

A New Era of Conflict

Resolution



by Roméo Dallaire
with Valerie Tystad, Editor, The Simons Center

The pace and nature of conflict, particularly over the last twenty years in this post-modern, post-Cold War era, can, in my opinion, be called a time of revolution. The scale and complexity of the changes require us to shift gears from simply trying to adapt what we have used in the past, to creating a whole new conceptual base for conflict resolution.

In order to create this new conceptual base, I will in this presentation, conduct a history tour and then project you into the future using general themes, some of which may seem a bit unusual. The first theme I want to analyze is: “Are all humans equal?” That is to say, are we actually all the same? Do we respond to the concept of human rights and the rights of the individual and do we act accordingly when challenged to do so?

During the genocide in Rwanda, extremists used young children to block the roads the emissaries and humanitarians were using to move water, medical supplies, food, and oil. Young children either blocked the roads, or they were killed. When the convoys stopped to avoid harming the children, extremists would ambush convoys, steal what they needed, and then sustain the ongoing slaughter.

One day, about the sixth or seventh week of the genocide, I was trying to move people from behind their own lines through the no man’s land that had been established between the fighting

Editor’s Note: This article is based on a presentation by Canadian Senator Roméo Dallaire at the 2011 CGSC Foundation Ethics Symposium on Prevention of Mass Atrocities. A retired lieutenant general, Dallaire had a distinguished career in the Canadian military. In 1994, Lt. Gen. Dallaire commanded the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). His book on this experience, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, was awarded the Governor General’s Literary Award for Non-Fiction in 2004, has garnered numerous international literary awards, and is the basis for a full-length, feature film released in 2007. In 1998, Lt. Gen. Dallaire was appointed the Canadian Assistant Deputy Minister for Human Resources in the Department of National Defense. In 2005 he was appointed to the Canadian Senate. Since his retirement from the military, Senator Dallaire has worked to increase the public’s understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder. He is a Fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a visiting lecturer at several Canadian and American universities. Senator Dallaire has written extensively on conflict resolution, humanitarian assistance, and human rights

elements. As I was moving through no man's land, I noticed a little boy, about six years old, about 300 meters up ahead. Anticipating this might be a potential ambush, the convoy slowed down. I jumped out with a couple of soldiers and, seeing no ambush, we looked around in some nearby huts, where we found the bodies of people killed weeks before. As we were looking around, we lost the little boy, so we doubled back and found him in a hut. In

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the hut were two adults, a male and a female, and a couple of children who were half eaten by dogs and rats. The little boy was sitting there as if he were at home. I picked him up. He was clothed in mangy and dirty rags. His stomach was bloated, and flies buzzed all around him. But then I looked into his eyes—this child of genocide—and I saw the eyes of my six-year-old son when I left for Africa. They were the eyes of a human child, and they were exactly the same as my son's. That child in the middle of that genocide and that civil war was just as human as my son back home.

However, did we—the world community—react in that context? Did we actually respond based on that premise? In the first days of the genocide, a number of nations sent in reconnaissance parties to assess the situation. At the debriefings, they said, "General, we're going to recommend that we don't get involved

in this complicated mess; it may only be tribal and it may not last too long." They said, "You know, there's nothing here for us. There's no strategic resource of any type. It's not an oil-producing country. The country is not even in a strategic location of importance to us. The only thing that is here are human beings, *and there are too many of them anyway.*"

And so the only criterion for intervention—the human beings—had not carried enough weight to win the argument. It was not until six weeks later with, 500,000 bodies lying around, that the UN Security Council finally agreed to call it genocide. So finally now it has a name: "genocide"—and I got the five-thousand troop reinforcement I needed *not* to stop the war between the two factions, but to stop the killing behind the lines! If I had been able to solve the killing behind the lines, the warring factions may have come to the table to stop the fighting. The Tutsis, who were being targeted by the genocide, said, "We're not going to negotiate until the killing stops." Meanwhile the Hutus said they could not stop the killing behind their lines because they were busy fighting the rebels.

And so, although the UN called it genocide, created a mandate, and called for five thousand troops, nobody came. The genocide ended in July of 1994, and the first Ethiopian troops hit the ground in August. The Ethiopians had just finished their own civil war, and they came with no background in how to handle a peace agreement within the context of a UN structure.

The question still remains: Do we have the will to intervene when genocide is ongoing, and even more significantly, do we have the will to intervene to prevent it from becoming catastrophic? The goal in the future must not just be merely to determine how to *resolve* conflict; the goal must be to *prevent* conflict. The Rwanda mission required about \$200 million over two years. Six months into the mission, I was scrounging money from Mozambique and Cambodia. We still did not have a budget,



A French soldier, one of the international force supporting the relief effort for Rwandan refugees, adjust the concertina wire surrounding the airport in August 1994.

DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Andy Dunaway

because nation-states had not paid the UN to provide the funds. There were 14 other missions going on at the same time. Eventually, focus shifted to Cambodia and Yugoslavia.

Within two months of the end of the genocide, when the killing was over and the war had ended, we had about four million refugees and internally displaced people, about 800,000 dead, and about a million injured and suffering from various diseases, including cholera. The international community contributed about \$3 billion in humanitarian aid, which in my opinion, is not even a good business plan, let alone an adequate humanitarian response to massive abuses of human rights and genocide in this enlightened era of history. We may have followed the rules, but we did not demonstrate the will to actually intervene.

In the book *The Other*, Ryszard Kapuściński argues that for five centuries anyone who was not a son of a white, Caucasian European was treated as “other.” The power base of the world was Eurocentric—“us” of European descent and all “others.” Now, however, through accelerated communication and so forth, we have all become the “other” to someone. The Eurocentric concept of the world has eroded as the ability to travel, to communicate, and to exchange ideas has expanded our perceptions.

These have produced a massive leap of change from the premises of the past. In a political sense then, the question is: Has our concept of humanity actually accepted the new premises? Or, have our actions and inactions established a new pecking order within humanity? I would argue that over the last twenty-odd years, since the end of the Cold War, we have created a pecking order in which Africa—and in particular, sub-Saharan Africa—is the lowest on the totem pole. This imposed pecking order and our measuring stick of self interest predict our willingness or unwillingness to intervene and also the arguments to support either position.

Because of the humanitarian law developed throughout this conflict in Africa, we enter this new era with preventive instruments to handle these complex situations. Conventions to international agreements, international law, and the International Criminal Court articulate and format tools we can actually use to fight with impunity and go after the really bad actors, including heads of state, even when their own states choose not to pursue them. With that as our reference, the question becomes: Is everybody playing by these rules, or have we entered an era in which some are choosing to no longer play by the rules? Certainly, during the Cold War we knew the opposition would

fundamentally play by the rules. We knew their ethos. Is that still the case? Since the end of the Cold War, we now face numerous imploding nations and failing states with massive human rights abuses.

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that we have entered an era of complexity and ambiguity, which has brought about ethical, legal, and moral dilemmas. We see those dilemmas being played out in the field and in national capitals, as leaders continue to stumble through this new era. We are formulating tactics, training, education, equipment, and organizations from the doctrine we articulate; however, the question remains: What is the conceptual basis for the doctrine and for conflict resolution in this era? Because we fail to clearly identify the conceptual basis and logic of conflict resolution, we find ourselves facing multiple dilemmas and the significant psychological trauma they create. Post-traumatic stress is not purely a combat-related condition; it may also be fueled by our inability to define the limits of our mandate, and to know when to use lethal force and how far to push its use.

For example, after 30 years of the NATO lexicon of “attack,” “defend,” “withdraw,” or “bypass”—which we all understood, we are thrust into an era in which the mandate becomes “establish an atmosphere of security.” What does “establish” mean? Does it mean

you will be held accountable for taking on and neutralizing belligerents? To what extent do you push the rules of engagement under “establish”? And what is an “atmosphere of security”? Is it a police state with no weapons? What is behind the mandate that enables us to apply our skills, knowledge, and experience to respond and to be successful? We soon discover there is nothing behind the mandate—just words and political interpretations. Those words and interpretations do not adapt in a structured way that we can apply in the field as a mission statement or concept of operations. With that as backdrop, it is no wonder the commander is never too sure of the limits of his mandate or in fact the aims he is trying to achieve, since it is ill defined and modified regularly, often after the fact. This lack of clarity carries significant psychological impact and does not instill confidence in the senior commander at the operational level, which in turn impacts commanders at the tactical level.

In this era, in which we are trying to wrest the initiative from the enemy and be proactive in shaping the future, we are far more willing to manage the problem than to resolve it. Are the political elites of the world actually trying to resolve conflicts, or are they really only striving to manage them, hoping they will resolve themselves? The recent crisis in Darfur illustrates the problem. Even though countries have declared genocide in Darfur, all they have done is throw cash at the humanitarian side of the problem. This cash feeds the nongovernmental and humanitarian communities’ desire to try to keep a lid on the two-and-a-half million people who are living with simply nothing, the women who are still raped, the kids who are still being abducted, and the men who are still being killed by the Sudanese forces, police, and Janjaweed.

There are still some who subscribe to the theory, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” —sort of an attitude of maintaining the status quo. I would argue that in this new era, status quo

is not a straight line; and because you cannot sustain it, status quo is regression. Everything is up for grabs; everything is moving. If you are not working under that premise, you are going to be left behind.

Change is not occurring in the evolutionary pace many of us are accustomed to. We are no longer shaping the future, nor are we anticipating the future; in reality, we are all just reacting to it and sometimes just trying to survive it. In that sort of survival atmosphere of *ad hoc* crisis management, how can we lead, how can we wrest the initiative from the other side, and how can we apply lessons learned?

Take a look at a few of the contemporary revolutions that define our era. The environmental revolution is just starting, and we are slowly beginning to realize that unless there is a communion between humanity and the planet, we will not thrive, we will be in survival mode, and we will reap the consequences of reckless choices. So the environment is a global scenario, and that global scenario is starting to affect how humanity will adjust to sustain itself and, ultimately, thrive and not just survive.

Some futurists predict the information revolution will bring about unprecedented accomplishments in biomechanical interfacing and artificial human enhancement in the very near future. Super brains will accelerate our capacities. And on the intellectual side, our method of deductive reasoning will become too slow to maximize our information systems. We will depend on technical people who can tell us what is out there; but will we be able to assimilate the information, synthesize its meaning, make decisions, and lead?

So what are the criteria for leadership in the emerging era? Are we preparing those in West Point now, the future battalion-level and higher leaders, for that era, or are we still fiddling with WordPerfect? One would hope that we have leapt ahead, but are we actually ahead of that exercise?

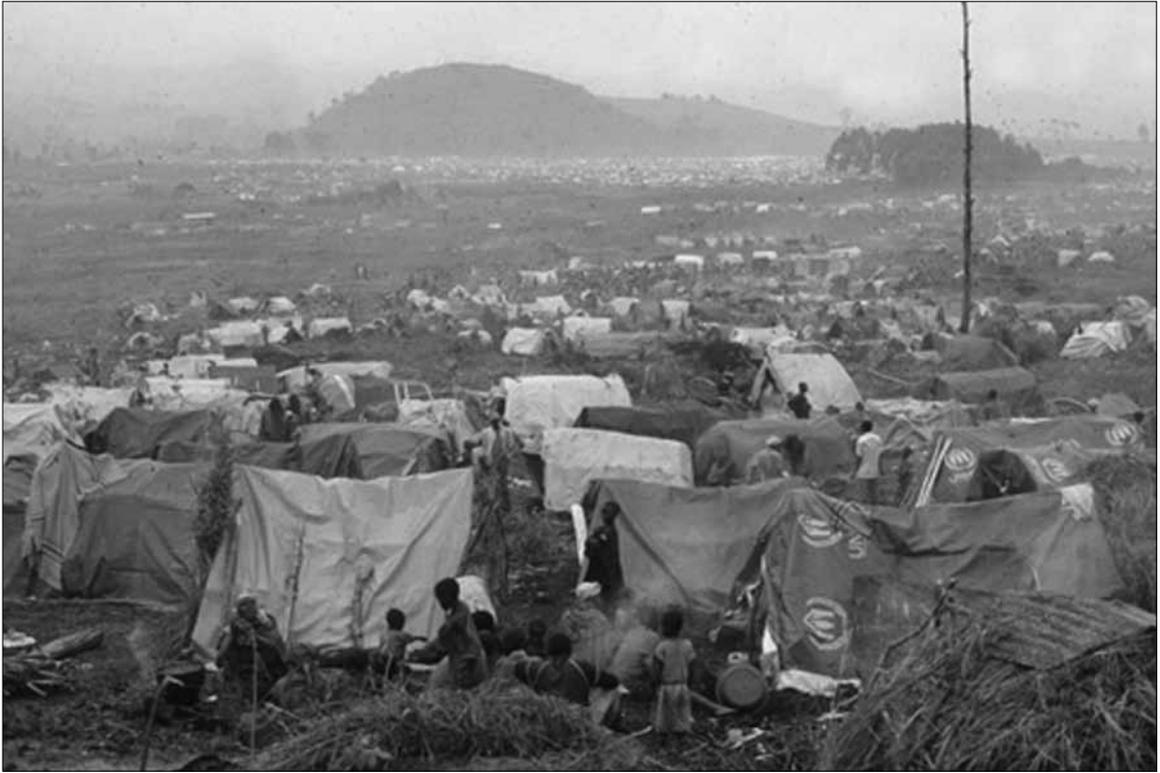
Just to illustrate that this question is not unique to the military environment, look at

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Google, Inc. Google is pervasive and worldwide; what happens if Google goes rogue? Who is really running Google? Google can digitize everything that is out of print—all scientific material, books, and so on; and the limits on its capabilities have not been articulated. Currently, the Harvard Library, the U.S. government, and Google are wrangling over Google's parameters. Will we even know when we are being moved in a different direction if we do not have information-savvy leadership to point the way forward?

In the Eurocentric good old days of classic warfare, there was a clear line of demarcation, and there were about three-and-a-half million soldiers on either side. All we needed was for somebody to step across that line, and—bingo—we were at war. As an artillery officer, I knew exactly where my gun positions were, I knew where to get ammunition, and I knew where the nuclear warheads were. That war was fought by drills and by maximizing elaborate intelligence, communications, and weapons systems.

After the Cold War, some argued that the classic concept of war simply did not exist anymore. In fact, not only did the classic concept of war not exist anymore, but the classic concept of peacekeeping also did not exist anymore. They argued that we had stumbled into everything in between. If so, the question is: How do we handle all of that in the middle? What happens when it is not nation-states going



Refugee camp for Rwandans in Kimbumba, eastern Zaire (current Democratic Republic of the Congo), following the Rwandan genocide. *Photo courtesy Centers for Disease Control*

at each other, but instead imploding nations, family states, and civil wars? How do we handle those conflicts?

The First Gulf War provided a moment of reprieve after the end of the Cold War. The Gulf War was classic warfare and a Cold War general's dream—small map, big arrows, simple plan. One morning, General Schwarzkopf woke up and looked at the sun, studied the entrails of a pigeon, and said, "Go." And so 600,000 men and women took on the other side's 400,000, they beat each other up, and the one left standing won. It was classic, traditional warfare that maximized technology, and all went according to plan. And so, some believed that our stumble into this post-Cold War era was, in fact, just a hiccup and that we would go back to the classic warfare that was the essence of what we were militarily. So in 2003, when 150,000 took on the Iraqi army

again, many thought we had another shot at returning to classic warfare. However this time, the killing did not stop when the Iraqi army was destroyed. So, since the end of the Cold War, these two conflicts have been the rare exceptions of classic force-on-force engagements. I argue that we are still conducting on-the-job-training and that Iraq and Afghanistan are the trial runs of an era of conflict that will be the norm for decades. Unlike the classic warfare era, in this era, we still do not have the depth to handle these problems.

President George H.W. Bush said he hoped the end of the Cold War would usher in a "new world order." I would argue that it ushered in a new world *disorder*. For example, we know that poverty is a great source of rage in the world. Eighty percent of humanity lives more or less in sub-human conditions, and this in turn feeds the rage of extremists. When we see extremism in

the Muslim world, we know there is absolutely nothing to prevent extremism in the African world. We have seen extremism and terrorism up close—and how we panic in response to it. We sacrifice our civil liberties, our human rights, and our international conventions to try and counter that threat. So how far down the road do we go to establish an adequate level of security from those who are not playing by the rules? Is the answer to this question the key to advancing our societies, stabilizing the future of humanity, and seeing humanity progress?

So, what have we seen evolving with that sort of atmosphere? We have essentially entered an era of elective wars or elective conflicts based on a variety of reasons, including the scramble for strategic resources. Coltan mined in eastern Congo is a prime example. Rwanda has no coltan, but it has been selling it for years, even during the genocide of the 1990's. How was that possible? Who was mining it? Was it ethical to buy Rwandan coltan? We concluded that mixing it with Australian coltan made it ethical, because our cell phones and Blackberries would not work without it. Because we refuse to give up our cell phones and Blackberries, we have tolerated a decade-long conflict that has killed over two million people. We assuaged our consciences by sending in an ineffective UN force to monitor the conflict as the mining continues. And so we must add the dynamic of resources into the exercise of engagement on the humanitarian side within imploding nations and failing or fragile states.

In Rwanda, there are 1.6 million internally displaced persons. How many trucks of food, water, medical supplies, and sheeting are needed to take care of or feed them twice a day? How do we get these things to the right places? How do we manage 100,000 people moving within hours? In Rwanda, this happened in less than 100 days, and it continues to destabilize the whole region. In this new era, the civilian population becomes a part of the conflict. They

are not adjunct participants, nor are they pushed to the sidelines; instead, refugees and internally displaced persons often become the instruments of the conflict. Extremists move that many people in order to build a basis for negotiations. They use fear to move the population by introducing new weapons, such as deliberate mass rape. Horror is an effective tool, and it ultimately gives those who use it a power base to continue the conflict and, in an odd sort of way, enhances their credibility. In this era, the civilian population is not a side show, it is the main event. In Rwanda, over 350,000 children under the age of 15 were slaughtered; and at the end of the war, close to 500,000 were orphaned.

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And so, because 50 percent of the populations within many of these countries are people under the age of 15, these massive abuse scenarios are being played out by children. We find ourselves facing the extreme scenarios we vowed would never happen again. There were more people killed, injured, internally displaced, and raped in 100 days in Rwanda than during the six years of the Balkan campaign. What criteria dictated that the world send 67,000 troops to the former Yugoslavia and none to Rwanda? The Montreal Institute of Genocidal Studies looked at the Kosovo campaign and Rwanda. In the end, elements of our basic assumption suggest all humans are not human; or put another way, maybe all humans are not equal. Maybe some humans are more human than others. Maybe we in the West consider ourselves to be more human than others. As a reference point, this

assumption appears to influence public policy in America.

I have essentially argued that in this era we do not have a level playing field in regard to those who are in conflict and those who are generating conflict. We have one side that is not playing by any rules; and that in turn raises the question, “if they are not playing by the rules, why should we”? How do we adapt to the rules or to the lack of them? In this era, we face complex scenarios and ethical and moral dilemmas continuously in the field. How many kids can one kill? What is the doctrine of facing child soldiers who are the primary weapons system in the conflict? Only the U.S. Marines have a doctrinal mandate to, avoid confrontation with children No other

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service has addressed this moral dilemma in its doctrine. So how about the doctrine of the right to self defense? How many 12-year-olds will one kill before one starts questioning that approach? Is that the way to go about it? Young girls constitute forty percent of this new, low-technology, sophisticated weapons system. When I was in Sierra Leone, demobilizing young combatants in 2001, I could demobilize ten boys for every girl, because girls are not primarily up front shooting and killing; they are running logistics and operating as sex slaves.

And so there are no more classic missions and mandates. All new era missions are complex and ambiguous, and moral and ethical dilemmas abound at all levels. More often we see mission

commanders held accountable for their losses rather than actually accomplishing the mission. Making sure everybody comes home safely often trumps actually saving tens of thousands of people from a country of “no significance.” So we have established that sort of criteria. The Commander of the Air Forces in the Kosovo campaign—a Canadian officer—was asked, “Colonel, what’s your job?” He said, “My job is to man these Canadian Air Forces in the Kosovo campaign.” And the second question was, “What’s your mission?” “My mission is to bring everybody home safely.”

The nongovernmental organization (NGO) world will become the voice of humanity. They are already a major player in this new era. When we asked General McChrystal what he is doing with the NGOs over there, he said, “Nothing, because they don’t want to talk to us. They want their humanitarian space. They want their neutrality.” These were the same NGOs that were hiring Blackwater to protect them. They do not want military people, but they are quite prepared to use security companies. Do they have an ethical problem to start with? And if we are not gathering the massive amounts of intelligence information they are and exchanging information with them, how do we think we are going to approach the whole problem?

And so here are the options: We either survive it, we don’t worry about it, or the United States and Canada get together and build a wall—the Fortress of America—and we do not let anybody in who has a black moustache. I would argue, however, that in the future we must find the source of the breach and resolve conflict there. So the question becomes, “How do we do that”? How do we get past throwing cash at it in a mistaken effort to avoid getting involved and thereby dealing with mass casualties in a country that is of no obvious consequence for us?

How does the international body develop

the political will to engage in conflict resolution to avoid mass atrocities and genocide? Currently *inaction* is the action of choice. Not to get involved is a decision. The will to intervene is based on a number of criteria that political people compute in order to make their decision and draw others to their side. Of the many criteria political leaders consider, I argue the following three are the most important:

- (1) “What is in it for me politically”?
- (2) “What is in my self interest”?
- (3) “Why take casualties to obtain something that provides me nothing”?

Criterion number three was the basis for President Clinton’s decision to accelerate the pullout from Somalia. He felt the American people would not accept casualties during a humanitarian mission executing an event that had no strategic value to the mission. Mid-level powers on the ground in these conflict resolution situations are not used because powerful countries, such as the United States, are not forcing them to be used. Powerful countries like the United States should be held in reserve while mid-level countries go in first. More often than not, the United States goes in too soon and acts as the world’s cop instead of as the world’s army. The United States should not go in first, get a bloody nose, and pull out, because it leaves the rest of the world with no options for action and certainly no credibility to act.

The new era brings with it new concepts, such as the responsibility to protect populations from massive human rights abuse. This, in turn, has made “sovereignty” no longer an absolute. Libya is a prime example of this new concept in action. The UN General Assembly accepted that concept and established intervention criteria in 2005; however, we need a whole new set of tools for this era. Cooperation, coordination, and collaboration are neat, but they are personality driven and will not bring anything new to the table. In this new era, we must make all disciplines work in an integrated fashion, which means we must have multi-disciplined leaders. This new construct of leadership and conflict resolution cannot be based on a single discipline.

We need innovative ideas and a new conceptual base to apply to a multi-disciplined world. For example, one of the reforms might be to add a whole new skill set above the warrior ethic. Professional military leaders, of course, must be credible as warriors to defend and protect their country. But above that skill we need something more, which is why we in Canada are introducing anthropology, philosophy, and sociology into the officer education program.

A new era demands a new conceptual base. Doctrine without a conceptual base is confusing and counterproductive. We should maximize the concept that sovereignty is no longer an absolute. We went just part of the way in Libya, and we should have had boots on the ground. The maturing of the NGO and the coalescing of the NGO community will be major factors in all operations. We will lose enormous initiative on the ground by continuing to allow them to define a construct of humanitarian space and neutrality.

In many of those developing nations, empowering women is crucial, so is education and respect. We must accept our responsibility to protect and hold the politicians accountable. If we can build a new framework of concepts, we will be able to move from conflict resolution to conflict prevention. **IAJ**