

Evaluation of Current Risk Assessment Models for Genocide and Mass Atrocity

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Bio:

Kathryn Gillum currently is an undergraduate student at Keene State College, in New Hampshire, pursuing two degrees. She will graduate from Keene in December of 2016, as a member of Zeta Chi Rho, the Holocaust and Genocide Studies honors society, with a BA in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and a minor in International Relations; along with another BA in Biology. Originally from the town of Hudson, New Hampshire, she has a passion for genocide studies and is excited to pursue a career in the field of genocide and atrocity prevention following her graduation.

Abstract:

Genocide is one of the three internationally-recognized atrocity crimes, whose prevention has become part of the United States' national security strategy. To prevent genocide and atrocity, one must first be able to recognize them, which can be accomplished by utilizing risk assessments. A risk assessment for atrocity crimes can be used to systematically evaluate the potential dangers for atrocity that a nation may have. They help define and assess "red flag" situations, which may be germinating within a nation and potentially act as contributing factors to atrocity crimes. Risk assessments are important as they provide the crucial quantitative data and qualitative analysis to help measure hazardous conditions and can help aid in atrocity and genocide prevention.

This paper will review various risk assessment models and evaluate each model's strengths, weaknesses, and commonalities. There are currently four major models of risk assessment that show if a nation may currently be, or soon to be, experiencing, atrocity. These

include the work of Dr. Barbara Harff, and international organizations including the United Nations, the European Commission, and the Fund for Peace. Within all these risk assessment systems there are three main categories of risk factors for genocide and atrocity crimes: political, economic or social instabilities and/or inequalities.

As a leader in the international community, the United States, and other world powers, have the responsibility to recognize and act to prevent genocide and mass atrocities, which are currently escalating around the world. To effectively do this, global leaders must understand and implement atrocity risk assessment and early warning systems so they are able to recognize the crimes, before they are perpetrated.

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Introduction:

Genocide and atrocity crimes are not only a curse to those directly involved, but a burden on all of humanity. What many people do not realize is that these crimes occur before even a drop of blood is spilt, which can be seen if one knows how to identify the different risk factors of the crimes. The international community not only has the moral obligation to intervene in atrocities, but also the duty to help protect victims under the United Nation's (UN) 2005 Responsibility to Protect (R2P).^{1 2} By recognizing atrocity in its early stages, it gives the international community greater capability and more response time to protect civilians. R2P and preemptive action could also reduce the risk of financial, stability, and diplomatic losses, along with protecting human life associated with atrocity. Therefore, it truly is in the international community's best interest to act in accordance with R2P.³ If the United States (US) and other world leaders act in more pre-emptive ways, they would be able to uphold international agreements of protection and ensure that other nations do their part in protecting innocent lives. To act preemptively with atrocity, the first step is for violence to be identified as an atrocity.

Identifying genocide and atrocities (including war crimes and crimes against humanity) before they occur can be difficult, but is a necessity in today's violent world. To help identify atrocity crimes there are models, called risk assessments, which use a collection of risk factors to evaluate the severity of violent outbreaks. Risk factors are identified situations that have been part of the causation of atrocities in the past, and if a state exhibits these factors it can mean that it is at higher risk of atrocity. Though these models vary in approach and factors, most of the risk factors can be grouped into three basic categories; political, economic, and social instabilities and/or inequalities. Political risk factors typically involve; instabilities in governance, militarization, legislation, and national history. Economic risk factors can include a decline of a

nation's gross national product, widening income inequality, or crumbling infrastructures. Lastly, examples of social factors can be aspects of increased hate speech, or propaganda, and discrimination such as othering, which is purposeful alienation.

This paper is an analysis of four influential atrocity/genocide risk assessments. The specific models in this paper were selected to provide examples of how diverse authoring institutions, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scholars, and government bodies, outline risk assessment. Each analysis provides a model overview that evaluates the model's strengths and weaknesses, and addresses distinctions and commonalities among the models. Understanding and implementing these risk assessment models can help preemptively identify and prevent genocide and atrocity crimes. For a summarization and outline of the four assessments please refer to Appendix A (See Appendix A: *Summarization of Risk Assessments Models*). The four risk assessment models examined in this analysis were: the Fund for Peace's 2014 *Conflict Assessment System Tool* (CAST), Dr. Barbara Harff's 2005 *Assessing Risks of Genocide and Politicide*, the European Commission's 2008 *Conflict Prevention*, and the United Nation's 2014 *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*.

***Fund for Peace's Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST, 2014):*⁴**

The Fund for Peace (FFP) is an educational and research based non-profit NGO, working towards the prevention of violence.⁵ In 2014, it published the *Conflict Assessment Framework Manual* containing a risk assessment model called the *Conflict Assessment System Tool*, or CAST. CAST is composed of twelve risk factors which are used to measure whether or not a state may experience atrocity. These twelve factors are broken down into three main sub-categories, "social indicators," "economic indicators", and "political/military indicators," as shown in Appendix A.

Social indicators in CAST include aspects such as refugee populations which today is a huge global issue in Syria as 4.6 million Syrians have been forced into a refugee population, and 6.6 million have become IDPs, since 2011.⁶ They also include certain community demographics, and a history of discriminatory tensions. In this case economic risks are not just purely a national economic decline or inequality, or even perceived inequality. Instead they can refer to inequalities in education, and hiring practices among different groups. These inequalities further divide groups as they become separated, not just economically, but societally as well. The FFP's political risk factors deal aspects of the status of the regime in power, along with the nation's military, and aspects of the state's past.

One aspect that makes CAST unique is that it has a severity scale of how in danger an event is to becoming an atrocity. These scales give ten examples of events that a state might endure ranked by severity from ten to zero, ten being events that put states at the highest risk and zero being event that put states at the lowest risk. This assessment is also effective, as jargon is kept to a minimum and allows for quick comparatives. Furthermore, CAST was not written with any one body in mind to recognize and fix atrocities in question. This un-biased dictation allows for use by many varying groups. Some negative points of CAST is that it is lengthy and some risk factors are hard to pinpoint and overall, while CAST is strong on political risks it lacks depth in social and economic risk factors.

Dr. Barbara Harff's Assessing Risks of Genocide and Politicide (2005):⁷

In 2005, Dr. Barbara Harff, an advisor for the Genocide Prevention Advisory Network, updated her 2003 risk assessment in a piece titled *Assessing Risks of Genocide and Politicide*. This assessment, originally published in *Peace and Conflict 2005: A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*, has since become an excellent tool in

genocide/politicide identification and prevention, and is continuously updated. According to Dr. Harff, this model when used correctly can be up to 76% - 90% accurate, and is the only model with an accuracy percentage. Harff's work has seven risk factors for genocide and politicide (defined as politically based violence and killing).

The majority of Harff's risk factors are politically focused, with a strong emphasis on history. Her first risk is if the state has experienced a genocide or politicide since 1945, if the country has then it is more likely to experience another, as the state may become more conditioned to outbreaks of violence. The next risk is political upheaval, which is if a country has experienced a regime change at some point within the past fifteen years. This is considered dangerous as the government may not yet be fully established, accepted, or stable. According to Harff, the most at risk regime is an autocracy, where there is a single person or party in control of the government, which does not allow opposition. The ethnic character of the rulers is another risk, and is when a population is not properly represented in their government. The shared ideology of the ruling elite is also a risk. If rulers have a belief system that enables them to justify elimination, persecution, or discrimination of a people it puts the entire nation at higher risk for atrocity. This is currently happening with ISIS, who rules as a theocracy with the religious justification for the elimination of outsiders through the duty of *jihād*. Harff also outlines a few social and economic discriminatory risk factors.

Dr. Harff's model is beneficial for many reasons, including the fact that she keeps her work as a living document adding current data to better her analysis. Also she notes that while no person, or analysis, can accurately predict when violence will begin, being able to recognize the risks and precursors of genocide/politicide is beneficial in enacting preventative measures to stop violence. Another unique element that she provides are examples of historical genocides

and politicides where she shows exactly how the risk factors she suggests played into them. A drawback of this model is that economic and social risks are largely untouched upon.

The European Commission's Conflict Prevention (2008):⁸

In 2008, K. Ahlfors and M. Van wrote the risk assessment model *Conflict prevention*, for the European Commission (EC). The purpose of this assessment was to categorize and define when and how, the European Union (EU) could get involved when faced with atrocity. While the report's main focus is on prevention, it also addresses post-conflict peace building. This model outlines eight risk factors of atrocity crimes, which each have concrete examples, or indicators, of how the risk can manifest in real-time, along with examples on how to combat them.

The EC has three political risk factors, which highlight a state's illegitimacy, judiciary weaknesses, and geopolitical climate as risks. Economic risks are factors such as a non-diversified economy, and economic inequities which are risk as they can exacerbate social tensions. Examples of social factors that the EC gives are group tensions, human rights abuses, and biased civil media outlets

Overall, the EC assessment focuses on prevention and rebuilding of atrocities through the local community, not just with those in power. This is important, as it suggests to allow people power over their own life. However, it is targeted for use by the EU and it may not be completely suitable for a border non-parliamentary global utilization, as in some cases it pushes European ideology.

The United Nation's Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes (2014):⁹

In 2014, the UN Office of the Special Advisors on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect published the *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*. This assessment model notes that while all risks in it are equally important this is subject to change

over time and severity, depending on the situation. It stresses the consequence of not only being able to act preemptively but also addresses the historic importance of it. As revealed in Appendix A, the UN has eight common risk factors for all atrocity crimes, then it has two specialized risks for each of the three individual crimes, providing a total of fourteen risks.

The eight common risks, share many different elements of the state, such as regime stability, and stressor factors. But, they also have factors of violence, such as the ability to commit atrocity. Along with motivations and triggering events which are risk as they can bring about, or justify, atrocity crimes. However, the last six specialized risks focus on the individual and legal aspects of the three crimes. These include factors of victimization, the intent of violent actions, and how attacks are perpetrated.

The UN's framework is an internationally recognized risk assignment model and has a lot to offer. It is helpful as it is easy to read and offers legal definitions for all atrocity crimes, along with individual risk factors for each crime so one can better be prepared to properly recognize the risk at hand. Also, the last few common risk factors for atrocity, motivations and triggering events, are important as no other risk assessment in this study shared those particular risks. Even though most atrocity crimes do start with a triggering event, such as an act of terror or an election, and all violence has to be started with some form of motivation or intention. Another helpful aspect of this model is that the risks, and their corresponding indicators, act as real-time examples, making them easily recognizable in current atrocities. However, it may seem confusing as the risks the UN offers are difficult to fit into the three sub-categories, of political, economic, or social risks, but the indicators that they offer for the risks can be. One downfall of this tool is that crimes against humanity and war crimes do not have as in depth risks as genocide, or the other eight common risk factors.

Common Factors and Comparisons:

While each of these four models have unique aspects that can make them better or worse in certain situations, they all offer significant insight to atrocity. It is also important to understand the common themes and similarities of the four assessments, instead of assessing the individual models by themselves. The most prevalent overall risk factors should be what is examined in an unstable state. Out of all the analyzed risk assessments there are only a few common risk factors found, which can be thought of as a sort of universal risk. This means that if a nation has one or more of those communal risk factors then they may be more at risk than if it has experienced a less common risk. There are three common risks shared in each assessment; history of abuse, economic inequality, and social discrimination against specific groups. Though those are not the only prominent commonalities, these are the only ones found in all four models (for more shared risks please refer to *Figure One: Compared Risk Factors for Assessment Models*).

Risk Model	Past crimes/abuses	Economic inequalities	Patterns of discrimination	Use of media	Lack of civilian controlled security services	Corruption	Regime change	Fractional-ization of elites	Lack of state legitimacy
CAST	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Harff	X	X	X				X	X	
EC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
UN	X	X	X	X	X	X			

Figure One: Compared Risk Factors for Assessment Models (X implies the model shares this risk)

The first common political risk factor, is if there is a history of atrocity crimes or human rights abuses. This a risk because if a nation has experienced human rights abuses, which have been uninterrupted by the international community, they are at risk of repeating actions in the future. Noninvolvement can justify a state previous crimes and states can further commit crimes because they believe that they have impunity for atrocity. It also gives perpetrators a sense of

security because, if the international community did nothing to stop perpetrators last time why would they stop them in the future. Also, in many previously unstable nations the entire culture is conditioned into a state of violence. This conditioning may have been a reason that many German Jews did not leave when Hitler took power, as the Jewish population have been persecuted since before the birth of Christ. This is important as the conditioning of violence on the victims and perpetrators, as it allows for a false sense of security for victims and implied impunity for perpetrators.

The next shared risk is economic inequalities along group lines. This is a risk because it causes othering, between the haves and the have not's. Economic inequalities, play a role not only in the financial stability, of a group, but their social stability. Typically, those that have money have better access to health care, necessities, and protection, then those that do not. Also economic inequalities can cause social segregation with different material items, jobs, and educations, furthering group divisions.

Perhaps one of the most important social risks of atrocity is discrimination against specific groups. This particular risk is dangerous because it legitimizes othering. Social discrimination starts off with a dislike of one group, which than escalates into persecution of the group, through laws, and human rights abuses. The social othering and discrimination is the original factor that separates individuals from a once united community. Without a hated group in a society there would not be societal support of violence, therefore, without the supportive climate potentially less atrocity crimes would be committed. Discrimination, like economic inequality, creates a hierarchy, but instead of it being who is rich and not, it is broken down into who lives and who dies.

Conclusion:

These models offer systematic qualitative analysis tools to help proactively identify, assess, and address risk factors – typically social, political and/or economic, instabilities or inequalities. As these factors can germinate in a nation and escalate into potential atrocity. While many important atrocity assessment models exist, there were only four models chosen for this comparative analysis. These assessments offer an excellent spectrum of atrocity recognition and preventive measures for citizens, NGOs, and world leaders to use to proactively address the probability of the commitment of atrocity crimes globally. While all genocide risk assessment models are important and have their own unique strengths, and weaknesses, some can be better than others for certain applications. For example, if a person was looking for a risk assessment emphasizing possible solutions to genocidal risks, then the European Commission’s *Conflict prevention* model would be best as it offers excellent risks, indicators, and proactive possible solutions. However, I do not think that a single model is best overall, but rather a collection of assessments, can be suitable as all outline unique risks and aspects in their reports.

As a hegemony and leader in the international community, the US, along with the other powers, such as China, Russia, the UK and France, have the responsibility to recognize and act to prevent atrocities, which today are escalating around the world. Even with the UN’s on-going limitations it can be used as one of the world’s only global collective that can discuss threats on peace. As our best hope for global security, and stability likely depends on the collective and collaborative efforts of our leading world powers to identify and end atrocity crimes, through risk assessments.

Appendix A: Summarization of Risk Assessments Models

<i>System Tool</i> <i>(CAST, 2014)</i>	<i>Risks of Genocide and Politicide (2005)</i>	<i>Conflict Prevention (2008)</i>	<i>Analysis for Atrocity Crime (2014)</i>
A research tool & prevention mechanism to qualitatively & quantitatively assess 12 genocidal risk factors or indicators.	Structural living model of genocide and politicide with seven main risks, and many examples of when and how they were used.	Outline used for conflict prevention and peace building initiatives with eight risk factors.	Prevention tool with fourteen risks with multiple indicators for each risk, broken down into risks of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
NGO established in 1957 with many political & business ties	Genocide Prevention Advisory Network; Background with US Task Force & Naval Academy	European Union	Special Advisors on the Prevention of Genocide, UN
Social: Demographic Pressures; Refugees & IDPs; Group Grievance; Human Flight & Brain Drain Economic: Uneven Economic Development; Economic Decline; Political: State Legitimacy; Public Services; Human Rights & the Rule of Law; Security Apparatus; Factionalized Elites; External Intervention	Social: little Economic: Trade openness Political: Prior genocides and politicides; Political upheaval; Ethnic character of ruling elite; Ideological character of the ruling elite; Regime type All: Severe political and economic discrimination between minorities (applies to all three)	Social: Tensions Between Communities Without Resolution; Violations of Fundamental Rights in the State; Weak Civil Society or Media Economic: Poor Economic Management; Socio-Economic Regional Inequalities Political: Legitimacy deficit; Restrictions to the Rule of Law; Geopolitical Instabilities	Social: Capacity to commit crimes; Tensions or patterns of discrimination; Enabling circumstances Economic: little Political: Past violation of human rights; Weak state structure; No mitigating factors All: Instability; Triggering factor (communal factors only)
Quick quantitative assessment strong comparative analysis, Non-biased approach, lots of examples and explanations applicable to <i>Assessment Models for Genocide and Mass Atrocity</i> March 2016	Ties risks to histories atrocities, "Living model" built (2003) with continuous updates (2015). Short concise, easy to understand, <i>Assessment Models for Genocide and Mass Atrocity</i> March 2016	Offers many possible solutions to the risks, Focuses on community rebuilding Many examples of indicators to the risks	In-depth risks indicators, Clearly defines and give risk all atrocity crimes. Addresses UNs own faults, Trigger factors
Lengthy report Somewhat convoluted risk indicators Proactive response	Lacks depth, Little on social and economic risk, No indicators of risk	Limited to European intervention Less Universal	Risks can not easily dovetail into; social, economic, or political segments, Crimes against Humanity and war crimes poorly addressed
Only model with quantifiable results by using a severity rating scale (10-most; 1-least) in each of 12 risk indicators.	Harff updates her assessment, so it is current, also it shows concrete examples from history and how her risks are used. Only model with % accuracy ratings.	This pro-active model is unique as it offers multiple possible solutions for each risk they offer.	Breaks down atrocity crimes and gives communal and separate risks for each crime. Only model stressing Trigger factors.

¹ *A Toolkit on the Responsibility to Protect* (Rep.). (n.d.). Retrieved February 1, 2016, from INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT website: <http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICRtoP%20Toolkit%20on%20the%20Responsibility%20to%20Protect%20high%20res.pdf>

² Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 16 September 2005. (2005, October 24). Retrieved from <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/487/60/PDF/N0548760.pdf?OpenElement>

³ Waller, J., Dr. (2015, March 3). *Responsibility to Protect*. Lecture presented in Keene State College, Keene.

⁴ *CAST Conflict Assessment Framework Manual* (Rep.). (2014). Retrieved <http://library.fundforpeace.org/library/cfsir1418-castmanual2014-english-03a.pdf>

⁵ About The Fund for Peace. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://global.fundforpeace.org/aboutus>

⁶ Syria Crisis. (2015). Retrieved March 21, 2016, from <http://www.wvi.org/syria-crisis>

⁷ Harff, B., Dr. (2005). *Assessing Risks of Genocide and Politicide* (Rep.). Retrieved http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/AboutGen_Assessing_Risks_of_Genocide_and_Politicide.pdf

⁸ *Programming Guide for Strategy Papers* (Rep.). (2008, November). Retrieved http://www.eplo.org/assets/files/3.%20Resources/EU%20Documents/European%20Commission_Programming%20Fiche_Conflict_Prevention.pdf

⁹ *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A tool for prevention* (Rep.). (2014). Retrieved February 01, 2016, from United Nations website: http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/framework%20of%20analysis%20for%20atrocity%20crimes_en.pdf