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Editor

Rethinking Security in the Twenty-First Century

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Edwin Daniel Jacob
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Protection from Whom? Tensions, Contradictions, and Potential in the Responsibility to Protect

Douglas Irvin-Erickson

In 2011, NATO requested United Nations Security Council authorization to invade Libya to protect the Libyan population from their own government. The Security Council Resolution that authorized the invasion used language that evoked the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, condemning "the gross and systematic violation of human rights, including arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and summary executions," while reiterating "the responsibility of the Libyan authorities to protect the Libyan population" and reaffirming "that parties to armed conflicts bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians."¹ Although Brazil, China, Germany, India, and Russia abstained from the vote, the resolution passed unanimously and carried the support of the League of Arab States, the African Union, and the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It was the first time the Security Council had voted to militarily protect

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the population of a country without the consent of the country's recognized government. At the end of March 2011, the Security Council again invoked R2P to impose sanctions and travel bans on leaders in Côte d'Ivoire and threaten sanctions against media actors inciting hatred and violence. Two years later in 2013, mass violence broke out between the Dinka and Nuer in Juba, and the UN mission to South Sudan was mandated to help the South Sudanese government fulfill its R2P obligations. When the mission provided shelter to 80,000 civilians, it was the first time a UN peacekeeping operation protected such a large number of civilians—a humanitarian accomplishment that helped ease the burdensome memory of the UN's failure in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. And, in 2014, in response to the Syrian crisis, the Security Council for the first time in history voted to deliver humanitarian aid to a besieged population without the consent of the country's recognized government, citing R2P principles.

Indeed, it is safe to say that R2P is a firmly entrenched norm. Since the R2P principle was affirmed by the United Nations in 2005, it has been invoked by UN officials, the leaders of many governments, and prominent human rights activists in response to mass violence and humanitarian crises in Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gaza, Georgia, Iraq, Kenya, Libya, Myanmar, North Korea, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen among others, prompting debates across the world over the responsibility of the so-called international community to intervene on behalf of the victims of mass violence.² The legality, ethics, and politics of such interventions remain contested. Nor is there a globally accepted threshold for delineating what kinds of atrocities warrant international intervention under R2P and what kinds of responses R2P calls for—as evidenced by the widespread referencing of R2P to call for foreign intervention in Burma after cyclone Nargis in 2008 which was met by the Myanmar government's strong anti-neocolonial rhetoric when they rejected foreign aid.³ The 2011 Libyan intervention, moreover, prompted a great deal of backlash against military interventions to protect populations, especially as NATO's strategy shifted from protecting populations to overthrowing the government and supporting rebel groups in an effort to secure Western economic interests.⁴ But the continued invocation of R2P by world leaders even after this backlash at the Libya invasion suggests that R2P is now firmly entrenched within global politics. Since 2011, the UN Security Council

has endorsed 26 resolutions directly referring to R2P, although none employed the language of military intervention.

As R2P has become a fixture of world politics, the concept has been incorporated into scholarship and taught under a wide range of disciplinary umbrellas. R2P has made its introductions into the interdisciplinary fields of international studies, peace and conflict studies, security studies, and peacebuilding, with R2P scholarship coalescing around the disciplines of international law and political science, specifically the subfields of international relations. New work on R2P has also been undertaken from the disciplines of philosophy, religious studies, anthropology, sociology, the arts, literature, and history.⁵ Among other things, these new studies have done much to demonstrate that the prevention of mass atrocities frequently has more to do with the resilience and strength of cultural, social, and political institutions and norms, rather than the international diplomatic and military frameworks envisioned by R2P.⁶ Still, scholars of international studies trained in sociological methods have demonstrated that R2P has had a significant impact on how the UN supports and intervenes in member states, and on the core principle of sovereignty in the international system—not necessarily through engaging the security architecture of states, but rather by shaping the attitudes and behaviors within the institutions of donor states.⁷

All of this points to a curious paradox within R2P that is necessary to parse from a critical security studies perspective. In theory, R2P speaks the language of the stock-and-trade of international law, international relations, and security studies—of creating international legal, political, moral, and military obligations to protect human lives and human well-being from abusive states. But, R2P in practice has very little to do with international law. The traditional sources of international law are customary law and treaty-based law, while the secondary sources of international law are traditionally held to be general principles of law common to the world's major legal systems, and the opinions of important jurists.⁸ Without any document citing a responsibility to protect in the two primary sources of international law, R2P's only grounding in international law is at best found in the writings of influential scholars. Moreover, the very purpose of R2P stated explicitly by its first advocates was not to create new international legal obligations, but to strengthen the commitment of states and institutions to fulfill their existing commitments under international law.⁹ Similarly, R2P does not fit comfortably as a subcategory of security

studies, especially since the traditional field of security studies grounded in international relations has tended to avoid questions of internal state politics and society, such as policing, inequality, and civilian well-being.

R2P, this chapter argues, is simply a normative principle that has been successful in shaping the practice of politics, and not a firm principle governing the practice of law and security. But the application of R2P principles to political action has produced yet another incongruity, where the principle of R2P in practice has often contradicted the principles of R2P in theory. This is especially true in the case of the 2011 US-led NATO war in Libya, where the intervention to protect the population of a state from the state extended the duration of the war by months, more than tripled the death toll and, by arming a loose coalition of rebel groups, led to the proliferation of arms across Libya and the region, the commission of mass violations of human rights, and the strengthening of violent extremist groups.¹⁰ Two years after US President Barack Obama's triumphant claim to have successfully prevented Muammar al-Qaddafi from following through on his threats to crush an uprising through genocidal massacres, international monitors documented pervasive human rights abuses and crimes against humanity across the country, and the displacement of almost half a million people from their homes.¹¹ In Kuperman's words, Obama's belief that the lesson to be learned from the NATO war in Libya was that the US should have committed more military resources to the war is precisely the wrong lesson. Not only should the lesson have been not to go to war, but the leaders of great powers should not justify wars to fight terrorism or overthrow tyrants on the pretext that the resulting war is a humanitarian project.¹²

After reviewing the history of R2P to try and present a history of the concept that can be used for inquires along the lines of critical security studies, this chapter turns its attention to the way the global discourse of R2P has been operationalized within US foreign policy. While R2P is often thought about as a norm most prevalent within international politics and the global arena of the UN, it has also impacted the discourse of the previous two US presidents, Obama and George W. Bush. The inclusion of this case is partly an effort to help expand the scholarship on R2P to consider the way the principle has impacted US foreign policy, and how US foreign policy has in turn impacted R2P. More importantly, the goal is not to offer suggestions for how the US could do a better job implementing R2P, but to highlight some of the ethical and political challenges that surround R2P.

By 2012 within the US government, R2P discourse had transferred from the level of presidential rhetoric into bureaucratic institutions with the establishment of an interagency Atrocity Prevention Board (APB). While the Board avoids using the language of R2P—perhaps to linguistically distance US foreign policy from the global R2P efforts that are centered within the United Nations—the goals and objectives are largely the same. One of the accomplishments of the APB, I believe, is that by locating the goals of atrocity prevention throughout the bureaucracy of the US government, atrocity prevention within the US government is less likely to be seen as a field dominated solely by security experts and the military. This opens up the possibility of mainstreaming the prevention of mass atrocities within agencies that do not employ military power, increasing the likelihood that US foreign policy will be able to promote peace beyond the US's borders through nonviolent means.

Nevertheless, this chapter concludes with two specific challenges and cautionary notes, and a normative assertion that the goals of R2P should not be to help create a world where populations are constantly protected by states, but to create a world where people do not need protection. I conclude, therefore, by arguing that R2P should not be orientated toward helping reform the practice of security but rather toward the creation of a world where state sovereignty entails working to maintain the well-being of their populations, not protecting them.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT? A NEW IDEA OR AN OLD IMPERIALISM?

R2P—as a concept—began to emerge in global politics and discourse after the publication of an influential Brookings Institution report published in 1996 by Francis Deng, Sadikiel Kimaro, Terrence Lyons, Donald Rothchild, and William Zarrman. They argued that sovereign states were not defined by the inviolability of their borders, but by their obligation to protect the well-being of those who lived within their borders.¹³ The genocides in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia placed the report into relief, highlighting the dangers of international apathy in the face of unfettered state sovereignty where governments could massacre their populations without fearing sanctions or rebuke. Three years later in 1999, the

NATO intervention in the former Yugoslavia—motivated in part by the lingering memory of genocides in the first half of the decade—sparked a global debate over the legality of humanitarian intervention to end mass atrocities. Two years after that, the Canadian government sponsored the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which authored a report, *Responsibility to Protect*, arguing that state sovereignty entailed a responsibility to protect civilians. The ICISS report found that the “traditional, narrow perception of security leaves out the most elementary and legitimate concerns of ordinary people regarding security in their daily lives,” and is unable to address the concerns of civilians that arise from internal state conflicts.¹⁴ R2P was proposed as a framework for encouraging states and the international system as a whole to place the well-being of civilian populations on equal footing with the concerns of traditional state security.

The ICISS report gave the “responsibility” in R2P two meanings. On one level, individual states had a responsibility to protect the basic rights and well-being of their populations. At the same time, the states also had a responsibility to ensure other states fulfilled this responsibility. The responsibility to assist other states fulfill their responsibility entailed an obligation to use military intervention, as well as a responsibility to react diplomatically to atrocities in foreign states and to help rebuild societies after mass atrocities.¹⁵ At the 2005 UN World Summit, the R2P principle was endorsed through a unanimous vote, as delegations from around the world held that states did have a responsibility to protect their population from genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The same year, the African Union endorsed the idea in its founding charter, stating that AU member states would protect human and peoples’ rights, and had the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of an AU member state to stop and prevent mass atrocities. Then, in April 2006, the UN Security Council affirmed the principles of R2P outlined in the World Summit document. In less than a decade, the R2P principle had captured a world stage.

Between 2005 and the Secretary-General’s Report on Implementing the Responsibility to Protect published in 2009, three pillars of R2P emerged.¹⁶ The first was that the state carries the primary responsibility for protecting populations from mass atrocities. Second, the international community has a responsibility to encourage and assist states in fulfilling this responsibility. And third, the international community has a responsibility to use diplomatic, humanitarian, and coercive means to protect

populations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, even if that means military intervention. At its core, R2P is therefore a doctrine of prevention, committing states to take action to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and grave violations of human rights (which I refer to as “atrocities crimes”).¹⁷ To many of R2P’s critics, the principle is nothing more than a repackaging of the old tradition of humanitarian intervention—with all its imperial baggage, and its implications of powerful states having a mission to civilize less powerful ones. As the supporters of R2P are quick to point out, however, humanitarian intervention is a last resort within R2P, which calls for a wide spectrum of policy and diplomatic tools.¹⁸ One of the principle architects of R2P, Gareth Evans, explains that the language of R2P was intentionally constructed to invert the principle of humanitarian intervention, which had always entailed powerful states throwing their political and military weight around to intervene in the affairs of smaller and weaker states in the name of protecting a population from their government’s violence or neglect. The relationships in the humanitarian intervention paradigm are, by definition, unreciprocal since weaker states could not be expected to intervene in the affairs of the powerful. R2P, on the other hand, was intended from the very beginning to not assert the moral and legal right of the powerful to intervene, but rather to establish a normative framework of encouraging each state to accept a responsibility to protect the well-being of their own populations, and encouraging states to assist other states in fulfilling this responsibility.¹⁹ As such, the explicit goal of R2P was not to advance new knowledge or articulate and test international relations theory, nor was it intended to create new legal rules, but rather to assist political practice and promote a sense of moral obligation among political actors within states. In short, the R2P movement from its inception was intended to marry the practice of politics with the practice of atrocity prevention, while binding both powerful and weaker states to the same normative expectations to protect people who live within their borders.

R2P was not a new idea. The essential principle that rulers have an obligation to protect and provide for the well-being of those whom they rule can be traced through the oldest of recorded political and religious texts—from predynastic Egypt and Babylon, through the traditions set forth by Judaism and Hinduism and the later works of Christian and Islamic theologians and Buddhist teachers, and in the early stirrings of European liberalism with the writings of Thomas Hobbes. In the 1940s,

Raphaël Lemkin—the jurist who coined the word “genocide” and played a crucial role in creating the international legal and institutional machinery upon which the R2P movement is built—drew inspiration from his study of medieval Islamic law, ancient Pali texts, the Jewish law tradition, and enlightenment liberalism to famously claim that sovereignty “cannot be conceived as the right to kill millions of innocent people” but rather should imply “conducting an independent foreign and internal policy, building schools, construction of roads, in brief, all types of activities directed towards the welfare of people.”²⁰ René Cassin, a principle drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, similarly believed human rights were necessary for mitigating the dangers of absolute state sovereignty.²¹ Cassin maintained that the principle upon which the Declaration was built—that sovereigns had a duty to protect their populations as an expectation of sovereignty—could be found in the world’s great religious and natural law traditions, while transcending religious and ideological differences, “whether these principles were centered on the church, the mosque, or the *polis*, they were often phrased in terms of duties, which now presume rights.”²² Human rights, as a bulwark against the sovereign’s right to cause their populations misery, were not legitimized through their reference to the particularism of Abrahamic faiths, Cassin believed, but to universal principles found in traditions such as the ten essential human freedoms and virtues of a good life in Hinduism, the Buddhist concepts of selflessness and the middle path, and Confucian injunctions against the desires of rulers, who have duties to heaven to have compassion toward people.²³

Indeed, many have argued that R2P adds nothing to the human rights tradition, nor to the existing international law on war crimes—including crimes against humanity and the prevention of genocide, and the international law governing humanitarian intervention—but rather depends on civil society activists to convince political leaders to prevent atrocities in foreign states, or even to stop committing atrocities against their own populations.²⁴ If R2P was neither normatively nor legally novel, what was new about R2P was the concept’s deployment in world politics during a historical moment that was shaped by the wake of genocides in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, when a global human rights movement called upon powerful states to prevent mass violence and mass atrocities within smaller states and weaker states under slogans of creating reciprocal normative, political, and legal restraints upon state actions.

R2P AND US FOREIGN POLICY: RESISTING IMPERIAL COOPTION

The R2P movement faced significant challenges in the first decade of the twenty-first century. After gaining discursive ground in the 1990s largely through the UN, the movement in the early 2000s became associated with the efforts of the second Bush administration to force a UN resolution legalizing unilateral military action in Iraq on the grounds that the war was a humanitarian action to uphold international standards of human rights and democracy. The Bush administration’s evocation of protecting the human rights of Iraqis against Saddam Hussein won the support of a cadre of academics in the USA who considered themselves progressives and philosophical liberals, and fell in line with a binary vision of the world as divided between the realm of the modern and peaceful versus out-of-the-way corners dominated by premodern sensibilities and filled bad guys.²⁵ The result was an ideologically incoherent policy response within the US government. In an effort to sell the war, self-proclaimed “realists” in the US defense department publicly assailed those in the US government who dissented against the Iraq invasion as human rights “idealists,” and then sold the war effort to the American public as a form of humanitarian intervention and a human rights project. The US administration’s explicit lies before the UN General Assembly about the nuclear capacity of Iraq—and the subsequent revelations that the USA covered up Saddam Hussein’s appeals to prevent war by agreeing to allow UN inspectors and free elections—cast the entire project of US humanitarianism in invading Iraq as nothing more than a new incarnation of the old “standards of civilization” and “white man’s burden” discourses that had legitimized European imperialism in the previous century.²⁶

Political leaders in London and Washington consciously invoked the newly emerging principles of R2P. Tony Blair’s 2004 statement that “we surely have a duty and a right to prevent the threat materialising; and we surely have a responsibility to act when a nation’s people are subjected to a regime such as Saddam’s,” for example, confirmed what Richard Falk had observed a year earlier: that the US and British approach to humanitarian intervention was nothing more than a post hoc rationalization for uses of force that were difficult to reconcile with international law.²⁷ The R2P movement was thus drawn into the war rhetoric of Washington and London, and many countries at the UN became hostile toward unilateral humanitarian intervention outside of Security Council’s decision-making

process.²⁸ The sentiment that the Iraq War was a consequence of the humanitarian intervention movement grew stronger when it became evident that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and the Bush administration suddenly “retroactively elevated” the unearthing of mass graves, the ending of mass torture, and genocide prevention as the primary reasons why the USA went to war.²⁹

When preventing genocide was offered by the Bush and Blair governments as the reasons for war, it was hard to argue that US (and UK) exceptionalism in the field of human rights enforcement was little more than a cover for US (and UK) imperialism.³⁰ This political precedent set the stage for Russian leaders to cite a responsibility for protecting supposedly oppressed Russian minorities to justify Russian invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2013, as well as Obama’s decision to lead NATO into war in Libya in 2011. All three cases were publically sold on the same grounds, in reference to a responsibility to protect innocent populations from their governments. In these three cases the discourse of R2P was used to justify military actions between states that undermined the rule of international law in the name of upholding the spirit of the law, undermining peace in the name of human rights, and, paradoxically enough, creating conditions that allowed for the flourishing of mass atrocities, not their prevention.³¹

As R2P began to be seen as a façade for imperial humanitarianism in the mid-2000s, emphasis began to shift in the R2P movement to highlight the nonmilitant aspects of the principle.³² The defenders of R2P argued that the criteria outlined by the principle in 2005 mitigated against it being used to legitimize self-interested foreign invasions given R2Ps’ explicit mandate to prioritize assisting states to bolster their own commitments to humanitarian protections. The discourse of R2P emphasized that R2P envisioned a sequence of responsibilities that placed the sovereign state as the focal point of atrocity prevention in the international order. This spectrum of responses invoked by R2P ranged from military interventions to nonmilitary forms of coercion such as sanctions and threats of international criminal prosecutions, persuasion, and long-term commitments on behalf of the international community to help states fulfill their commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of citizens and, more hopefully, all people living in the state. In this context, some debated whether or not R2P established a duty to intervene in the domestic affairs of states that were unable or unwilling to care for their populations in the wake of natural disasters.³³

Critics responded to these disagreements by arguing that the shifting principle of R2P amounted to nothing more than repackaging the “right to intervene” into a new “right to prosecute,” or a soft-power incarnation of imperial humanitarianism.³⁴ The shifting emphasis from R2P as a doctrine of military intervention toward a doctrine for encouraging positive nonmilitary engagement, however, allowed the R2P movement to differentiate itself from the tradition of humanitarian intervention. This distance was brought about, in large part, through a shift in language, using the concept of a “responsibility” to displace a language of “intervention,” changing the terms of a confrontational global discourse where political leaders from the so-called global north championed a “right to intervene” in the affairs of small and weak states, whose leaders saw such a “right” as a new form of imperialism. There were, of course, some who argued that powerful states did have a duty to interfere in the affairs of small state or weaker states through prosecution and soft-power because R2P amounted to an international “duty to care,” where global webs of interdependence made it a matter of basic national security for the most powerful of states to create political frameworks to coordinate foreign interventions when other states conducted mass slaughter.³⁵ The argument essentially places political responsibility to protect in an amorphous “international community” that is, in many ways, tantamount to placing prevention in the hands of powerful states from the global north, without delineating a specific agent that is supposed to fulfill this responsibility.³⁶

These criticisms of R2P gained new salience when the discourse of R2P was picked up by Obama, who articulated an evolving “Obama doctrine” that selectively cited the victim-centered principles of R2P that emphasized the necessity of powerful states to embark on military projects of self-sacrifice to help the weak and underdeveloped defend themselves against barbarity and violence, accompanied by a social project to bring modernization. Consider, for example, not Obama’s justification for war in Libya but his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech where he repeated the word “security” seven times and the words “responsible” or “responsibility” five times, charting a doctrine for world peace where the USA had a “responsibility” to help underwrite “global security” “with the blood of our citizens and the strength of our arms” to “prevent the slaughter of civilians by their own government.”³⁷

While Obama’s references to R2P tend to emphasize military engagement and armed humanitarian intervention, the overall influence of R2P discourse within the US government has helped produce a political

climate where, in August 2011, Obama announced the establishment of Presidential Study 10 (PSD 10) to identify ways the US government could prevent and respond to atrocities around the world, and declared the prevention of genocides and mass atrocities as a core national security interest. When the study was complete in April 2012, the president accepted all 100 of its recommendations, and instructed the US National Security Council to establish an Atrocity Prevention Board (APB) consisting of representatives from departments and agencies at the Assistant Secretary level or above.³⁸ In 2012, Obama tasked the APB with identifying ways agencies and departments within the US government could contribute to formulating and executing a US foreign policy to prevent atrocities from occurring around the world, either through direct intervention during ongoing conflict or providing security and development in their broader meaning before mass violence occurs.³⁹

In many ways, the establishment of the APB is a positive development in humanitarian terms, containing the promise of shifting a responsibility to prevent mass atrocities from the Department of Defense to other agencies across the US government, hopefully orienting US policy towards a goal of promoting peace and preventing mass atrocities across a wide spectrum of offices and departments in the Washington bureaucracy. Through the APB, the Treasury Department, Justice Department, and State Department, for example, have been tasked with helping craft a foreign policy directed toward supporting atrocity prevention. The US Agency for International Development has produced a field manual instructing USAID officials on the practical steps that can be taken across USAID to align the agency's work with the foreign policy objectives of preventing mass atrocities.⁴⁰

Within the communities of R2P and atrocity prevention advocates, the establishment of the APB was seen as a major victory, indicative of a normative shift in the way governments viewed the balance between national interests and human rights brought about by tireless lobbying and activism.⁴¹ This followed the 2010 establishment of "R2P focal points" in the governments of Denmark, Costa Rica, and Ghana, through a partnership with the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. The focal points serve as governmental bodies that bring together senior officials mandated to enable national-level efforts to improve their governments' atrocity prevention and response.⁴² Although the R2P focal points are specifically international in scope and seek to connect officials within national governments, both the R2P focal points and the US's PSD 10 committee

and APB were staffed by senior-level officials well versed in the scholarship on conflict and atrocity prevention, including the academic theory of "upstreaming" prevention or seeking to prevent conflicts in their early stages.⁴³ For the veterans of government bureaucracy, however, the hurdle that stood in the way of their governments pursuing successful atrocity prevention strategies was not a lack of theoretical expertise in conflict and peace, but rather that the government bureaucracies that tend to focus on immediate crisis and conflict situations are usually ill equipped to upstream prevention and take on the task of trying to predict and prevent future atrocities.⁴⁴ This challenge was evident in the US Department of State, for example, as Finkel writes, because

Foreign Service Officers are still taught that their primary job is to observe, analyze, and report, but not to interfere. Yet prevention, at any point along the conflict continuum, calls for a much more hands on strategy that includes working with civil society within country, other like-minded states, NGOs, international organization and international financial institutions to articulate a broad range of possible approaches, programs, and policies tailored to the specific circumstances in order to avoid, or at least mitigate, the risk of atrocity.⁴⁵

THE CHALLENGE OF R2P: PEACE THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF PEACE

One of the goals of this chapter has been to highlight how the global discourse of R2P contains the potential to be manipulated by global actors seeking to justify wars under slogans of a responsibility to protect citizens from their own governments—from the US-led invasions of Iraq and Libya to the Russian invasions of Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria. A second was to warn against an overemphasis on R2P as a principle for strengthening commitments to protect populations under the umbrella of state security forces, in terms of the use of force both in international relations and within states. It must be remembered that it is the security structures of the state that are most often the ones responsible for committing atrocity crimes in the first place. Atrocities such as genocide are not sporadic events, but require a sustained coordination of violence across space and time. Even if the organizational structure of a genocidal regime is informal or decentralized, or relies on militias acting with the sanction of the state,

violence such as genocide requires an organizational structure capable of linking the goals of elites with local actors who are carrying out mass violence. Violence such as genocide also requires an ability to ensure that orders (either explicit or implied) to commit acts such as massacres, torture, or mass rape are followed, either by preparing those who will carry out orders to see their victims as dehumanized subjects or to exact enough discipline within the ranks of police forces and the military to ensure the compliance of security officers. In either case, it is hard to imagine any other form of social organization besides states or state-like groups being capable of carrying out such violence in the world today.

Furthermore, to assume that a state has a responsibility to protect its populations begs the question: protection from whom? Yet again, another cautionary tale can be drawn from the comparative study of genocide, which has yielded overwhelming evidence that the perpetrators of genocide frequently believe they are acting to protect the populations for whom the state has been created to serve and protect. One of the consistent patterns across cases of genocide—from the Holocaust, to Cambodia (1975–1979), Rwanda (1994), Darfur (2003 on), and the genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar (2015 on)—is that genocide entails a social process of manufacturing differences among people, of distinguishing between an “us” for whom the state is supposed to work and protect and a “them” who is an enemy, a stigmatized group whose isolation is initiated through institutional, legal, social, and political changes that transform the targeted victim group into dangerous or subhuman outsiders whose removal from society is seen as a way of protecting society.⁴⁶

These cautionary examples provide evidence to support a normative assertion implicit in the argument of this chapter so far: that the goal of R2P should not be to help create a world where populations are constantly protected by states but to create a world where people do not need protection. R2P should therefore not be orientated toward helping reform the practice of security—or, worse yet, create unreciprocal expectations of powerful states to “help” reform the actions of weaker states—but rather toward contributing to a world where state sovereignty entails state institutions and elites working to maintain the well-being of their populations. This also means that states have a responsibility to ensure that states do not work for the well-being and protection of a certain category of people over others—but all people.⁴⁷ Arguably, therefore, the full promise of R2P to play a transformative role in promoting the practice of peace and the

prevention of mass atrocities lies not within R2P’s relationship to international law or global security but rather in its role as a normative principle that reforms the practice of politics on a global level.

In the context of US foreign policy, this is especially important given the strides the US government has taken in mainstreaming the prevention of mass atrocities in US domestic and foreign policy after Obama’s 2011 presidential directives. When atrocity prevention and a responsibility to protect are invoked to justify wars that cause humanitarian suffering, government bodies such as the APB and doctrines, principles, and norms such as R2P run the danger of legitimizing, or even bringing about, their very opposites. Any successes of these institutions and movements, therefore, will be predicated upon the ability of their supporters and advocates to denounce the efforts of the leaders of powerful states to use the discourse of R2P to justify war, and thereby prevent the discourse of R2P from obscuring the political goals of war with a language of protecting human life, human rights, and human well-being.

NOTES

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3. Renaud Egreteau and Larry Jagan, *Soldiers and Diplomacy in Burma: Understanding The Foreign Relations Of The Burmese Praetorian State* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2013), 451. See also Emma Gilligan, “Redefining Humanitarian Intervention: The Historical Challenge of R2P,” *Journal of Human Rights* 12, no. 1 (2013): 21–39.
4. See James Pattison, “The Ethics of Humanitarian Intervention in Libya,” *Ethics and International Affairs*, 25, no. 3 (2011): 271–277.
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19. *Ibid.*, 4.
20. Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphaël Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2017), 37.
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23. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, 20–21.
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 39. James P. Finkel, *Atrocity Prevention At The Crossroads: Assessing The President’s Atrocity Prevention Board After Two Years* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Center for the Prevention of Genocide, 2014), <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20140904-finkel-atrocity-prevention-report.pdf>.
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