

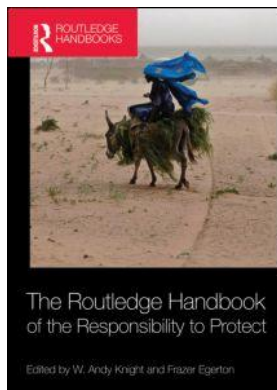
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.98.93

On: 21 Oct 2019

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

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The Responsibility to React

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203117637.ch3>

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Published online on: 19 Jun 2012

How to cite :- Frank Chalk, Roméo Dallaire, Kyle Matthews. 19 Jun 2012, *The Responsibility to React from: THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT* Routledge
Accessed on: 21 Oct 2019

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203117637.ch3>

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THE RESPONSIBILITY TO REACT

Frank Chalk, Roméo Dallaire and Kyle Matthews

In a new era where instant communications allows decision makers and the public to witness human suffering in real time, it is important to ask where is our collective and national will to intervene to end atrocities that shock the conscience of humankind. What can be done to correct the international community's failure to protect endangered populations from slaughter? In this chapter we will review the second pillar of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)—the Responsibility to React—and address the challenges to implementing the concept in a newly globalized world, where the spillover effects of mass atrocity crimes endanger international security and global economic prosperity.

A new world disorder: enter R2P

The lessons learned from the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and the mass atrocities committed in the Balkans throughout the 1990s created the momentum to avert the human suffering within Kosovo's borders. Although not approved by the UN Security Council, the NATO military intervention in Kosovo in 1999, which was later termed "illegal" but "legitimate," divided the community of nations.¹ Polarization led to a consensus among some nations that guidelines and norms for armed intervention needed to be established and that national sovereignty should no longer serve as a barrier to action when mass atrocities were unfolding.

Following the initiative of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Canadian government agreed to take the lead in establishing the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). Annan was haunted by the UN Security Council's decision to not reinforce and ultimately reduce the support and personnel of the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, which allowed the killing machine that engulfed the country in 1994 to destroy close to one million lives in a genocide while he was in charge of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Annan was equally troubled by the failure of the UN Security Council to authorize the use of force in Kosovo. He decided to seek a new way for the international community to mount humanitarian intervention in the post-Cold War era. After two years of consultations across the globe, ICISS released its final report in 2001, entitled "The Responsibility to Protect."

The ICISS report gave the international community the R2P principles, a concept of sovereignty that obligates national governments to protect their citizens. R2P makes it clear that

the national authorities governing the territory in which atrocities are unfolding have the right of first response. But the emerging norm stipulates that if a state refuses or is unable to protect its own people from gross human rights violations, then the international community has a responsibility to fill the void and protect them. In this new paradigm, indifference and inaction on the part of the international community, previously justified by the Westphalian notion of state sovereignty, can no longer be tolerated.

The ICISS report outlined three distinct pillars that make up R2P: the responsibility to prevent, the responsibility to react, and the responsibility to rebuild. The three tenets of R2P privilege the protection of innocent civilians facing organized mass violence. While R2P starts with the most ambitious goal, implementing the Responsibility to Prevent, the Responsibility to React is designed to guide states when immediate action is demanded by the facts on the ground. As the ICISS's report explains:

When preventive measures fail to resolve or contain the situation and when a state is unable or unwilling to redress the situation, then interventionary measures by other members of the broader community of states may be required. These coercive measures may include political, economic or judicial measures, and in extreme cases—but only extreme cases—they may also include military action. As a matter of first principles, in the case of reaction just as with prevention, less intrusive and coercive measures should always be considered before more coercive and intrusive ones are applied.²

The Responsibility to React provides a checklist of coercive and non-coercive policy options focusing first and foremost on the use of soft power (non-military) measures that can be ramped up to intensify pressure on the state that is unwilling or unable to protect its own citizens. The Responsibility to React clearly stipulates that any armed intervention must abide by the just war guidelines, identified as right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospects.³ Even when military measures are justified, a full-scale invasion is not encouraged. Rather, military options such as strengthening peacekeeping operations, establishing safe havens for civilians, enforcing arms embargoes, imposing no-fly zones and naval blockades, and jamming radio broadcasting of hate speech are some of the measures that ought to be pursued first.⁴

The UN conundrum

The UN was founded on the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of states. Many of its member states have graduated from colonial status and jealously guard their sovereignty. Thomas Weiss and Ramesh Thakur outline the challenge of making R2P a norm within the UN system: “outsiders wishing to protect or assist affected populations confront the hard reality of the nonintervention principle in Article 2(7) of the UN Charter.”⁵

Kofi Annan, speaking in his role as Secretary General of the UN, understood that governments cannot treat their sovereignty as a license to kill their own citizens. Speaking at the Ditchley Foundation in 1998, Annan explained:

The Charter, after all, was issued in the name of “the peoples”, not the governments, of the United Nations. Its aim is not only to preserve international peace—vitaly important though that is—but also “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the person”. The Charter protects the sovereignty of peoples.

It was never meant as a license for governments to trample on human rights and human dignity. Sovereignty implies responsibility, not just power.⁶

And yet, the UN Security Council and its five permanent members who have the power to veto Security Council resolutions are reluctant to halt the newest rounds of deadly violence against civilians that have marked the first decade of the twenty-first century. While it is true that the Security Council mandated preventive action for Cote d'Ivoire (S/Res/1967 (2011)) and Libya (S/Res/1973 (2011)) in 2011, Russia, China, South Africa and other countries swiftly withdrew their support, charging that they should have been given a greater say over the military operations conducted by the UN authorized forces, especially in Libya. While all are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the "Permanent Five" have failed to demonstrate leadership, with some using their veto power or the threat of a veto irresponsibly to block the interdiction of mass atrocity crimes once they are underway.⁷ One of the cases that led to the foundation of the Responsibility to Protect involved the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, who in 1998 openly threatened to use their veto power to block any resolution that sought to authorize the use of force to protect civilians in Kosovo.⁸ As Paul Heinbecker, Canada's former ambassador to the UN, recently proposed:

we should continue to press for a formal undertaking by all five veto-holders that they will never employ vetoes to prevent collective action on genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and will exercise the veto only in cases of supreme national interest.⁹

If they do not, they should not be surprised when other actors or organizations emerge to respond to unfolding human catastrophes, as NATO did in 1999 in the face of Russian and Chinese threats to use their veto power to block action, despite evidence of Serbian atrocities.

Buyer's remorse for a watered down R2P?

The heads of state and government attending the 2005 UN World Summit meeting in New York endorsed the Responsibility to Protect principles and committed themselves to doing more to prevent future genocides, ethnic cleansings, crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, one remaining problem is that the landmark agreement is not legally binding and therefore does not guarantee enforcement of the Responsibility to Protect. Concerns have also been expressed that compared to the ICISS report, the states attending the UN's 2005 World Summit whittled R2P down so much that they removed its nuances, leaving the field open for misuse, neglect or outright dismissal. Alex Bellamy has observed that in 2005 the attending states slid backwards by "emphasizing international assistance to states (pillar two), downplaying the role of armed intervention, and rejecting criteria to guide decision-making on the use of force and the prospect of intervention not authorized by the UN Security Council."¹⁰

In modern times no genocide or major crime against humanity, once underway, was curtailed solely through the application of soft-power measures. Crimes against humanity in East Pakistan in 1971 and the killing fields of Cambodia in 1978 were only stopped by intervening militarily. By downplaying the importance of military force and omitting the criteria for its use, the 2005 Summit states advanced a diluted version of R2P. Worrying in itself, one could also argue that by keeping the "carrot" but removing the "stick," the World Summit sent a clear

message to the global community that the tools of diplomacy will not be supported with parallel threats of force, thereby compromising the prevention pillar of R2P.

The last decade offers examples of numerous cases in which the international community has refined and tried to implement the Responsibility to React with limited success. The mass atrocity crimes in Darfur, the fighting in 2008 between the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers, trapping scores of civilians between the two sides, and the ethnic cleansing in Kyrgyzstan, all exemplify the failure to operationalize the Responsibility to React in a robust and rapid manner.

Over the past decade, when non-intervention was the norm, two serious problems in the international system became apparent. First, the member states of the UN never put credible military force on the table to reinforce soft-power measures and deter predatory violence. The only country with enough military might and logistical capacity to do the job alone or lead a coalition of the willing, the US, remained bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq, devoid of the extra resources and the will needed. Second, UN member states denied the UN sufficient military capacity to intimidate potential *genocidaires* with a UN Multinational Standing High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) capable of rapidly deploying to deal with complex emergencies in a timely and effective manner. In 1995, following the terrible events of the Rwandan genocide, a group of governments (Austria, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Sweden) had agreed to create SHIRBRIG.¹¹ However, in 2008, a number of countries opted for defence budget and troop cuts; they abandoned SHIRBRIG and it was dissolved in 2009, weakening the UN's peacekeeping capacity.¹² With its disappearance, the hollowing out of the UN's already limited capacity to protect civilians in troubled corners of the world deepened.

The pendulum swings away from humanitarian intervention

While the idea of humanitarian intervention emerged victorious at the end of the 1990s, the pendulum has unfortunately swung in the opposite direction over the past decade. The Islamic terrorists' attack on New York City and Washington also impacted negatively on the implementation of R2P. Following the NATO intervention in Afghanistan of 2001 and the US-led coalition of the willing's invasion of Iraq in 2003, Western democracies, spearheaded by the US, responded to 9/11 by concentrating their attention and national power on protecting their own citizens from external threats. The protection of foreign civilians from murderous thugs and despotic regimes in far-away lands simply fell off the Western world's radar screen, as many governments recalibrated their policies to enlist in the "Global War on Terror" and "homeland security." Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, has commented: "The people of Darfur, with more than two million displaced and tens of thousands dead, can in this sense be said to be indirect victims of the Iraq war."¹³ Michael Ignatieff pointedly added to Roth's observation, commenting that "[t]he demand for humanitarian intervention is high, but the supply has dried up."¹⁴

Some of the governments participating in the Iraq intervention, most notably the American and the British, have also done a disservice to the aspiring R2P norm by inaccurately justifying their participation as based on humanitarian considerations. In a speech in the British House of Commons on the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Prime Minister Tony Blair argued that the United Kingdom needed to take action against Saddam Hussein's regime primarily due to the threat it posed to the world through its weapons of mass destruction and links to international terrorist networks. But Blair also argued that the planned intervention was humanitarian in nature given that "[t]he brutality of the repression – the death and torture camps, the barbaric prisons

for political opponents, the routine beatings for anyone or their families suspected of disloyalty are well documented.”¹⁵ Speeches such as these have aroused the already mounting suspicion of many governments in the Global South and sown confusion over R2P. It has provided political ammunition to those countries already seeking to champion the right of non-interference in their domestic affairs, regardless of the scale and nature of the crimes being planned or committed within their borders.

While critics of R2P point to the US-led intervention in Iraq as a neo-imperialist venture justified hypocritically on humanitarian and security grounds, defenders of R2P seek to make clear that the intervention completely failed to meet R2P’s stringent criteria for military action. Kenneth Roth forcefully argues that “the invasion of Iraq fails the test for a humanitarian intervention. Most important, the killing in Iraq at the time [of the intervention] was not of the dire and exceptional nature that would justify military action.”¹⁶ Roth explains: “Indeed, there were times in the past when the killing was so intense that humanitarian intervention could have been justified—for example, during the 1988 *Anfal* genocide, in which the Iraqi government slaughtered some 100,000 Kurds. However, by the time of the March 2003 invasion, the government’s killing had ebbed.”¹⁷ Nor were R2P’s precautionary principles satisfied, especially the stricture that military action only be used as a last resort, and that the intervention must primarily be motivated by humanitarian concerns.

Abusing and blocking the Responsibility to React

The United States and Britain were not the only governments to have used humanitarian language to justify military intervention in recent memory. The Russian Federation intervened militarily in the Republic of Georgia in August 2008, referring to R2P to justify its unilateral action.¹⁸ While claiming it was acting to protect its citizens in Georgia’s separatist enclave of South Ossetia, Moscow’s rapid deployment of military personnel outside of its borders did not comply with a key tenet of the Responsibility to React, namely that force only be used as a “last resort.”¹⁹ As the R2P report states clearly: “Every diplomatic and non-military avenue for the prevention or peaceful resolution of the humanitarian crisis must have been explored ... The responsibility to react—with military coercion—can only be justified when the responsibility to prevent has been fully discharged.”²⁰

Soon after intervening, Moscow recognized the independence of South Ossetia, as well as that of Georgia’s other secessionist region, Abkhazia. These actions contradicted the “Right Intention” underlined in the Responsibility to React, which states: “Any use of military force that aims from the outset, for example, for the alteration of borders or the advancement of a particular combatant group’s claim to self-determination, cannot be justified.”²¹

Some countries provide rhetorical support to R2P, but oppose it in practice for a variety of economic, political and ideological reasons. In discussing how to translate R2P into reality, Samantha Power stresses that the “Sovereignty Bloc” must be neutralized.²² China and Russia continue to promote sovereignty as an absolute value that trumps the principle that civilians must not be abandoned to the predatory mass violence of their governments. Beijing and Moscow fear that restive national minorities will focus unwanted international attention on their volatile domestic affairs. Perhaps most sobering of all is Michael Ignatieff’s observation that “[t]he combined resurgence of the Russians and Chinese makes it unlikely that the Security Council will authorize humanitarian interventions again, at least in regions vital to their interests.”²³

While some opponents of R2P paint the emerging norm as an “imperial” and “neo-colonial project” of the West, it is hard to accept these claims seriously when countries such as South Africa, Rwanda and Botswana advocate it so strongly within their regions. Bellamy believes that

Rwanda and South Africa persuaded the skeptics in the Group of 77 that R2P was in their national interest. He quotes South African representatives contending: “we’re not likely to respond to threats of genocide in London, Rome or San Francisco ... this is all about us, in our countries, on our continent’.”²⁴

Those who label the emerging R2P norm as a “neo-colonial project” often speak for autocratic or predatory regimes, not on behalf of the downtrodden. However, there are four distinct facts that these critics ignore; first, R2P was championed by Canada, a Western democracy with no colonial baggage in the Global South; second, it was initiated by an African UN Secretary General; third, one of the ICISS’s co-chairs was Algerian; and finally, the principle that sovereignty entails responsibility was first argued by a Sudanese diplomat, Dr Francis Deng, who in 2007 became the UN Secretary General’s Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Interestingly, a 2005 public opinion study contradicts the view that the R2P principles are opposed by the ordinary African citizen. When asked whether the UN Security Council “should or should not have the right to authorize the use of military force to prevent severe human rights violations such as genocide,” 65 percent of the Africans polled agreed with the statement and just 19 percent disagreed. Support for R2P was strongest among those polled in Ghana (80 percent), Kenya (75 percent), Nigeria (66 percent), Tanzania (66 percent), Zimbabwe (65 percent), and Cameroon (64 percent), while less than half of South Africans (47 percent) polled supported the use of force to enforce the new norm. The attitude study concludes that aside from Angola, where 37 percent of respondents opposed the idea of humanitarian intervention, an average of 80 percent of the citizens of all other African countries supported it.²⁵ Such polling conclusively demonstrates that the average African views R2P as a universal, not a Western-centric norm.

Building infrastructure and momentum for action

Several research, educational and professional groups have come to the realization that if the R2P principles are ever to be implemented on the international scene, it is crucial to generate discussion and awareness among domestic politicians, the media, and civil society. In Canada, the Will to Intervene Project, based at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University, researches best practices to mobilize national governments to implement R2P principles. The project’s first study, published in 2009, focused on building capacity for R2P in the US and Canada, advocating a whole-of-government approach aimed at marshalling and focusing soft and hard national power in a more efficient manner.²⁶

Similarly, in the United States, the US Institute of Peace, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and the American Academy of Diplomacy created the Genocide Prevention Task Force, co-chaired by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former US Secretary of Defense William Cohen. In December 2008 the Task Force released a detailed report featuring strategic recommendations to the executive and legislative branches of the US government explaining ways they could improve their capacity to prevent and react to mass atrocities.²⁷ The Obama administration has already followed through on several of the Task Force’s recommendations, creating a designated focal point within the National Security Council tasked with preventing and responding to mass atrocities, genocide and war crimes.²⁸

In addition to proactive civil society groups and academic research centres advancing R2P principles, the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) has begun to review its role as a responder to R2P situations. In 2010, NATO’s Group of Experts, led by former US Secretary

of State Madeleine Albright, released a report advocating a new strategic concept for the alliance. The report states:

Because of its visibility and power, NATO may well be called upon to respond to challenges that do not directly affect its security but that still matter to its citizens and that will contribute to the Alliance's international standing. These challenges could include the humanitarian consequences of a failed state, the devastation caused by a natural disaster, or the dangers posed by genocide or other massive violations of human rights.²⁹

Furthermore, the Group of Experts recommended to NATO that

[c]oordination between the UN and NATO can prove crucial in the event of genocide, other massive violations of human rights, or humanitarian emergency. The Strategic Concept should make clear that NATO is willing to consider requests from the UN to take appropriate action in such circumstances (possibly in support of other regional organizations), provided the North Atlantic Council agrees to the mission and resources are available to carry it out.³⁰

R2P is also a national responsibility

These developments take us back to the central challenge of implementing the Responsibility to React, which is: “who enforces it and how?” Technically, enforcers must be authorized by the UN Security Council, but if all soft-power measures fail and boots on the ground remain the only option left, who will claim authority to act? Will the next round of endangered civilians have no choice but to wait helplessly as the UN Security Council dithers and its members, individually or collectively, neglect their Responsibility to React? Will a “coalition of the civilized” emerge to operationalize the Responsibility to React in a timely fashion? R2P was a response to a particular moment in time, the 1990s, and the norm is not being discussed at the domestic political level in the countries that have the capacity to react. The time has come to examine what national governments should do when they move from rhetoric to action.

Before the UN and other multilateral bodies can implement the Responsibility to React, states the world over must raise their national domestic capacities to contribute to this task. Much work needs to be done, including:

- the conceptual work in each country of thinking through how the national interest is advanced by implementing the Responsibility to React and explaining these reasons to the public;
- the hard work of crafting doctrines and policies to guide government departments of development, foreign affairs and defense implementing the Responsibility to React; and
- the practical work of identifying pragmatic next steps needed to ensure success.

The national interest in implementing the Responsibility to React

For years, human rights groups have advocated intervention to save lives endangered by mass atrocity crimes by advancing humanitarian arguments. Intervention to protect innocent civilians is widely acknowledged to be the right thing to do, morally and ethically. Ernie Regehr, Senior Policy Advisor to Project Ploughshares, succinctly summarizes the essential arguments when he writes in reference to Canada but with relevance far beyond: “the Canadian interest is ... shaped by a core value that commits us to coming to the aid of the world's most vulnerable—partly

because chronic human suffering undermines confidence in and respect for a rules-based order and thus undermines our vital security interests, but also because we simply recognize ourselves as constituents of a common humanity.”³¹

Had Regehr’s tapestry, weaving together humanitarian values with broad security interests, sufficed, the governments of the US and Canada would have stopped the Rwandan genocide dead in its tracks. But they did not. In *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene: Leadership to Prevent Mass Atrocities*, we argue that a combination of politics, history, and unawareness of any national interest at stake in Rwanda decisively trumped empathy for a distant part of humanity. Like the public’s assumption that 25 percent of eligible Americans give their blood to the Red Cross without compensation, when the figure is actually 2.5 percent, expecting voters and political leaders to act primarily from humanitarian motives gives both groups credit for being far more altruistic and empathetic than they actually are.³²

Halting mass atrocities *is* in the national interest of all countries, but until very recently human rights advocates failed to make the national interest case powerfully to their nation’s political leaders. Yet the implementation of the Responsibility to React depends on driving that point home in each country; engaging with the national interest debate is an essential prelude to securing domestic support for the international cooperation necessary to halt mass atrocities. To mount an effective argument, we must alert political leaders around the world to the four threats to their national interests that will overtake them and their citizens if they fail to avert or stop mass atrocities:

- first, mass atrocities raise the incidence of terrorism, piracy and other forms of lawlessness on the land and sea;
- second, mass atrocities facilitate the spread of warlordism, which obstructs access to vital raw materials at economically viable prices;
- third, mass atrocities trigger forced migrations that accelerate the incidence and spread of lethal infectious diseases whose worldwide diffusion can become a reality due to the enormous increase in international air travel today;
- fourth, mass atrocities destabilize countries, which in turn fuels transnational crime as has happened in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia.³³

Reinforcing these points, Maurice Baril, the military advisor to Kofi Annan when he headed the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, characterizes contemporary threats to national security as “no longer exclusively measured in geographic borders that are physical.”³⁴ “Maintaining secure borders,” he argues, “requires analyses that assess the impact of economic variables, pandemics such as H1N1 and HIV/AIDS, people movement due to climate changes, and the nature of intra-state conflicts.” In Baril’s view, today’s permeable borders ensure that “money, disease, migration, ideas, and technology impact on how foreign and defence policy is and will be determined.”³⁵

Developing guidelines for departments of international development, foreign affairs and defence implementing the Responsibility to React

Blending hard power with soft power to implement the Responsibility to React

As the Responsibility to React stipulates, soft-power measures should be exhausted before hard power is contemplated. Baril defines soft power as “the strategic use of diplomacy, persuasion,

capacity building, and the projection of power and influence in ways that are cost-effective and have political and social legitimacy.”³⁶ Yet soft power is no panacea, especially when it is deployed without the backing of credible military force. Quiet diplomacy and negotiations brought about the failed Arusha Accords, designed to bring the Rwandan civil war to an end and propel a shared Hutu/Tutsi government to power in 1994. When spoilers sabotaged the agreements, one of the authors, LGen Roméo Dallaire, then commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda, found himself rendered virtually powerless because the permanent members of the UN Security Council refused his mission with essential reinforcements and a mandate to halt escalating ethnic violence directed against innocent civilians. The members of the Security Council buried their heads in the sand and abandoned the victims to their fate. They could have initiated a wide range of actions including suspension of visas, expulsion of the Ambassador of Rwanda from the Security Council, and removing hate radio station RTLM from the airwaves, but sovereignty was advanced as the argument for doing nothing. Their refusal to recognize a responsibility to react brought about a perfect demonstration of the fact that soft power rarely succeeds if it is not paired with the credible threat of hard power.

Before any country can act upon the Responsibility to React, it must develop and hone policies for the departments of its own government responsible for international development, foreign affairs and defense. In addition, these departments must master the art of working together effectively at home and in the field, moving beyond an ad hoc approach to cooperation. The broad canvas of what governments must do is now clear. It is the ultimate irony that many of these policies emerge from experience gained during the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, two missions that definitely did *not* meet the R2P criteria. Despite this fact, vital lessons should be wrung from the hard-earned experiences of the US and its allies in Iraq and the US, Canada and other countries in Afghanistan. Let us turn now to some of the relevant wisdom acquired in these cases.

No smart power without effective interagency coordination

Countries implementing the Responsibility to React must focus on civilian protection by aiding the peoples in question to create safe and secure environments, the rule of law, stable governance and social well-being. The art of reacting to mass atrocities lies in using coercive “smart power” to head off the need for an overt military response. Employing smart power, Maurice Baril argues, “underscores the necessity of a strong military,” but acknowledges that “security and development cannot be independent of each other.”³⁷ He views the twinning of development and security, as well as a new emphasis on civil–military cooperation, as essential prerequisites to success. “We cannot shoot our way to peace,” he reminds us, “the civil–military relationship is critical.”³⁸

Canada’s experiences in Afghanistan teach us that much work remains to be done. The Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) came into existence, Baril points out, “to fill the need for a substantive civilian corps ... [which] can rapidly respond to peace building requirements.”³⁹ But as a study of the Canadian PRT in Kandahar by researchers at Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School suggests, other governments have much to learn from the problems faced by the Canadians. Before Afghanistan, Canadian governmental agencies were “not often ... called upon to work together,”⁴⁰ and the Canadian PRT in Kandahar suffered from “lack of coherent vision about what the PRT was meant to accomplish.”⁴¹ Its problems included an imbalance “between human intelligence, security and development,” “the lack of NGO support,” inadequate exchanges of intelligence and other information between departments, poor “relationships with local actors, a lack of training for the mission, a lack of availability of governmental personnel at CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] and

DFAIT [Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade], a lack of metrics to measure success and the overwhelming importance of individual personalities.”⁴² What is badly needed now, the Princeton team concluded, is “interagency coordination at all levels” and “clear objectives so ... [government departments] do not infringe upon the work of other departments,” as well as “cooperation and information sharing among the departments from the bottom to the top of government.”⁴³ To these points we add our own recommendation urging the development of truly coordinated solutions fully integrating diplomatic, development and military efforts crafted by a new generation of multidisciplinary leaders.

Civilian protection is the key to success

The US experience in Afghanistan leads to even more damning observations of deficiencies in concepts and operations than those detected in Canadian operations. In August 2009, before he resigned from his position as Commander of the US Armed Forces and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, General Stanley A. McChrystal analyzed and proposed solutions to many of the problems he perceived in a confidential memorandum addressed to US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. His report vividly illustrates the yawning gaps in understanding that undermine the capacity of states to carry out foreign civilian protection operations to implement the Responsibility to React, and for that reason we quote extensively from his findings and recommendations.

First on McChrystal’s list of problems is the need to change the operational culture of missions like ISAF. ISAF was a conventional force, he noted, “poorly configured” for counterinsurgency and “inexperienced in local languages and culture.”⁴⁴ Physically and psychologically distanced from the people they were meant to protect, the ISAF troops thought little of causing unnecessary civilian casualties. But ISAF faced the risk of nothing less than “strategic defeat by pursuing tactical wins that cause civilian casualties or unnecessary collateral damage,” McChrystal observed. “The insurgents cannot defeat us militarily,” he concluded, “but we can defeat ourselves.” “Change the operational culture to connect with the people,” he recommended, and “focus on operations that bring stability, while shielding them from insurgent violence, corruption, and coercion.” Only through “face-to-face relationships” and meeting “the needs of the people at the community level” could ISAF and Afghan forces prevail, he insisted.⁴⁵

Second, McChrystal emphasized, ISAF must improve its understanding of the Afghan people. This is a key lesson for the international community when it attempts to halt future genocides. ISAF soldiers and civilian personnel should view themselves, he suggested, as “guests of the Afghan people and their government, not an occupying army.”⁴⁶ It is crucial that key personnel “receive training in local languages,” that tour lengths be lengthened to “build continuity and ownership of success,” and that all foreign personnel “show respect for local cultures and customs and demonstrate intellectual curiosity about the people of Afghanistan.”⁴⁷ Nurturing and sustaining a group of ISAF soldiers, civilians and outside specialists “with deep knowledge of Afghanistan” is a prerequisite for success, according to McChrystal, and by analogy, we would add, such knowledge and respect for local cultures should be a pillar of all future interventions designed to prevent and interrupt mass atrocities.⁴⁸

Third, and based upon the foundation of improved understanding resulting from connecting with and improving knowledge of the host population, McChrystal advocated building personal relationships with the Afghan population and projecting confidence. ISAF, he contended, “must spend as much time as possible with the people and as little time as possible in armored vehicles or behind the walls of forward operating bases.” “When ISAF forces travel through even the most secure areas of Afghanistan firmly ensconced in armored vehicles with body

armor and turrets manned, they convey a sense of high risk and fear to the population,” he noted. “ISAF cannot expect unarmed Afghans to feel secure before heavily armed ISAF forces do. ISAF cannot succeed if it is unwilling to share risk, at least equally, with the people.”⁴⁹

Fourth, McChrystal highlighted the need for a new ISAF communications strategy focusing on the vulnerabilities of the insurgents, including “their causing of the majority of civilian casualties, attacks on education, development projects, and government institutions, and flagrant contravention of the principles of the Koran.” That McChrystal realized none of this could happen without “increased cultural expertise” and better knowledge of traditional communications methods in Afghanistan is evident from his key recommendations for future action—consulting with authoritative Afghan religious leaders, teachers and tribal elders to “tap into the wider cultural pulse of Afghanistan,” and using “word of mouth and modern technology” to disseminate indigenous narratives.⁵⁰

Doctrine, policies and training for halting mass atrocities

Genocide prevention and peace-support missions are not simply one point on the broad spectrum of conventional war-fighting operations for which most military units are trained. Analysts drew that lesson after observing Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s and it is just as true today. For this reason, senior commanders in a number of countries, including the United States, are directing military planners to specially prepare for preventing “human suffering due to mass atrocities.”⁵¹ The Harvard Kennedy School of Government worked for two and a half years to help fill the gap in American planning, releasing in 2010 *Mass Atrocities Response Operations: A Military Planning Handbook*, co-authored with the US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI). Humanitarian and relief operations normally take place in a non-violent environment, they point out, while MARO may need to combine non-combatant evacuation operations, distribution of food and medicine, and high-intensity conventional fighting. “What is more,” they continue, “the enemy is often behaving differently during a MARO than in conventional warfare; instead of seeking first to defeat opposing forces, the enemy is focused on slaughtering defenceless civilians.” Traditional non-combatant evacuation operations do not usually involve “[d]efeating combatants, protecting civilians from continuing attacks, or creating stable conditions ... ,” but MARO do. And unlike a counterinsurgency operation in which both sides vie for the loyalty of civilians, and some civilians are allied with one side or the other, in its overview of the study the MARO team points out that “[i]n a MARO, protection of civilians victimized by perpetrators is the core objective of the mission.”⁵²

Next steps: a summary of guidelines and actions needed to ensure success implementing the Responsibility to React

From these important observations, several guidelines for government departments emerge:

- understand and operationalize the conclusion that it is in the national interest of all countries to implement the Responsibility to React;
- pair soft power with the credible threat of hard power;
- train troops for mass atrocity response operations chiefly aimed at protecting civilians;
- expand budgets allocated to support training in foreign languages and cultures to improve capacity to prevent violent conflict and interdict mass atrocities;
- focus Responsibility to React missions on aiding host governments to create safe and secure environments, the rule of law, stable governance and social well-being;

- embrace Maurice Baril's aphorism that "We cannot shoot our way to peace,"⁵³ the civil–military relationship is critical and developing civilian capacity is imperative;
- make inter-departmental cooperation between national government departments responsible for defense, development and diplomacy second nature through steadily coordinating their work at home and in the field, training a new generation of multidisciplinary leaders to integrate across departmental boundaries their operations to aid fragile and failing states;
- support an operational culture that connects with the people at the local level and focuses on operations that bring stability;
- employ strategies and tactics that avoid unnecessary casualties among civilians.

While there remains strong opposition to R2P, people will gradually learn that in addition to being a moral imperative the Responsibility to React serves their national interests. In a globalized world it is next to impossible to seal our national borders from the devastation that mass atrocities produce. Their spill-over effects include uncontrolled migration, the emergence and spread of deadly diseases, and failed states that can become safe havens for pirates, drug smugglers and terrorists.⁵⁴ Gareth Evans concludes that "states that will not or cannot stop internal atrocity crimes are the kind of states that cannot or will not stop terrorism, weapons proliferation, drug and people trafficking, the spread of health pandemics, and other global risks."⁵⁵ It is increasingly the case that the lives we save when we halt mass atrocities may very well be our own.

Notes

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