

Human security

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, students will learn about human security and the status of this concept in policy and research today. The popularization of human security through the UN Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report promised a revolutionary move in security studies, reorienting the focus to individuals rather than states. The hope that this concept would significantly change the course of security studies thinking did not come to fruition, at least not as some had hoped. States and international institutions adopted the concept but often for their own purposes, losing sight of individual, contextualized experiences of insecurity that were often brought about by these same states and institutions. Some critics of human security saw this development as the demise of an ineffective, non-state-based security concept. However, other critics argue that it still has potential, and they continue to provide empirical evidence that recognizes the work non-state actors do in providing security and to influence the policy of states and international institutions. As such, the human security concept continues to be relevant to state and non-state actors alike.

Introduction

The concept of human security came into popular use through its introduction in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 1994 Human Development Report (UNDP 1994). This report marked a milestone in the field of security studies and in security policy, explicitly contesting the dominant, realist approach to security promoted during the Cold War (see Chapter 1). It also had a substantial impact on debates around the theory and practice of security. Human security made explicit the possibility, not just in academic circles but also in policy, of thinking about security beyond the confines of the state. By virtue of distinguishing 'human' security from 'security', the fears, needs and priorities of ordinary people were brought to the forefront, highlighting that the security (and interests) of states did not necessarily coincide with the security (and interests) of people.

Almost 25 years after the UNDP report, human security continues to have relevance and application both in policy and academic worlds. It provides a framework for discussions about humanitarian intervention and the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) (ICISS 2001; Orford 2013) and it is increasingly engaged by scholars and practitioners in diverse disciplines from health and medicine to criminology, to gender and feminist studies, as well as in security studies and international relations (Wibben 2008; Anand 2012; Roses Periago 2012; Newman 2016). The concept has also gained attention beyond the context of armed conflicts, with analysts using it to make sense of the intersections between challenges of identity, health, food and environmental security issues, for example (Cassotta et al. 2016).

Since its introduction, however, human security has also been subjected to sustained critique. Some saw this as inevitable given the absence of a clear theoretical foundation or definition (Breslin and Christou 2015). Other critics suggested that as a concept it is 'everything and nothing', constituting the IR equivalent of 'motherhood and apple pie' (Paris 2001; Hoogensen and Rottem 2004). Roland Paris (2001) noted that it was unclear whether advocates of human security saw it operating as a new security paradigm for theorists or a progressive policy agenda for practitioners. On the former, some critics argued that, as a conceptual framework, human security fails to provide a resource for either understanding global security politics or the processes through which political communities give meaning to security (McDonald 2002). On the latter, human security has been accused of failing to alter the security considerations and practices of key actors, namely states (Booth 2007: 322–4) or conversely of being co-opted to serve as a tool of neo-liberal power-brokers that perpetuates Western-dominant interests, particularly through the use of military intervention (Chandler 2012).

The development of the concept helps to explain its relative resilience. By the early 1990s, in an atmosphere of international cooperation after the Cold War, it was clear that the narrow definition of security as a militarized and elite notion reserved for the 'state', bound within an anarchic international system regulated by superpowers, was insufficient for making sense of key international political concerns (Walt 1991; Hough 2008). Since the late 1970s, some analysts have noted how security referred to issues that went well beyond the use of military power to protect the state (e.g. Ullman 1983; Rothschild 1995). Early advocates of human security,

including the UNDP, were arguably attempting to redefine security precisely because it was considered ‘high politics’, commanding both political attention and funding (Hough 2008). Thus including poverty and inequality as fundamental threats to (human) security, as did the UNDP, would help ensure attention and funding for prioritizing these issues, all which had been ignored during the Cold War.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. It begins by summarizing how the UNDP’s 1994 report approached human security through the key components of ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’. The second section then situates both the UNDP approach and broader debates about human security within the history of security studies more generally. The third section analyses the role of the state in promoting and providing human security, and the potential contradictions that arise from this approach. The final section builds on this discussion by examining how critical security scholarship, in particular gender and feminist security studies, brings human security closer to its original revolutionary aspirations.

Human security

The concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people. . . Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives. . . In the final analysis, human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity.

(UNDP 1994: 22)

The 1994 UNDP report on human security was considered revolutionary in some respects. Within this framework, the policy community drafting the report pushed against the narrow definitions that dominated IR during the Cold War to generate ‘another profound transition in thinking – from nuclear security to human security’ (UNDP 1994: 22). Indeed, human security has contributed to ‘deepening’ (from the state down to the individual) and ‘widening’ (from state and military security to economic, environmental etc.) the concept of security from the Cold War focus on military defence of the state to include a much broader and comprehensive set of concerns (Buzan and Hansen 2009).

The UNDP report argued that the everyday security of people around the world was usually focused on worries and fears of unemployment, disease, localized discrimination and violence, and crime. It also had become increasingly clear that the state was by no means the sole security provider, particularly in weak or failed states where civilians had to rely on other sources, including themselves, to establish some semblance of security to manage their day-to-day existence. The UNDP report acknowledged the role of more ‘traditional’ security threats such as large-scale physical violence, understood as ‘ethnic and other conflicts’, and ‘military spending’ (UNDP 1994: 38). However, as is clear in the report, these indicators can no longer

be seen as isolated or independent indicators that define security when taking individuals into account. Human insecurity is equally severe under conditions of food insecurity, job or income insecurity, human rights violations and inequality (political insecurity), or gross environmental degradation.

Thus at its core, human security is concerned with how people experience security and insecurity. The 1994 UNDP report highlighted four essential characteristics of human security (1994: 22–3). First, human security is universal, meaning that it applies to all human beings, rich or poor, Global South or Global North. As will be noted, however, human security was heavily oriented towards the concerns of people of the Global South and the sources of their insecurity, a focus arguably reflective of the interests of the UNDP in addressing global poverty and inequality. Second, human security is interdependent, meaning that human insecurities derive from both the local environment as well as across international borders and can have global implications. The third characteristic of human security, the imperative of prevention, argues for the necessity to implement measures such as primary health care for example, so that insecurities are less likely to arise. The fourth characteristic of human security is that it is ‘people-centred’, which, given the increased dominance of the state-based security concept during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, made human security quite revolutionary (UNDP 1994; Breslin and Christou 2015).

The definition of human security has often been referred to as ‘freedom from fear and freedom from want’ (Winslow and Eriksen 2004). This phrase was popularized by US President Roosevelt in his 1941 State of the Union address. The UNDP report reinvented it as encompassing the ‘two major components of human security’ (1994: 24). This characterization has been criticized for being either too vague or too all-encompassing – *everything* in life becomes a potential human security issue – or a ‘shopping list’ of a wide range of otherwise disconnected issues (Krause 2004). The 1994 UNDP report further defined seven main categories of threats against human security: political, personal, food, health, environment, economic and community security (see Box 15.1).

The categories identified in Box 15.1 provide more narrow foci within which one can identify human insecurity, but they are also interconnected. Poverty, youth unemployment, general population unemployment, and temporary or contract work all fall under economic security issues; however, they simultaneously closely impact health security, including access to general health care, maternal health care services, clean water and food sources and affordable medicines. Environmental security focuses on clean water resources, access to energy and food resources (and their sustainability and manageability), air pollution and natural disasters, all of which affect economic, food and health security.

The political and community security categories serve to recognize that the ways in which we organize and create order in society can have an impact on individual security. Community security focuses on the role of ethnicity and cultural traditions that can impact individuals positively (providing a sense of identity and belonging to a community) or negatively (where persecution and discrimination on the basis of gender, sexuality, race, or religion, for example, continues). Political security, meanwhile, acknowledges the role of the state as a potential threat to human security. The absence or violation of human rights owing to oppressive or dictatorial regimes,



Box 15.1 The UN Development Programme's categories of human security

Source: UNDP 1994: 25–33

Economic security: economic security is defined as an assured income, preferably through paid work, but also includes (in the last resort) public safety net measures ensuring income to those who are unable to obtain an income.

Food security: food security concerns adequate access to food, both physically and economically. Some (see Box 15.2) note that food security is also about getting access to those foods that are important to culture, health, and well-being.

Health security: health security entails access to health care and protection against diseases: infectious and parasitic diseases linked to malnutrition and environmental degradation (including pollution), and also those diseases linked to lifestyles (such as circulatory diseases or cancer).

Environmental security: human well-being is intricately linked to the condition of the environment. Deforestation, overgrazing and poor conservation methods lead to environmental degradation such as desertification where the land can no longer support communities. Climate change has emerged as a central human security concern in recent years.

Personal security: personal security addresses threats from physical violence including threats from the state (including torture), from other states (war) and from other groups of people (ethnic tension), as well as violence stemming from crime, gendered violence or threats against women, threats against children and threats against oneself (suicide).

Community security: community security addresses the security individuals get within a group, establishing a sense of belonging and identity rooted in shared values.

Political security: political security affords individuals the freedom to be governed in a way that respects basic human rights, protected by democratic institutions in which individuals are given a voice. Control over information and media, physical repression by militaries, and threat of prison or detainment (or worse) during political protests are all examples of political insecurity.

restrictions on ideas and/or information-sharing, and lack of democratic political processes are identified as signs of political insecurity, which in their worst form can lead to violence against individuals by the state. This example serves as a reminder of the rationale for human security: while states exist to provide for the security of their populations under the social contract, many are not only failing to perform this role but represent a source of threat to the very people they claim to protect.

The final category of human security is personal security. As the UNDP report stated, ‘perhaps no other aspect of human security is so vital for people as their security from physical violence’ (1994: 30). Threats to personal security range from those emanating from the state – which overlap with the insecurities identified in the political category – to threats from groups of people or other forms of social organization such as white supremacist or radical religious groups, which overlap with community security. But personal security is also threatened by criminal elements, domestic violence and aggression against oneself, such as suicide. State and international developments in human security among states and internationally have focused on narrow definitions of human security that prioritize the category of personal security. Canada, for example, which for a time championed the human security concept, chose to focus on physical threats as the core indicator of threats to human security. This approach reflected a narrowing of human security to just ‘freedom from fear’, focusing on crisis prevention or conflict management (Bosold and Werthes 2005). It left aside the dimensions of the human security concept that emphasized immediate but non-violent threats to people.

In contrast to the focus on direct, physical violence in the dimensions outlined above, the categories of food, health, economic and environmental security might be said to align with ‘freedom from want’. Harms to individuals come through more indirect means, either through starvation, poverty, natural disaster or illness. Again, strict dividing lines are difficult: personal security, for example, enters the realm of health security regarding family violence and threats to the self, while economic security may play a central role in ethnic conflict when inequalities in unemployment or poverty lie at the core of unrest.

In 2001, the Commission on Human Security (CHS) was formed by the government of Japan, responding to the continued interest of then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to focus on freedom from fear and freedom from want as reflected in the 2000 Millennium Summit declaration (UN Millennium Summit 2000). In its 2003 report titled *Human Security Now*, the CHS argued that the goal of human security was: ‘to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment’ (CHS 2003: 4). This definition was very broad, noting that ‘what people consider to be “vital” – what they consider to be “of the essence of life” and “crucially important” – varies across individuals and societies’. The CHS report claimed that human security included the ‘interrelated building blocks’ of freedom from fear, freedom from want and ‘the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment’. Lastly, human security also ‘reinforces human dignity’.

In some respects the CHS definition went beyond the 1994 UNDP report, widening the possibilities for understanding human security from the position of individuals rather than states. At the same time, however, the CHS report placed significant emphasis on the role of the state, frequently repeating the claim that human security ‘complements’ state security. Nevertheless, both the UNDP and CHS reports were clear about the important role of the individual. Individuals are not just a security ‘referent’, nor are state actors expected to address all manner of human security threats. Rather, the concept of human security is also a call to action, specifically to increase the capacities of individuals to address their own security and confirming

that ‘people are the most active participants in determining their well-being’ (CHS 2003: 4). They are security actors in their own right, able to ‘meet their own essential needs and to earn their own living’ (UNDP 1994: 24).

As such, we can say human security

is achieved when individuals and/or multiple actors have the freedom to identify risks and threats to their well-being and values . . . the opportunity to articulate these threats to other actors, and the capacity to determine ways to end, mitigate or adapt to those risks and threats either individually or in concert with other actors.

(Hoogensen Gjørsv et al. 2016: 186)

The concept of human security thus draws attention to security dynamics at the level of civilians or non-state actors. Understanding the needs and capacities of persons, and how they understand and manage their security needs, is crucial for both academics and policymakers. Scholars exploring potential theoretical avenues in human security are increasingly aware that people, and in particular marginalized women, ethnic minorities and the poor, for example, need to be included in any lens that helps us understand security from the local to the global levels. Policymakers need to be aware of how their decisions may decrease human security or work against the initiatives of other, non-state security actors operating in the same environment.

As discussed in the next section, the ideas behind ‘human’ security have been a part of the debate about definitions of security throughout the history of Western political thought.

A brief history of human security

The concept of ‘human’ security has its roots in the concept of security in general. The distinctions between ‘human’ or ‘state’ security, for example, are historically contingent, reflecting the values of those who have the power to define security at a given time. At its core, the concept of security is about reducing or eliminating fear. The work of Cicero (106–43 BCE) is frequently taken as the departure point for our understanding of the concept of security. Cicero coined the word ‘*securitas*’ to reflect a state of calm undisturbed by passions including fear, anger and anxiety (Liotta and Owen 2006; Hamilton, J. 2013). The concept also included the acknowledgement that without security one was ‘incapable’ (Hamilton, J. 2013: 62). This implies that the condition of security ensures that the individual has the capacity to pursue tasks and ambitions without fear (or, at least, with as little fear as possible). The concept was grounded in the condition of the individual, though Cicero recognized its relevance for larger political communities (Hamilton, J. 2013). Even after the creation of states within Europe through the Peace of Westphalia (1648), Western political philosophers, including Thomas Hobbes, Jeremy Bentham and Adam Smith, continued to theorize security from the standpoint of the individual, focusing on the tensions and responsibilities for security between the individual and the state (Rothschild 1995; Hoogensen 2005).

It was arguably not until the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century that the central referent object of security – the individual – was replaced by the state (Rothschild 1995). In this vision of security, as long as the state was secure it was assumed that human beings were also secure via a form of ‘trickle-down’ security (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004). Throughout the twentieth century, the idea of the state as the sole security actor became increasingly prevalent, especially during the Cold War. However, attempts to widen and deepen the concept of security continued throughout this period, with the focus broadening, for example, to include environmental issues and a vision for society/nation as opposed to solely security for the state (Buzan 1983; Ullman 1983).

By the early 1990s, the security of the individual was reintroduced through the concept of human security. The dominance of the state as *the* referent object and agent of security remains today, and is even referred to as ‘traditional’ or ‘classical’ security. Human security, however, challenges the state’s privileged position. Analytically, the human security concept demonstrates that there is nothing about security (its origins or contemporary usage) that necessitates a focus on states and precludes a focus on individuals. Rather, the focus reflects a particular choice made by the analyst or the practitioner, rather than the essential meaning of security. This view shares some common ground with constructivist approaches (see Chapter 3) and the securitization framework (see Chapter 7). The concept of security has thus always allowed for diverse and multiple actors, or multiple referent objects. But it has often reflected the interests of those who have the power to define it. It embodies a competition of values: which values should be prioritized and who decides (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004; Wibben 2008)?

Human security: the role of states?

If one issue, beyond the lack of a universally recognized definition, has consistently raised challenges and questions concerning human security, it is the question of the role of the state. The human security concept is clear about the need to reorient towards the individual as a security referent. It is also clear that individuals as well as states are recognized as providers of security, at least in principle. What has been less clear, however, is how the provision of security is operationalized. How are freedom from fear and freedom from want secured, and by whom?

Operationalizing human security is important not just because of the practical need to know ‘who does what?’ in creating and/or maintaining security, but because it also speaks to who decides which human security issues need attention. The question about the role of the state thus implies an additional question regarding where the power behind the concept lies. Can the concept be revolutionary if it is operationalized primarily by states? Is the concept an empowering tool for non-state actors, or have states co-opted it for their own devices, including using it as justification for military intervention?

While individuals clearly have a role in providing their own security within the concept and practice of human security, there are many instances in which individual action is insufficient – responding to interstate violence, structural threats or issues requiring transnational cooperation, for example. States are powerful actors in the

international system with considerable resources and capabilities; maybe the best way to advance progressive ends within that system is to work with them.

At the same time, however, a state embracing 'human security' may not necessarily be consistent with the ultimate goals of the approach. If human security emerged as a necessary response to the failure of the state system to serve the interests of people, can we realistically expect those same institutions to protect the rights of people, particularly people on the margins? State leaders generally prioritize the rights and needs of their own population over others, which do not necessarily serve the interests of suffering populations abroad (Hataley and Nossal 2004). Moreover, states may co-opt the human security agenda to add legitimacy to business as usual practices, or even to help justify illiberal ends.

These two positions were captured in two separate debates on human security in the journal *Security Dialogue*. First, in 2002, Nicholas Thomas and William T. Tow (2002a) argued that human security had the potential to provide the basis for encouraging progressive state behaviour, but only if it was defined narrowly and applied to a selective set of circumstances, in particular transnational threats that require some form of intervention. For the authors, a more expansive definition of human security would be unwieldy for states to implement and would prove unhelpful as a guide for practical action in a complex international system. The authors' argument largely assumed that the state would be a, if not *the*, primary provider of human security.

In response, Alex Bellamy and Matt McDonald argued that Thomas and Tow's attempts to render human security 'policy relevant' meant 'changing its scope to such an extent that it risks losing its emancipatory potential' (2002: 375). For them, the desire to speak to policymakers effectively meant addressing the mechanisms within state and international systems that had *produced* large-scale and systemic harm to which the human security discourse was responding. Indeed, the human security agenda should serve as a 'radical critique' of existing political structures and discourses (Bellamy and McDonald 2002: 376).

Thomas and Tow responded by claiming that 'more states than not are usually successful in containing and resolving the most fundamental challenges of individual human survival and development' and disagreed that states were the 'primary agent of human insecurity' (2002b: 379). They argued that as long as states remained the predominant actors in international relations it must be acknowledged that they would absorb most of the burden of addressing human insecurities and advancing the human security agenda.

In a 2008 review essay, the question was debated again, this time beginning with the critique that the human security agenda offered little new (Chandler 2008). This was no revolutionary paradigm, it was argued, but one that 'reinforced, rather than challenged, existing policy frameworks' (Chandler 2008: 428). For Chandler, while promoted in international circles, the human security agenda had done little to impact policy outcomes. Instead, this agenda was accused of exaggerating security threats in the post-Cold War era, of identifying these threats as largely emanating from the Global South, and finally of serving as a stopgap measure that distracted from the clear absence of long-term foreign policy strategy and visions (Chandler 2008). While Thomas and Tow argued for the importance of the state as a human security

provider, Chandler criticized the human security agenda for becoming another tool of the state. Like Bellamy and McDonald had stated six years earlier, little systemic reflection and change occurs when state actors continue to dominate security discourse and practice, as well as the provision of security.

Human security: from state-dominated to critical approaches?

Instead of giving up on human security – and indeed the state as a provider of security – a critical academic approach can be pursued that engages with policy but which promotes a greater consideration of the structural dimensions of deprivation and insecurity. Human security must be used to interrogate and problematize the values and institutions which currently exist as they relate to human welfare and more thoroughly question the interests that are served by these institutions.

(Newman 2016: 1179)

At first glance, it may appear that the debate has been stuck in a holding pattern between those who see the state as an adequate, and still primary, human security provider, and those who are looking for a more critical approach to security. Taylor Owen's response to Chandler's 2008 critique noted that the human security agenda, rather than exaggerating new threats, made existing threats and vulnerabilities more visible since the end of the Cold War, including the impacts of disease and extreme poverty and 'dire human development conditions' (Owen 2008: 447). He further argued that the policy focus on the Global South was driven by the fact that 'those that are dying in the greatest numbers' were located there (Owen 2008: 448). David Ambrosetti added that integrating a new security approach into established bureaucracies such as the UN and its member states required time for it to be amenable to state-based interests and to be considered legitimate by certain 'audiences' within the international system (2008: 442). From this vantage point, it might be concluded that the human security agenda has no other option than to be integrated, if not co-opted, into the state system. Annick Wibben agreed with Chandler's critique of the lack of critical engagement within the human security concept, but she saw the potential for an opening that would give non-state actors a much larger role and stronger relevance (Wibben 2008).

Have debate and progress regarding human security stagnated? One analysis claimed that human security was of little interest to the international community, arguing that the term human security had 'all but vanished' from UN documents (Martin and Owen 2010: 211). The authors noted that a report from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, titled *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (UN General Assembly 2004), employed the concept of human security but almost always as a complement to state security. They also noted that in the 2005 Secretary-General's report *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for All* (UN General Assembly 2005a) human security was not mentioned at all, though the components of 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' played a central, defining role in the document.

Contrary to the argument that the human security concept was largely dying out, however, it was again highlighted in the UN's 2005 *World Summit Outcome*, a document that provided the definition of human security for the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS). The UNTFHS finances UN organizations to carry out projects and activities that promote human security, including rebuilding war-torn communities, supporting people after natural disasters and events causing extreme poverty, addressing human trafficking and other activities, amounting to 210 projects by 2013 (Human Security Unit 2014). The intentions and operating definitions of human security have thus continued to stimulate debate and develop at the UN level, including in reports from the Secretary-General and in General Assembly resolutions.

The UN General Assembly has continued to work on an effective and operational human security concept, and its 2012 resolution plays a central role in the definition of human security for the UNTFHS Strategic Plan 2014–2017 (UN General Assembly 2012; Human Security Unit 2014). Though sceptical about the UN's operationalization of the concept, Martin and Owen (2010) remained cautiously optimistic about the EU's incorporation of the concept into its security policy, as long as the concept and intent stayed clear. NATO's comprehensive approach to civil–military operations, meanwhile, has reflected human security perspectives (Weller 2014), and the concept has continued to be considered relevant, though controversial to NATO antiterrorism efforts (Kfir 2015). Finally, the IPCC (the official international scientific body whose assessments inform the UNFCCC climate negotiations) included a chapter on the human security implications of climate change in its 2014 impact assessment report (IPCC 2014). It can thus be concluded that the human security concept is still active within leading international institutions and, by association, to the states that are members of them.

All this may just prove Chandler's point, that human security is nothing more than a tool to further state and international agendas. However, as Newman (2016) argued, it is imperative that critical human security perspectives develop simultaneously, informing and pushing institutional approaches towards changing harmful state and global structures that contribute to human insecurity. Wibben (2008: 457) noted that critical security studies (CSS) itself (and not just human security) could be subjected to Chandler's critique, where CSS scholars 'have been careful not to divert too much from a traditional security framework'. Wibben, however, has encouraged human security scholars to challenge ontological and epistemological assumptions – in other words, she has urged them to outright challenge the *politics* of security (2008: 460).

These challenges were already reflected in the debates referred to above, where the potential of a revolutionary, non-state-centric security concept instead became a Western-centric and state co-opted conception of security (see Bellamy and McDonald 2002; Chandler 2008). Human security policies, largely from northern states such as Canada and Norway, were criticized for perpetuating ahistorical claims that assumed that 'strong states provide better security' (Wibben 2011: 70; see also Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007). Not only was the Global North assumed to be composed of 'strong' states that successfully addressed their own human security issues and that could assist the perceived insecure Global South, but 'securing' the

Global South would in turn support northern state security (McRae and Hubert 2001). The co-option of human security for state security purposes thus turned into a sort of 'virtuous imperialism', whereby states in the Global North engage in humanitarian interventions or other proclaimed human security measures for the purposes of ensuring that unrest in the Global South does not extend to northern states through migration or terrorism.

Contrary to what was originally envisioned in the UNDP and CHS reports, the state security orientation and implementation of human security has often rendered non-state actors passive and made invisible any human insecurities and vulnerabilities not identified by states. It assumes that community and individual voices are represented, and attended to, by a state actor, and it disguises and prevents any possible shared human security concerns and experiences between peoples across communities and regions, let alone across states. The result is an imbalance in perceptions and explanations of what occurs within and across regions and the globe, a tendency that also disguises the contributions and competencies of different actors in providing security at different levels (Abiew 2010).

This highlights the importance of opening the concept to various methodological and analytical approaches. An essential ally for human security research is the work done in feminist and gender security studies, which has developed simultaneously and alongside human security perspectives (Blanchard 2003; Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006). Individuals and their communities are, and have always been, security actors, functioning alongside 'traditional' tools of security such as states and their militaries or, more often, functioning in the absence of the latter. Narrow or state-based 'security narratives . . . limit how we can think about security, whose security matters, and how it might be achieved' (Wibben 2011: 65). In contrast, feminist scholarship has been groundbreaking for security perspectives that adopt a people-centred approach and have been developing in parallel with human security theorizing (see Chapter 5). Significant empirical research has been conducted, particularly in the area of gender and feminist security studies, focusing on the efforts of 'average' or everyday women and men, girls and boys, in identifying insecurity and sources of fear, and expressing vulnerabilities. This research has also examined capabilities and the ways in which people, societies and groups enable and ensure their security through a variety of means (Hoogensen and Stuvøy 2006; Scharffscher 2011).

Gender and feminist analyses take their starting point from the bottom up, similar to critical human security approaches, but exhibit an increased awareness of the impacts of gender on personal relations and on understandings of security. Gender and feminist analyses question the terms we use, including the notion of 'human' itself – who is included (or not) and why (Hudson 2005). In acknowledging that the personal is political, these analyses reach deep into the individual's experience, claiming it is highly relevant to the security of the individual and the community, but also to the state and global order. By identifying the articulation of security needs by those who are least secure or marginalized, security is reoriented away from elite or state interests (Hilhorst 2003). Feminist approaches have long highlighted marginalized realities that the majority of the world's population faces on a daily basis resulting from economic insecurity and domestic violence, from rape

as an institutionalized strategy of warfare and/or from the gendered roots of war itself.

In other words, regardless of the way traditional approaches to security position the state as the exclusive security provider, in practice states have never been the only ‘security’ providers, particularly where human security is concerned (Kaldor 2006). Government officials, politicians and military leaders are not always the leading actors in providing security or identifying threats, nor do they need to intervene at all levels of human insecurity. They can, however, act as important conduits for knowledge between communities and actors, and they have the capacity to respond to human insecurities when communities can no longer effectively confront threats on their own (Soderlund et al. 2008).



Box 15.2 Human security in the Arctic

While a human security lens is most often applied to contexts of the Global South, dynamics in the Arctic region also serve to illustrate the utility of a human security perspective.

Until very recently, there has been a marked increase in proposed activities regarding energy and mineral resource development in the Arctic region. Even with the current downturn in prices for oil and gas, and the recent UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 21 Paris Agreement, many analysts claim that oil and gas (particularly in the Arctic) will still have a role to play in global economies and politics, not least replacing dependencies on coal (Topdahl and Stokka 2015). The tensions between economic security, energy needs and energy security, and environmental security have thus been heightened within the context of increasing global attention to and scrutiny over extractive industries and their potential impact on global climate change, habitat degradation, community health and welfare, and apprehensions regarding offshore drilling that powerfully resurfaced in the aftermath of the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Environmental impacts of continued oil and gas exploration in the Arctic thus have implications globally, but also locally, where climate change and environmental contamination of territories occupied by Indigenous peoples impact food and health security, as well as the ability of Indigenous communities to continue traditional economic and social activities such as hunting marine mammals (whale, seal) and reindeer herding (Huntington et al. 2016; Stammer and Ivanova 2017). At the same time, however, the reduction or elimination of oil and gas development in the Arctic has profound impacts on the economic security of regions that have become reliant on these extractive industries as a promised or actual primary source of income and way out of poverty, including the Murmansk region in north-west Russia (Lvova forthcoming). Human insecurities in the Arctic provide important case studies for understanding the contextualized, at times competing, and complex nature of human security.

Conclusion

The concept of human security will continue to be a part of the broader debate on security for the foreseeable future. It has staying power within many global institutions, including the UN, EU and NATO. Though operationalizing the concept still strongly reflects state interests, they have also slowly but surely begun to reflect an increasing awareness of the ways in which institutions and states cause human insecurity (see the women, peace and security agenda, for example, discussed in Chapter 34). Human security is a complex concept that will continue to play an integral role in the history of security studies as a whole. It continues to be subject to debate regarding whether or not it has been co-opted by the state, which uses humanitarian rhetoric to perpetuate measures and policies that in fact may not be conducive to the security of individuals, or whether it is indeed a revolutionary and radical concept that opens up the security debate to bring marginalized voices into the security conversation. It is safe to say that, at this stage, it is both.

Critical approaches to human security have exposed activities and processes taking place on the ground, where individuals are constantly creating spaces of security that are often fragile but in constant development. Local efforts made by women and men according to varying capacities can be influential not only to their security but to perceptions of security beyond the individual and community levels. Sometimes, the powers behind competing geopolitical interests also understand that local community perceptions and experiences of security can be decisive for their own purposes. The lessons learned thus far are that human security perspectives emanating from individuals and communities, from the bottom up, are not irrelevant to so-called traditional or state security priorities articulated by governments. Particularly in situations where state authorities are weak, fragile or virtually non-existent, the relevance of community needs and interests can be crucial to strengthening security at multiple levels.



Further reading

- J. Peter Burgess and Taylor Owen (eds), 'Special Section on Human Security', *Security Dialogue*, 35(3) (2004): 345–71. Provides insights and critiques by leading security studies scholars about the value and potential of human security.
- Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now* (CHS 2003). The Japanese-led and UN-sanctioned commission to further pursue a definition of human security that could serve UN policies.
- Lorraine Elliot, 'Human Security/Environmental Security', *Contemporary Politics*, 21(1) (2015): 11–24. Discusses intersections between human security and developments in other areas of security such as environmental security.
- Gunhild Hoogensen and Kirsti Stuvøy, 'Human Security, Gender and Resistance', *Security Dialogue*, 37(2) (2006): 207–28. A response to the 2004 *Security Dialogue* special section on human security, it demonstrated the benefits for human security research in drawing on gender and feminist security studies research.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1994* (UN, 1994). The original report, which served as the foundation for much of the subsequent human security debate.

The responsibility to protect

Alex J. Bellamy

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, students will learn about the ‘responsibility to protect’ principle, which seeks to recast the relationship between security, sovereignty and human rights. It looks at the origins of the principle, the politics behind its adoption by the UN in 2005, subsequent debates at the UN about its implementation, and its role in shaping international responses to major humanitarian crises. Key questions include whether sovereignty should entail the protection of a state’s population, whether states can be persuaded to take responsibility for protecting populations abroad and what sorts of policies states should adopt in the face of mass atrocities.

Introduction

Atrocity crimes – understood as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – are a tragically persistent feature of contemporary world politics. No region has escaped them. Since the end of the Cold War, atrocity crimes have been committed in Europe (including Bosnia and Kosovo), Africa (including Rwanda and Darfur), the Middle East (including Syria and Libya) and South and East Asia (including Sri Lanka and Myanmar). Time and again there have been impassioned appeals to put an end to atrocity crimes, not least after the Holocaust, when the world collectively proclaimed ‘Never Again!’ and created international humanitarian laws designed to prohibit these crimes and create positive duties to prevent them and punish their perpetrators.

And, yet, international society has repeatedly failed to protect populations from mass killing, rape and deportation. In 1994, international society stood aside as around 800,000 were massacred during the Rwandan genocide. When the Bosnian Serb Army overran the UN designated ‘safe area’ of Srebrenica in Bosnia in 1995, they separated the men and boys from the women and girls and massacred more than 7,600 of them. Today, we see the consequences of that failure in Syria where more than 400,000 people have been killed and more than six million displaced by an internationalized civil war that has given rise to every imaginable form of brutality: people shot, bombed, knifed, gassed, beheaded, mutilated, raped, tortured, often just because of who they are. Those fortunate enough to escape have had to navigate the horrors of displacement as thousands have died at sea while seeking international protection – protection they have a right to expect under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Recognizing this gap between the legal prohibition of atrocity crimes and international society’s tepid response to actual cases, at the 2005 World Summit, the largest ever gathering of heads of state and government committed themselves unanimously to a new principle – the responsibility to protect, or R2P. As agreed by UN member states, the principle rests on three equally important and non-sequential pillars (UN General Assembly 2005b: paras 138–9):

I: The responsibility of the state to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and from their incitement.

(para. 138)

II: The international community’s responsibility to assist the state to fulfil its responsibility to protect.

(para. 139)

III: In situations where a state is manifestly failing to protect its population from the four crimes, the international community’s responsibility to take timely and decisive action through peaceful diplomatic and humanitarian means and, if that fails, other more forceful means in a manner consistent with Chapters VI (peaceful measures), VII (enforcement measures) and VIII (regional arrangements) of the UN Charter.

(para. 139)

For the first time, governments declared themselves responsible for the protection of their populations from four of the most serious crimes and promised that in some circumstances the security of individuals and groups should be prioritized over the security of states.

Since then, R2P has been incorporated into practice, albeit with mixed results. The UN Security Council reaffirmed R2P in 2006 (Resolution 1674) and indicated its preparedness to act in response to the four crimes (collectively labelled ‘mass atrocities’ in this chapter). It did so again three years later (Resolution 1894). By 2017, the Security Council had reaffirmed the principle six times. It has also begun to incorporate R2P into its operational mandates, adopting more than 50 resolutions referencing the principle in relation to crises in the Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur, Mali, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and elsewhere. The UN General Assembly has adopted resolutions referencing R2P in relation to crises in Syria and North Korea and the UN’s Human Rights Council has also adopted more than 20 resolutions referencing R2P. The UN Secretary-General has issued nine reports focusing on the implementation of R2P, early warning and assessment of mass atrocity threats, and the role of regional organizations, the primary responsibility of states, international assistance, timely and decisive response, the imperative of collective action and – most recently – accountability for atrocity prevention. Each of these has been debated in informal sessions of the General Assembly, at which more than 150 states have participated. The UN has also established a Joint Office for Genocide Prevention and R2P that provides early warning advice, helps craft responses to major crises and develops a coherent system-wide approach to these issues.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the concepts behind the R2P, the politics surrounding its adoption at the 2005 World Summit and its implementation in the UN system, and the challenges that have arisen with respect to implementation. It is divided into three parts. The first provides an overview of the transformation of thinking about sovereignty and its relationship to R2P. The second section examines the adoption of R2P by world leaders in 2005 and subsequent debates about implementation. The third section considers how R2P has been used in practice.

Sovereignty and responsibility

The idea that sovereignty entitles governments to treat their citizens however they see fit is based on a common misunderstanding of the meaning of ‘absolute sovereignty’, a doctrine that prevailed in Europe until the nineteenth century. ‘Absolute sovereignty’ is commonly understood as providing a government with *carte blanche* within its internationally recognized borders. However, in the sixteenth century, when the doctrine of absolutism was first espoused, sovereigns and lawyers distinguished between two different meanings of ‘absolute sovereignty’. Yes, sovereigns had exclusive jurisdiction in their territory but they were not entitled to rule arbitrarily because sovereignty entailed responsibilities to God. As Luke Glanville (2013) demonstrates, sovereignty has always entailed responsibilities of one form or other.

At the beginning of the industrial age in the late eighteenth century, liberals and republicans guided by beliefs in rationalism and science refused to accept that sovereigns were only answerable to God. Beginning with the American Revolution in the early eighteenth century and culminating in the principle of self-determination set out by the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War, they insisted that sovereignty derived from the people within a state (Bukovansky 2002). According to this doctrine, states draw their right to rule from the consent of the governed and this consent might be withdrawn if the sovereign abused its citizens or failed to guarantee their basic rights.

Following this, the horrors of the Second World War produced a somewhat contradictory response from international society because of three key factors pulling in different directions. First, Article 2(4) of the UN Charter created a strong impetus for the outlawing of war as an instrument of state policy. Second, the belief that peoples had a right to govern themselves gave impetus to decolonization under Article 1(2) but posed the problem of how to protect newly independent states from interference by the world's great powers. In addition to the ban on force, the key protection afforded to the new states was the principle of non-interference set out in Article 2(7). Finally, the Holocaust and other horrors persuaded international society to place aspirations for basic human rights at the heart of the new order (as set out in Articles 1(3), 55 and 56). The tension this created is evident in the preamble of the UN Charter, which promises to 'reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person' but also says that states must 'practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours'. Thus the charter reflected a pivotal political dilemma: how should states behave in cases where maintaining faith in human rights means refusing to be a good neighbour to a tyrannical regime? For this reason, the question of humanitarian intervention – the use of military force to stop atrocity crimes – was often portrayed as a debate over the priority that should be accorded to either sovereignty or human rights (see Wheeler 2000).

There is no space here to rehearse the debates about humanitarian intervention. Suffice it to say that during the Cold War no right of humanitarian intervention was permitted because states were primarily concerned about maintaining as much international order as possible through adherence to the rule of non-interference. There were also deep and well-founded concerns among postcolonial states that the great powers would abuse any such right of humanitarian intervention to justify neoimperialist activities. After the Cold War, atrocities in northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda brought a subtle but important change whereby states agreed that the UN Security Council was entitled to use its Chapter VII enforcement powers to authorize humanitarian intervention. However, a strong commitment to non-interference remained and at no time did the Security Council authorize interventions against fully functioning sovereign states that abused their citizens.

Two events in the 1990s prompted academics, politicians and international organizations to revisit the meaning of sovereignty. In 1994, the world stood aside as Rwandan armed forces and Hutu militia massacred approximately 800,000 Tutsi and Hutu civilians. The Rwandan genocide raised questions about how international society should make good on its promise to affirm human rights by preventing genocide and mass killing and how individual states might be persuaded to commit

troops and money to protect imperilled foreigners in such cases. Importantly, although there was no humanitarian intervention, no governments publicly argued that Rwanda's sovereignty should be privileged over concern for its citizens. In 1999, NATO bombed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to coerce its leader, Slobodan Milosevic, into ceasing the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. NATO was forced to act without a UN mandate because Russia and China believed that the situation in Kosovo was not serious enough to warrant armed intervention. This case also raised two important questions: is it legitimate for states or groups of states to intervene without UN approval and, to put it crudely, how are we to make judgements about whether there has been enough killing to warrant intervention?

It was questions like these that prompted a rethink about the nature of sovereignty. An important contribution was made by Francis Deng, a former Sudanese diplomat who was appointed the UN Secretary-General's special representative on internally displaced people in 1992. In a co-authored book published in 1996, Deng and his co-authors argued that

sovereignty carries with it certain responsibilities for which governments must be held accountable. And they are accountable not only to their own national constituencies but ultimately to the international community. In other words, by effectively discharging its responsibilities for good governance, a state can legitimately claim protection for its national sovereignty.

(Deng et al. 1996: 1)

Legitimate sovereignty thus required a demonstration of responsibility. Troubled states faced a choice: they could work with international society to improve their citizens' living conditions or they could obstruct international efforts and forfeit their sovereignty (Deng et al. 1996: 28). Conceptualizing sovereignty as responsibility undermined objections to international assistance and mediation based on the principle of non-interference. But at what point could a state be judged to have forfeited its sovereignty and what body has the right to decide? Deng et al. were sketchy on these points but they did suggest that sovereignty as responsibility implied the existence of a 'higher authority capable of holding supposed sovereigns accountable' and that this dominant authority should place collective interests ahead of the national interests of its members (Deng et al. 1996: 32). The UN Security Council most closely resembles this description, though it falls a long way short of their ideal.

The divisiveness of NATO's operation in Kosovo prompted UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to enter the debate in 1999. In his annual address to the General Assembly, he insisted that 'state sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalization and international cooperation'. He continued,

the state is now widely understood to be the servant of its people, and not vice versa. At the same time, individual sovereignty – and by this I mean the human rights and fundamental freedoms of each and every individual as enshrined in our Charter – has been enhanced by a renewed consciousness of the right of every individual to control his or her own destiny.

(Annan 1999)

Together, Deng and Annan sketched a new way of conceiving the relationship between sovereignty and human rights that recalled the long-forgotten idea that sovereignty entailed responsibilities as well as rights.

It was at this point that the Canadian government established an International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) to conduct a systematic study of the relationship between sovereignty and human rights that could point to ways of advancing the debate. The ICISS is most famous for coining the phrase ‘responsibility to protect’ as a way of bridging the divide between sovereignty and human rights. After a year of consultation and research, it delivered its report in late 2001, shortly after the 9/11 attacks in the US. Borrowing from Deng’s concept of sovereignty as responsibility, though without acknowledging him explicitly, the commission argued that states have primary responsibility for protecting their populations from genocide and mass atrocities. When states were unwilling or unable to protect their citizens from grave harm, the ICISS argued that the principle of non-interference ‘yields to the responsibility to protect’.

The concept of R2P was intended as a way of escaping the logic of ‘sovereignty versus human rights’ by focusing not on what interveners are entitled to do (‘a right of intervention’) but on what was necessary to protect people in dire need and the responsibilities of various actors to provide such protection. The ICISS argued that R2P was about much more than just military intervention. In addition to a ‘responsibility to react’ (intervene) to massive human suffering, international society also had responsibilities to use non-violent tools to prevent such suffering (‘responsibility to prevent’) and rebuild polities and societies afterwards (responsibility to rebuild’). Rather than viewing sovereignty and human rights as antagonistic, R2P sees them as mutually supporting, insists that international society has a responsibility to ensure and enable this relationship to flourish, and sets out a number of ways in which this might be achieved.

The R2P concept was therefore born out of long-standing ideas about the responsibilities incumbent on sovereigns. The phrase was coined by an international commission that borrowed basic concepts developed by the UN’s Special Representative on internally displaced people in the early 1990s in order to break the logjam in debates about humanitarian intervention. Whatever its merits – and faults – R2P would have remained a purely academic idea had it not been adopted by UN member states in 2005, albeit in a very different form to that proposed by the ICISS four years earlier.

R2P and international politics

The ICISS report was received most favourably by ‘like-minded’ states including Canada, the UK and Germany. Since the Kosovo intervention, they had been exploring the potential for developing criteria to guide global decision-making about humanitarian intervention. The US rejected some of the commission’s ideas, especially its proposal that judgements about intervention be guided by thresholds and criteria, which the US believed was unduly constraining (Welsh 2004: 180). China was even more sceptical about the whole idea and insisted that all questions relating to the use of force should defer to the Security Council, making much of the commission’s

work on intervention redundant. Russia agreed with the Chinese view, arguing that the UN was already equipped to deal with humanitarian crises and suggesting that R2P risked undermining the UN Charter.

Opinion outside the Security Council was also sceptical. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which represents most of the world's decolonized states, rejected R2P, though the 'Group of 77' (G77) developing states was more equivocal. Offering no joint position on the concept, the G77 nevertheless suggested that R2P be revised to emphasize the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. To make matters worse, constructive debate about R2P was hampered by the US-led invasion of Iraq. It certainly did not help that a prominent ICISS commissioner – Michael Ignatieff (2003) – initially defended the invasion on human rights grounds before changing his mind. ICISS co-chair Gareth Evans (2004: 63) rightly argued that the 'poorly and inconsistently' argued humanitarian justification for the war in Iraq 'almost choked at birth what many were hoping was an emerging new norm justifying intervention on the basis of the principle of "responsibility to protect"'.

In preparation for a major world summit in 2005, which was expected to focus on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, created a high-level panel to provide him with recommendations for reforming the UN to make it better able to meet the challenge of peace and security in the twenty-first century. The panel included Gareth Evans, the ICISS co-chair and a passionate advocate of R2P, who succeeded in persuading it to endorse the concept (UN Secretary-General 2004: para. 203). Annan accepted almost all the panel's recommendations, including R2P, in his own blueprint for UN reform (UN General Assembly 2005a). In important departures from the ICISS, however, the Secretary-General closed off the idea that R2P could legitimize armed intervention not authorized by the Security Council and refrained from endorsing the proposed responsibilities to 'prevent, react, and rebuild', fundamentally changing the way in which R2P was conceptualized.

Further changes were made to R2P during the negotiations leading up to the 2005 World Summit. In particular, references to the idea of criteria guiding decisions about the use of force were removed entirely, R2P intervention was made dependent on UN Security Council authorization, the thresholds at which crises would become matters of international concern were raised to cover only governments were 'manifestly' failing to protect their populations, and caveats were added to give the Security Council the flexibility to choose not to act. On the positive side, the summit's commitment to R2P was incredibly clear and direct and world leaders clarified what the concept applied to (genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity), improving on the conceptual fuzziness of the ICISS.

Debates about implementing R2P through the UN got off to an inauspicious start. Thanks largely to lingering concerns about its potential to legitimize interference in the domestic affairs of states, some states tried to retreat from their commitment. It took six months of intense debate for the Security Council to unanimously adopt Resolution 1674, 'reaffirming' the World Summit's provisions 'regarding the responsibility to protect'. This experience persuaded some of the council's R2P advocates to refrain from pushing the body to make greater use of the principle for fear of creating opportunities for backsliding. It proved similarly difficult to persuade the council to refer to R2P in a non-operative paragraph in Resolution 1706 (2006)

on the situation in Darfur, Sudan. A paragraph indirectly referring to R2P was subsequently deleted from a draft of Resolution 1769 (2007) on Darfur and Resolution 1814 (2008) on Somalia pointedly referred to the protection of civilians and Resolution 1674 without mentioning R2P (Strauss 2009: 307). Resistance to implementing R2P was also evident in other UN bodies. For example, when the UN Human Rights Council's High-Level Mission to Darfur reported in 2007 that the government of Sudan was failing in its responsibility to protect Darfuris, the Arab Group, Asia Group and Organization of Islamic Conference all questioned the report's legitimacy and tried to prevent deliberation on its findings.

More promising signs emerged with the election of the South Korean foreign minister, Ban Ki-moon, as the UN Secretary-General in October 2006. Ban was personally committed to R2P and proved to be an effective norm entrepreneur. Campaigning under the slogan of 'promise less and deliver more', Ban argued that the UN needed to close the gap between its lofty rhetoric and its often less than lofty performance. The Secretary-General appointed Edward Luck as his special advisor on R2P. Luck's appointment represented a turning point. The special advisor engaged in extensive consultation with UN member states based on an appropriately sharp distinction between what they had actually agreed to in relation to R2P, and a variety of alternative formulations – including that of the ICISS (Luck 2007). Many academics continue to fail to make this extremely important distinction and it is vitally important that students are aware of it. Luck's consultations encouraged the Secretary-General to identify a 'narrow but deep' approach to implementing R2P that strictly limited it to what was agreed in 2005 but 'utilized the whole prevention and protection tool kit' available to the United Nations system, regional arrangements, states and civil society groups. Analysing in detail what states had actually agreed in 2005, the Secretary-General also identified the three pillars of R2P described earlier (Ban 2008).

In 2009, the Secretary-General released an important report, entitled *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect* (Ban 2009). It clarified the nature of the 2005 agreement and outlined a wide range of measures that individual states, regional organizations and the UN system might consider in order to implement R2P's three pillars. Some of the recommendations are summarized in Table 16.1.

The Secretary-General argued that R2P 'is an ally of sovereignty, not an adversary', that grows from the principle of sovereignty as responsibility rather than through the doctrine of humanitarian intervention (Ban 2009: para.10(a)). As such, R2P focuses on helping states to succeed (pillar two), not just on reacting when they fail (some aspects of pillar three). Furthermore, he found that until member states decide otherwise, the R2P applies only to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to their prevention. Expanding the principle to include natural disasters or climate change would undermine consensus and damage the principle's operational utility.

The report was subsequently debated in the General Assembly, revealing a broad consensus in support of his approach. Ninety-four speakers, representing some 180 governments (including the Non-Aligned Movement) from every region participated in the debate. Of those, only four (Cuba, Venezuela, Sudan and Nicaragua) called for a renegotiation of the 2005 agreement. The General Assembly largely agreed with

TABLE 16.1 Implementing the responsibility to protect: the UN's Secretary-General's recommendations (excerpts)

Pillar I: The state's R2P	Pillar II: International assistance to the state	Pillar III: Timely and decisive response
The UN Human Rights Council could encourage states to meet their R2P obligations	Those inciting or planning to commit the four crimes need to be made aware that they will be held to account	The Security Council might use targeted sanctions on travel, financial transfers, and luxury goods, and arms embargoes. Capacity and will should be dedicated to properly implement these regimes
States should become parties to the relevant instruments of human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law, as well as to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)	Incentives should be offered to encourage parties towards reconciliation	The permanent members of the Security Council should refrain from using their veto in situations of manifest failure and should act in good faith to reach a consensus on exercising the Council's responsibility
States should assist the ICC and other international tribunals	Security sector reform aimed at building and sustaining legitimate and effective security forces	The UN should strengthen its capacity for the rapid deployment of military personnel
R2P principles should be localized into each culture and society	Targeted economic development assistance would assist . . . by reducing inequalities, improving education, giving the poor a stronger voice, and increasing political participation	The UN should strengthen its partnerships with regional organizations to facilitate rapid cooperation
States should ensure that they have mechanisms in place to deal with bigotry, intolerance, racism and exclusion	<p>International assistance should help states and societies to build the specific capacities they need to prevent genocide and mass atrocities</p> <p>The UN and regional and subregional organizations could build rapidly deploy-able civilian and police capacities to help countries under stress</p> <p>Where relevant crimes are committed by non-state actors, international military assistance to the state may be the most effective way of helping it to fulfil its R2P</p>	

Source: Ban (2009)

the Secretary-General's interpretation of the principle's fundamental elements. In particular, most governments welcomed the Secretary-General's report, noted that the 2005 World Summit represented the international consensus on R2P and agreed that there was no need to renegotiate that text. The challenge, the General Assembly agreed, was to implement R2P, *not* renegotiate it. The overwhelming majority also indicated their support for the Secretary-General's identification of the three pillars of the R2P and the 'narrow but deep' approach to implementing the principle (Bellamy 2011: 42–9). The Assembly passed a unanimous resolution, acknowledging the report, noting that the Assembly had engaged in a productive debate, and deciding to continue consideration of the matter (UN Doc. A/RES/63/308, 7 October 2009).

In 2010, the Secretary-General proposed the establishment of a Joint Office for Genocide Prevention and R2P that would have two principal functions: provide early warning and assessment of situations likely to give rise to one of the four R2P crimes, and in the event that the crimes were thought likely or were in progress, the Joint Office would provide a convening mechanism that would bring together key UN departments and agencies to develop integrated policy advice and strategic planning. Since then, the office's role has expanded considerably to include regular engagement with member states and regional organizations, providing atrocity prevention training for UN officials and member states, and briefing the UN's decision-making bodies (i.e. the Security Council) on atrocity-related concerns.

States are also beginning to seriously integrate R2P into national policy. At least 55 states, drawn from every continent, have appointed a senior official to serve as national focal point, a role that involves coordinating domestic policy and facilitating international engagement. The Obama administration in the US spearheaded efforts in this regard, establishing an Atrocity Prevention Board comprised of interagency officials to provide consolidated advice to the National Security Advisor on global atrocity crime risks and potential responses. Several other countries have followed suit, with Australia, Denmark, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Tanzania and Ghana all developing national mechanisms to support R2P.

Clearly, significant progress has been made in deepening the consensus reached in 2005 and translating that agreement into new institutional capacity. But it is one thing to agree on a principle and abstract modalities for implementation. It is another thing entirely to agree on how to respond in actual crises. The following section considers the mixed results R2P has achieved in practice.

R2P in action

R2P has become part of the diplomatic language used to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes, albeit unevenly and with patchy results. Its practical implementation also got off to a slow and discouraging start. Between Security Council Resolution 1674 (2006) and Resolution 1970 on Libya (2009), the council referred to the concept only once (though it did refer to R2P prior to Resolution 1674, in Resolution 1653 (2006) on the Great Lakes region of Africa). This came in a highly contentious preambular paragraph in Resolution 1706 (2006) on the situation in Darfur, where Sudanese government forces and their notorious allies the 'Janjaweed' militia had unleashed a reign of terror resulting in the death of some 200,000 people and forced

displacement of over two million more. Several council members were cautious about the inclusion of R2P in the resolution (China abstained) and about the diplomatic pressure that was brought to bear to secure it. The diplomatic victory over the passage of Resolution 1706 was pyrrhic.

With the UN and its member states so hesitant to implement their 2005 commitment to R2P, few – if any – anticipated the role that the principle would play in the dramatic events of 2011. In February 2011, the ‘Arab Spring’ reached Libya. Protests there quickly turned into a major uprising that threatened to topple the dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, who had ruled with an iron fist for over 40 years. Gaddafi’s forces responded to the challenge with typical brutality and the Libyan leader issued chilling threats of retribution reminiscent of the terms used to incite the Rwandan genocide nearly 20 years earlier. The following month, the Security Council responded to the unfolding crisis by throwing almost its entire portfolio of preventive measures at the situation in Libya in Resolution 1970. When the Gaddafi regime failed to comply with the council’s demands and looked likely to topple the rebel stronghold of Benghazi and commit a massacre there, the council took the unprecedented step of authorizing the use of force against a state to protect civilians from imminent danger, enforce a no-fly zone and enforce an arms embargo (Resolution 1973). NATO and its allies hastily arranged a coalition of the willing that prevented the fall of Benghazi and the widely anticipated massacre there. The conflict dragged on into a stalemate but eventually the regime collapsed and Gaddafi was killed, provoking a new storm of controversy. Egged on by Libya’s new government, which rejected a proposed international force to support peacebuilding in Libya, major states decided to adopt a ‘light footprint’ approach. Partly as a result, Libya has been wracked with militia violence since 2012 and has effectively divided into two sub-states, one controlled by Tripoli and the other by rival groups in Benghazi. Amid the mayhem, the so-called ‘Islamic State’ also established operations in Libya.

Protracted instability in Libya has given rise to sharp criticism of the intervention and R2P. Some states, notably Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa, argued that NATO and its allies exceeded their civilian protection mandate by pursuing ‘regime change’ and that the Security Council lost control of the operation. These concerns persuaded Brazil to propose a new concept of ‘responsibility while protecting’ that calls for measures to ensure that the council’s decision-making is more transparent and accountable and that those acting on council mandates remain accountable to, and under the direction of, the council. These proposals were generally well received by states that understood the need to rebuild trust after the controversies of Libya. In 2017, proposals aimed at achieving these two effects were also advanced by the new UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. Others argue that intervention only made matters worse in Libya, because of the post-war instability, and hence that, far from helping Libya’s civilians, R2P actually imperilled them further. It is indisputable that the UN and major states made serious mistakes in their response to the situation in Libya. In particular, the post-war peacebuilding effort was wholly inadequate, but it is important to recall that this was in part driven by the demands of the new Libyan government. It is no easy feat of counterfactual analysis to determine whether Libya was better or worse off because of the inter-

vention. Much of the criticism takes as its starting point Libya in 2010 – that is, pre-civil war – rather than Libya as the Security Council found it in 2011, wracked by civil war with a widely acknowledged serious threat of massacre in Benghazi. If we take that as our starting point, and look at what we know about the trajectory of civil wars and what we have learned from Syria and Yemen, then it is not at all clear that Libya is worse off today than it would have been without intervention. As bad as Libya is, Syria – where there was no such intervention – is incalculably worse and there is every reason to expect that without intervention Libya too would have fallen into an escalating civil war. These are the sorts of difficult judgements that policymakers have to confront. And cases do not happen one by one, for, as the UN-authorized intervention took place in Libya, so too did simultaneous crises erupt in Côte d'Ivoire and Syria.

A few days after the adoption of its landmark resolution on Libya, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1975 on Côte d'Ivoire. Having lost an election, the country's now former president, Laurent Gbagbo, refused to stand down. Following the advice of international election monitors, the council declared Alassane Ouattara to be the country's president and authorized the use of force to protect the civilian population. UN forces already stationed in Côte d'Ivoire – as part of the UNOCI operation deployed to oversee an end to the country's civil war and transition to a new, democratic, government – acted alongside French forces to stop the escalating violence, remove Gbagbo and allow the elected president to take his place at the head of the new government.

The council's responses to the crises in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire demonstrated a newly found determination to act on the responsibility to protect populations from atrocity crimes, including through the use of force when necessary. The use of force in Côte d'Ivoire was unambiguously effective in halting the country's slide back towards civil war and atrocity crimes and demonstrates the capacity of determined international action to make a positive difference. But the responses proved highly controversial. Critics complained that NATO and the UN had overstepped their mandates by contributing to regime change, that they had used disproportionate force which increased civilian casualties and that they had ignored or outright rejected opportunities for further political dialogue. Russia in particular argued that the Libyan experience coloured its thinking on the subsequent crisis in Syria, pushing it to resist Western pressure on the al-Assad regime on the grounds that it might open the door to forced regime change. However, we need to recognize that Russia had other interests in Syria irrespective of the Libya experience. On the one hand, Russia saw the uprising there – indeed the whole Arab Uprising – through a national security lens. It perceived the uprising as a front for the rise of radical Islamists and worried about its spread into Russia's southern caucuses, especially Chechnya and Dagestan. These concerns were inflamed by the flow of Chechen fighters into Syria at the start of the war there. On the other, the Syrian government was the last remaining Russian ally in the Middle East.

Although the council has indeed been deadlocked on Syria and has failed to respond adequately to a monumental crisis, controversies about the implementation of protection mandates in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire did not inhibit the constructive use of R2P even in this difficult context. The council did (temporarily) find common

ground to support Kofi Annan's peace plan, though this quickly disintegrated. It also moved to support the disarmament of Syria's chemical weapons and to authorize (for the first time in its history, in Resolution 2165) the delivery of humanitarian aid without the government's consent. In 2017, the council supported a Russian and Turkish initiative to establish 'safety zones' inside Syria. Inadequate as these initiatives are, they demonstrate that the council recognizes it cannot stand aside and do nothing. Indeed, another interesting test of a principle such as R2P is what happens when actors fail to live up to it. If the principle is meaningful, we should expect to see such failures criticized. It is telling, then, that in the case of Syria the UN General Assembly has passed resolutions that 'deplore' and 'express alarm' at the council's failure to protect civilians, clearly signalling international society's view that the council is not fulfilling its responsibility. At the same time, critical of the council's decision not to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, the General Assembly used its own authority to establish an independent investigatory mechanism to gather evidence to support future prosecutions for atrocity crimes.

R2P has also been incorporated into the council's work elsewhere. Resolution 1996, adopted in July 2011, established a UN peace operation for South Sudan and called for international assistance to help the new government there to fulfil its responsibility to protect. Resolution 2014 (October 2011), reminded the government of Yemen of its primary responsibility to protect its population. In its September 2011 presidential statement on preventive diplomacy, the council again recalled its commitment to R2P. More recently, Resolution 2085 (2012) on Mali authorized an international mission to assist the government there in fulfilling its responsibility to protect (among other things), Resolution 2117 (2013) on small arms and light weapons recognized their capacity to result in the commission of R2P crimes, and Resolution 2121 (2013) on the Central African Republic underscored the government's responsibility to protect its own population.

Thus, in a remarkably short space of time R2P has been transformed from a concept proposed by an international commission into an international norm endorsed by the world's governments and usefully employed in more than a dozen situations. It is a principle that increasingly frames how the world thinks about the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities and responses to them. Translating that principle into consistent practice has proven more difficult, however, and the practical record is mixed. That is primarily because R2P does not exist in a social vacuum but instead interacts with other norms and interests and is subject to political contestation. For example, even if actors agree on the substance of R2P as a principle, they may still disagree radically on the best way of achieving its ambitions or on whether doing so is more, or less, important than achieving other goals, such as stability and order. Justin Morris (2015) coined the apt phrase 'dual responsibility' to point to the fact that the world's great powers have not just a responsibility to protect but also a responsibility to maintain international peace and security, and there are times in which the two imperatives might not correspond. Moreover, we tend to greatly exaggerate international society's capacity to influence domestic politics through means short of comprehensive interventions, which are inevitably costly and risky undertakings (Straus 2015: 326).

Nevertheless, R2P has been associated with two underlying shifts in global practice. First, when atrocity crimes are committed international society is much more likely than it once was to take some form of collective action. During the Cold War, less than half of all cases of atrocity crimes elicited an international response. For example, the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, in which a quarter of the country's entire population was killed between 1975 and 1978, did not even get on the agenda of the UN Security Council. This rate of engagement increased to a little more than half after the Cold War, but grew to exceed 90 per cent after the adoption of R2P. Second, where once protection was a peripheral concern, international responses now prioritize the protection of populations from atrocity crimes (Bellamy 2015).

Conclusion

The R2P is an attempt to reconfigure the relationship between sovereignty and fundamental human rights in a way that strengthens the protection of vulnerable populations while protecting cherished international rules about non-intervention. Traditionally it was assumed that the demands of international order required strict adherence to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference and that in cases where the security of states and individuals collided, the former should be privileged. After the Cold War, many governments and scholars argued that in grave circumstances sovereignty should be suspended and intervention permitted. This produced a complex debate about who had a right to authorize such interventions and in what circumstances.

This debate pitted sovereignty against human rights. In doing so, however, it played down both the original meaning of sovereignty and two centuries of republican thinking. From the republican perspective, sovereignty resides with the people and governments may only claim sovereign rights if they fulfil certain basic responsibilities to their people. It is this approach to sovereignty and human rights that underpins the R2P. If sovereignty is understood as interdependent with human rights, then the role of international society becomes one of enabling and supporting sovereigns in the discharge of their responsibilities to their citizens. The R2P argues that this is not just a matter of charity but a matter of responsibility, because the very foundations of sovereignty and international society are individual human rights. As a result, international society has a responsibility to ensure that sovereigns fulfil their duties to their citizens by preventing and reacting to cases of genocide, mass killing and ethnic cleansing and helping to transform societies afterwards. This responsibility was acknowledged at the 2005 World Summit. The principle has been endorsed many times since and has begun to shape both institutional design and political practice. But with practice come new challenges and difficult dilemmas, both political and operational, and much work remains to be done.



Further reading

Alex J. Bellamy, *Responsibility to Protect: The Global Effort to End Mass Atrocities* (Polity, 2010). Examines the origins of R2P and early attempts to implement it.

Alex J. Bellamy, *Responsibility to Protect: A Defense* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

An argument in defence of R2P that takes on some of the critics.

Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All* (Brookings Institution Press, 2009). A powerful argument for R2P by one of its principal advocates.

Luke Glanville, *Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect: A New History* (Chicago University Press, 2013). Demonstrates that responsibilities towards citizens and subjects have always been integral to the concept and practice of sovereignty.

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: ICISS, 2001). The ICISS report setting out the R2P in detail.

Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford University Press, 2000). Still the best book on the norm of humanitarian intervention prior to 2000.

Also see the journal *Global Responsibility to Protect*, which is dedicated to this topic.