

Information, Human Security, and The Responsibility to Protect

by K.J. Wetherholt

International organizations, whose legitimacy rests on their supposed superior knowledge of what is good for a society, and how to achieve it, also find it hard to admit to any mistake... The “international community” ends by oscillating between exaggerated fears and an inflated sense of its own power, between paranoia and megalomania, reflecting in its lurches its half-conscious insecurity about its lack of power, knowledge, certainty, and legitimacy.

-- Introduction, *Can Intervention Work?* (Amnesty International Global Ethics Series, W.W. Norton & Company.) (2011)

Not all neologisms are equally plausible or useful.

-- Roland Paris, quoting from Daniel Deudney in “Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?” (*International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 2)

With the current conflict in Syria, the concept of R2P is currently at the fore of international controversy. In a recent interview with CNN’s Christiane Amanpour as the MIPJ was going to press, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon admitted that there is “no plan ‘B.’” This article seeks to examine the merits of R2P in light of current events.

INTRODUCTION:

THE PRECURSORS TO R2P

The concept of Human Security, and its exact definition, has undergone vast debate among international actors since the end of the Cold War.

Notions of security that seemed relevant before, in which states were aligned with one of two superpowers, the U.S. or the Soviet Union, including via treaty organizations like NATO and the Warsaw Pact, or else were the locations of influence or proxy wars in the geopolitical “South,” following the end of the Cold War meant a flux in power centers and structures, and the resurrection of old border disputes

and ethnic hatreds that had previously been kept in check—or ignored—by the realities of dueling hegemonic control.

Responding to this new paradigm, and the rapid deconstruction of dual-hegemonic influence, in 1994 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) responded with a redefinition of human security with their *Human Development Report*, which redefined security based on the state itself, with the health of that state based on seven specific areas: political security, economic security, community security, personal security, food security, health security and environmental security. Responding further to what it believed often amounted to the needs and realities of the developing world, the UNDP also advocated the broader acceptance of two particular concepts: “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear.”

International relations, like any area of discourse, has ideas that gain popularity when advocated by major institutions or well-known or authoritative voices

within the international community. This is especially true when the international community finds itself amidst a new reality. The desire to “redefine” is almost compulsive, and often those among international policy contingents push for the creation of definitive and attractive concepts and overarching themes that can gain currency if they can strike the right chord.

Because the end of the Cold War represented a prime opportunity to fill up existing vacuums of influence and forge new ground, and as many among diplomatic, aid and development circles are wont to do in also attempting to build consensus, the 1994 UNDP report presented a significant moment to foster such a redefinition of the international reality and to try to build bridges, at least in theory, between the geopolitical “North” and “South” — or in the new and more acceptable parlance, “developed” and the “developing” worlds—and if possible, work, ultimately, toward some kind of parity between them.

“Human security,” then, became a buzz phrase post-Cold War, in the attempt to create some kind of concept that sounded at once powerful, progressive and humanistic in dealing with crisis and conflict—countering the traditional political structuralism of Hegel, Westphalian notions of the State, and post-WWII policies centered on *Realpolitik*, thereby creating some kind of distance from the combative and dualistic tone of old Cold War rhetoric.

It is unfortunate, in putting away the past, which as the old and necessary adage goes, if we do not learn from we are doomed to repeat, that the lessons from WWII would also have been summarily swept under the rug. The very time period which produced the concentration camps of Europe, the horrors of Japanese invasions of China, to the inception of the atomic age in which bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the countless stories of human atrocity that made us all believe—with such dramatic and verifiable documentary proof and firsthand accounts of their commission—that such things should never happen again, and that we had learned from the experience.

However, as tends to happen when a power vacuum occurs, the old regional tensions and ethnic hatreds found their way once again to public consciousness, and “never again” continued, as it had during the distractions of the Cold War (when atrocities continued to occur, but in the shadows of the Superpowers) to be the rhetoric while the unthinkable continued to happen, purportedly under the radar and with almost tacit consent.

But the near prescience of those who had experienced the

horrors of WWII, then all too keenly aware of the tendencies of humanity’s dark side in having just been faced with it, had the foresight not just to create laws to address the crimes of WWII, but to ensure that there would be a way to address, if not prevent, the very same kinds of atrocities that had marred the world’s conscience.

Part of these came with the Nuremberg Conventions and other codified laws dealing with war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. Additionally, the UN Charter authorized military action by the UN Security Council (UNSC), which via Article 42 states:

[T]he Security Council...may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.

However, the very structure of the UNSC via its permanent five (P5) members, which was done for political expediency among the winning powers of WWII, presented a problem. Such CH VII missions authorized by Article 42 and by UNSC resolution were rare during the Cold War (the Korean War, authorized by UNSC Resolution 82 being one exception), primarily because of the conflicting interests in the UNSC P5 and their inherent veto power over any UN action.

In the 1990’s, with the USSR no longer in existence and its former satellites declaring independence, further difficulty arose when, without the constant distraction of the US and USSR being at loggerheads, the CH VII mandate was more easily utilized

to address increasing lawlessness and violence. These CH VII actions, with the exception of the limited nature of the UNSC-sanctioned action, including the use of force, during the first Gulf War in 1991 (UNSC Resolution 678) the remaining actions during the 1990’s, were, for the most part, well-publicized disasters, as exemplified by Somalia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia. This created a profound doubt as to the efficacy of the UN in CH VII mandates, without knowing what possible alternative existed. In certain cases, actions taken by UN member states that had not received prior CH VII authorization to make them “legitimate” actions, would later, such as NATO action in Kosovo in 1999, while not considered “authorized” or “legitimate” at the time, be deemed by the UNSC “legitimate but not legal.”

These difficulties were exacerbated by the reasonable fears of developing countries, whose experiences with foreign stakeholders and world powers had been problematic at best and disastrous at worst since the colonial age. Combined with the profound failure of CH VII actions in the 1990’s in fragile, failing, or failed states, the concept of “intervention,” became synonymous among most in the developing world as Western-justified military intervention, and more for purposes of “neo-imperialist” rather than true humanitarian motives. The perception was that such “interventions” of the kind lauded, in fact, didn’t actually exist. Instead, less benevolent forms of “intervention” seemed to be the norm. And following the debacle regarding inaccurate intelligence proffered leading up to the war in Iraq, it seemed any Western motives could be justified with shoddy or

questionable reports and intelligence, when the real motives were most likely a desire for regional influence, oil and mineral interests, toppling a problematic government, or myriad other rather “non-humanitarian” actions that put power once again in Western hands.

The failure of international military action to stop atrocity, and the fear of the developing world of the perhaps less than benign interests of the developed world, unfortunately also caused “humanitarian intervention” to also be defined solely in terms of armed response, rather than the vast other collections of “interventions” that existed in humanitarian action, from medical interventions to munitions clearance, and even other aid and development operations that sought to address the seven areas described by the UNDP 1994 report. These interventions also included the DDR paradigm—interventions that in a post-conflict setting centered on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of former combatants, inclusive of child soldiers, which were necessary before effective recovery and development considerations could effectively take place. Even the failures and self-interests of developed states with ineffective or irresponsible non-military interventions, inclusive of aid efforts, cast a damning shadow on the term “intervention.”

With such a damning connotation being so seemingly pervasive, the desire for redefinition emerged. International actors thought of ostensibly giving the older concepts, and especially when it concerned the need for military intervention, a new spin, particularly if it were “reframed” from a different perspective,

which included not just an interventionist responsibility now referred to as “protection,” but even a responsibility to “prevent” future atrocity within a new paradigm of Human Security.

This approach had its detractors, and for good reason. These tenets already existed, and with the force of international law. Instead of attempting to clarify, repurpose, and educate about *effective* and *responsible* humanitarian interventions that also exist within and are supported by the very structure of existing international law, and decidedly *acting* on those structures to solidify them, this new structure, R2P (also abbreviated as RtoP), or the Responsibility to Protect, since its formal introduction in 2001 with a report by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), and subsequent advocacy by both former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and current Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, indeed went head-to-head with the notion of Humanitarian Intervention for legitimacy when it came to addressing Human Security.

Its tenets, wide and broad and thereby garnering more consensus than anything more specific and perhaps even more pragmatically operational, supplanted the notion of “intervention” among its creators and advocates, but it didn’t erase its connotations. Instead, even with the introduction of R2P, vitriolic debate continued among developed and developing countries to the point of devolving into pointed semantics, and once again, over the same old issues.

There is a profound danger in creating yet another neologism for an idea already in existence—with existing international law—

for distinctly political—including politically correct—purposes of redefinition, even if it is meant to strengthen traction that comes with trying to reignite international will. The machinations of redefinition and the endless debates that mire the world community in its specifics invariably produce yet another perpetual loop resembling the ancient image of an Ourboros—a snake eating its own tail—showing both a rehashing not just of history, but of philosophical debates that existed even before the Treaty of Westphalia (1648).

While the concept truly meant well, and placed the emphasis, as had Kofi Annan in one of several speeches about the convergence of Human Security and Human Rights (2006) in valuing the individual’s rights as much as the sovereignty of the state, including when the state is ignoring the needs of its own people—or is in fact subjugating them—the additional—and very real danger—is that in the time taken to make whatever arguments based on yet another new paradigm, there will invariably arise situations that cannot be ignored that because of the confusion, including the inability to operationalize what is ostensibly still a philosophy, action is never taken, or if taken, has no clear direction or established authority. This will also come at a cost of lives that could have been saved if those with the will and the courage to act simply do so, and with the presence and authority of post-WWII international law—already having been created for that very purpose in remembrance of WWII atrocity—firmly on their side.

INFORMATION, HUMAN SECURITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

In order to better examine R2P, it is essential to delineate its tenets, or “pillars” and both compare them to existing international legal norms and laws, as well as examine both its successes and its failures.

Information, therefore, is an essential component, both in terms of its role in R2P, and its use as evidence in terms of the proposal of R2P that it be used as an “early-warning system,” which in the case of Syria, has been, most would agree, and to the detriment of tens of thousands of lives, unfortunately, already an abject failure. But it also has other uses, stronger ones, which R2P has not addressed.

Oxford University Press published this year a book titled *The Responsibility to Protect: The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities in Our Time*, which, to be fair, was compiled at the very beginnings of Arab Spring for publication. However, clear issues could still be anticipated in terms of the efficacy of R2P as, what its advocates propose, is an “emerging norm” in Human Security discourse. In other words, among any of the realists among the chapters’ authors, one would have to imagine that a situation such as Syria, in which more than one of the UNSC P5 would have direct interests that could ostensibly act as a functional roadblock, could be anticipated.

The book is extraordinary in its detail and in the sometimes clashing opinions among its varying writers, each of whom contributed a chapter to the book, whether depicting the historical context of R2P; its development as a construct in international security policy; its relevancy in international law; case studies as to where it has been used, could have been used,

or should be used; and ultimately a concluding chapter about its future. Each of the writers, from Desmond Tutu and the late Václav Havel, who write its introduction, to the various scholars and known names in the international sphere writing the chapters making up the body of the work, to its conclusion written by the indomitable Gareth Evans, writes passionately about R2P and from varying important perspectives.

However, at the end of it, there were a couple of nagging questions that were not answered, or were not answered well in justifying R2P, realistically, as a necessary and practicable concept, and in fact in certain instances, again, missed the point from a very relevant policy perspective.

One of these--already mentioned-- was addressed immediately by both Tutu and Havel: “how RtoP will be implemented.” This addresses the very crux of any real discussion of Human Security—how does one “operationalize” a concept such as R2P, when it may have overarching tenets, but no specific, widely accepted means to put these tenets into practice?

Tutu and Havel also address the question of purportedly needing to supplant “humanitarian intervention” as an operational term, referring to the antipathy with which it has been met, quoting then-Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan, speaking following the atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia:

[i]f humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond...to gross systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?

“This,” Tutu and Havel suggest, “is the question that the Responsibility to Protect attempts to Answer.”

Notwithstanding the notion that perhaps Annan’s question could have been rhetorical, R2P attempts to answer this question with the following “pillars”:

- 1) *The responsibility of the state to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity and their incitement;*
- 2) *The commitment of the international community to assist states in meeting these obligations;*
- 3) *The responsibility of the member states to respond in a timely and decisive manner when a state is manifestly failing to provide such protection.*

Tutu and Havel, both having experienced some of the most harrowing of realities, Tutu from Apartheid and Havel from the totalitarian reality of Czechoslovakia under Communism, approach R2P with the kind of hope and faith of those who have seen vast change within their lifetimes, and have been key presences within such change. Here they suggest:

[R2P] is far more than an aspirational doctrine. It is a clear and unequivocal public commitment by world leaders that can and will prevent mass atrocities.

Their very presence in the work’s introduction, and an understanding of both of their histories to triumph over unspeakable conditions and clear adversity, is meant to offer significant and moral weight to the concept, and indeed it does as much as

it can. Knowing what we now know about the international community's failure to respond to a situation like Syria, despite the very popular presence of R2P, and clear evidence of the necessity of some kind of action--those who have advocated it so fervently, such as Kofi Annan, being rather publicly involved in what could be considered the UNSC P5's "active inaction" in Syria--and including inaction from the very world leaders to whom Tutu and Havel refer--in some significant ways shatter Tutu's and Havel's truly earnest and noble intentions. These leaders have failed to respond with either "timeliness" or "decisiveness" when it has mattered most.

Continuing with the chronology of R2P, in 2003, Kofi Annan enlisted an imminent panel of sixteen for the Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, which subsequently produced a report titled, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, which, as Lloyd Axworthy states in Chapter One, referred to R2P and "the responsibility of governments to protect their populations."

He then quotes from the report:

There is a growing recognition that the issue is not the "right to intervene" of any [s]tate, but the "responsibility to protect" of every state when it comes to people suffering from avoidable catastrophe--mass murder and rape, ethnic cleansing by forcible expulsion and terror, and deliberate starvation and exposure to disease.

This is the kind of language that might be true in the best of all possible worlds. A state's self-interest, however, including in

terms of the interest of powers within a state, will always trump the underlying rhetoric of R2P. And R2P proponents also seem blinded to another reality that hampers their efforts: similar language has been utilized to excess in the last decades by dignitaries, leaders, and diplomats alike, if not specifically, then in substance, utilizing the "strongest" possible language of condemnation of any atrocity and subsequently aligning with cloying support of the subjugated, all without the force of action behind those sentiments. This history also proves problematic to R2P's current verbiage, making it seem, at its most benign, like the continued musings of those within an ivory tower, rather than those who are forced to address the gritty reality on the ground, where the visceral nature of atrocity makes such language seem, again, well-intentioned but almost oblivious.

At its worst, and if approached with an understandable cynicism given current international events, it is difficult not to see a quote like this on the merits of R2P through the lens of semantics, as well as self-conscious if not self-serving political spin meant to "reframe" the notion of intervention, if even within a state's own borders. But in either case, whether well-intentioned and oblivious or intentionally manipulative, in terms of logic: in protecting a vulnerable population, one is *in fact* intervening in whatever crisis for the purpose of protection or parity. This is true for, again, the broader notion of intervention, rightly used, when it comes not just to military intervention, but medical intervention; legal interventions when violations of international law are identified,

prosecuted and adjudicated; or even the implementation of other forms of necessary humanitarian action.

The book continues in its examination of R2P, and again with lauding its reception and seemed acceptance by the world community. In 2005, the UN Security Council reaffirmed, not adopted, the tenets of R2P by unanimous resolution via Resolution 1674, in terms of articles 138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document, which support the political commitment to R2P without requiring UN member states any legal obligation to adopt it. While this did give R2P its greatest legitimacy via written support of its tenets, it, however, did not give it the force of law.

According to William W. Burke-White, the author of Chapter Two regarding the development of R2P, this, however, may be seen as part of an "ongoing process of legalization." He further states that R2P's power "ultimately lies in the ability to generate political pressure and compliance pull."

However, this emphasis on political will and pressure is also inherently problematic. In the latest clear, incontrovertible evidence before the world community, and again in the case of Syria, as it indeed is a glaring case of the world's inaction, and a situation in which R2P should have seen its greatest success, R2P has not moved the political machine toward any timely and decisive action, other than ineffectual resolutions condemning violence and inattention to cease-fire agreements, that by all accounts, should trigger CH VII action, as they did in Libya, and as international law clearly prescribes.

Nor is there the "compliance

pull” as written by Burke-White and suggested by many of the other authors. Because of the interests of Russia and China, at least two of the P5 on the UN Security Council, providing arms and other forms of support to Syria’s Bashar al-Assad (not to mention the fear of triggering a proxy war with Iran, also supplying Assad with support), any form of “protection”—as some form of intervention—is not going to come into play in any shape or form of UN CH VII authorization unless the best interests of *all* of the UNSC P5 converge to make this a possibility.

And this is where the notion of information comes in, and proves essential, as the greatest tool in combatting atrocity. However, those advocating R2P miss the point of information entirely, barely even mentioning it except in the same context as nearly every writer does in the work, inclusive of Gareth Evans in the book’s conclusion: information is most suitable as a solely precursory “early warning system” that perhaps can aid in R2P’s “prevention” of atrocity. Voiced most succinctly by Axelworthy:

[I]nformation flow, assessment, and early warning are essential, operationalization of the Responsibility to Protect is more often a political than information challenge.

This once again proves a strange ignorance regarding the value of information in any international action. The ubiquity of information in this “Information Age” may be a given. But in terms of legitimacy and the integrity of content, information, when dealing with crisis and/or atrocity, will only ever be valuable if its integrity is unassail-

able, actionable, and it carries the validity and weight of legal evidence triggering international law. In addition, a detailed and comprehensive account of the atrocities themselves as clear and incontrovertible documentary evidence regarding war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity is essential to make sure recognition of any victims’ experience can occur, and justice can be done in some capacity. And while the notion of an “early warning system” is an important concept, this is not so easy a consideration as one might anticipate, especially on a pragmatic level, and for pragmatic reasons.

As in the case of Syria, among any of the other incontrovertible disasters of the international community when it comes to atrocity, the reality is that it can either be sudden and punctuated, or it can be chronic and systemic, depending upon the context in which it occurs. And only once the first concerning action(s) have occurred can the international community respond, alerted via intelligence, media reports, or other forms of information aggregation, analysis, and dissemination, however quickly such dissemination reaches those with the capacity to act. And before any action can conceivably be taken, the information regarding such atrocity must still be vetted. Many remember the effects of shoddy information—including via questionable intelligence—when it precipitates any action, including military intervention. This is a lesson learned by the entire international community regarding any kind of intervention: what you claim to know must be backed by irrefutable evidence and be categorically unassailable before any action

can be taken.

While the technology exists to now aggregate documentary evidence regarding both atrocity—and its precursors—via satellite and other imaging technology, or crowdsourced information—the “political will” necessary to supersede the self-interests of international actors that would otherwise adopt a “wait and see” approach, the history of a region, its tendency toward violence, prior atrocity, and even adjudication of previous crimes will, in conjunction with documentary evidence, need to be so profound that political will cannot point to anything other than intervention. This is an exceedingly rare occurrence. And also, given the recent international reaction to any kind of preemptive action, and its inherent difficulties raised by many states—including in the developing world regarding sovereignty because of their profound lack of trust for others’ motives—as R2P proponents recognize, there are few who will take such actions unless they are willing to stand, at least at first in the best of cases, initially and decidedly alone.

R2P AND CURRENT INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL LAW

Article 42 of CH VII of the UN Charter, governing the ability of the international community, and even regional treaty organizations via precedent (again, such as NATO in being given legitimacy after the fact) to intervene is one essential tool in terms of addressing atrocity, so is the notion of international criminal law, which is the most specific of all tools that can currently be utilized when facing the evidence of atrocity.

While international criminal law has not been widely recognized as an immediate panacea, it in

fact can be, as it does have teeth, and more than just acting as a caution to those who would commit such crimes, provided international criminal legal structures, given the tools they already have, are willing to use them in the ways intended. As intended, and as they should be practiced, they directly address the realities of the very vulnerable populations who are consistently forgotten except, unfortunately, and including in R2P, most often as a political football.

Such criminal law can--and should (as intimated in the last section)--be utilized to act as a trigger to force intervention according to legal precedent, both as determined by the UNSC (or a regional treaty organization, if the UNSC will not act), and via the initial determinations of irrefutable evidence, that such a crime (and/or crimes) have been committed, thereby setting any such necessary interventions in motion. To stand by and watch genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity take place can indeed have distinctly negative consequences (including in terms of notions of complicity). when such evidence, along with uncompromising public pressure, in terms of state, UNSC, P5, and regional treaty organization self-interest, outweigh the continued use of rhetoric alone.

Additionally, after intervention takes place, such criminal law can--again, if such laws are utilized as they were intended--then act as a means to execute justice, whether within the national courts, or if those courts are not functional or unable to adjudicate such cases for whatever reasons, via the International Criminal Court (ICC) or special tribunal, such as existed

with the ICTY (the former Yugoslavia) and the ICTR (for Rwanda) following the genocide.

(An important note: not all of the P5 are signatories of the Rome Statute, creating the ICC in 1998, and thereby could functionally veto any legal action before the ICC. In such cases, federal or district courts would need to adjudicate.)

While adjudication of law comes after any such intervention, as any vulnerable population suffering such crimes can attest, its importance can also be profound. Justice is not just a way to create closure, there is the possibility with justice (whether within the country itself, via ICC or special tribunal) to abate the pain and the potential for unaddressed hostilities that not only fester, but have the capacity to explode into continued violence. While not always successful, as generations can also forget the lessons of the past, and even at times justice for one party will invariably spark anger among others feeling aggrieved by the outcome, it nevertheless is a real and pragmatic means of addressing atrocity, also forcing such criminal acts to also go on record in all of their harrowing detail. This is not just vindication for the victims, but a record that will continue to exist, and in an official capacity, so that the atrocities cannot so easily be forgotten, also acting as further legal precedent.

These laws, already in existence, directly addressing war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity have been in effect as international law under one or more of the following (as delineated in an excellent chapter on R2P and criminal definitions by Tarun Chhabra and Jeremy B. Zucker):

Article Six of the Nuremberg Charter (1945), the International Criminal Code as codified by the International Law Commission (ILC) and accepted by UN resolution (later integrated into the Draft Code of Offences Against the Peace and Security of Mankind in 1954), The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention) in 1948, the Geneva Conventions (1929 and 1949), and updated Draft Codes in 1994 and 1996, and draft statute for the International Criminal Court.

(An important note: "Ethnic Cleansing," included specifically in R2P, and met with some understood and important poignancy in light of the Balkans, Darfur, and other areas of ethnic/geographic conflict, is indeed covered in substance by the encompassing delineations of the other three crimes, as can be noted in reading the varying conventions, as codified.)

Beginning with the Nuremberg Trials, which marked an almost unheard of attention to immediacy, fairness and diligence to address the crimes of the Nazis and their allies during WWII (for further information on this, an excellent book is *Tyranny on Trial*, by Whitney R. Harris, published by Southern Methodist University Press (Revised Edition) in 1999), these laws in fact give a substantial means to address current crises, given their clear, practicable, and comprehensive nature. Once again, those with experience in international jurisprudence would suggest it is better to utilize laws and legal norms already on the books than perhaps complicate matters by debating the addition of concepts, such as R2P, already sufficiently and specifically ad-

dressed by current law.

CONCLUSION

The very difficulties with the Information Age and its role in the international sphere, including where it comes to definitions and the promulgation and promotion of certain ideas comes with what can be considered a very profound handicap: the unintended consequences of bombast, and in the case of R2P, a political and philosophical idea with no prescribed or legal means to initiate action (namely intervention) or to functionally address impunity when action comes too late.

As mentioned in the *MIPJ*'s introduction, the integrity of information—as content—is sometimes trumped by the emphasis on the means and almost frenzied attention to the immediacy of its dissemination, and for a particular, often political purpose. Among international actors, the purpose is often first to get attention, and by whatever means necessary, for what one can understand is the traction one gains to make a sometimes important point. The motive: from attention comes influence. For those populations in crisis, the jockeying for attention and influence among international stakeholders, can, unfortunately, be both a tragic and even solipsistic exercise, if not a means of making crisis-affected populations unintentional pawns in the machinations of those who claim to represent their best interests.

For atrocity-affected populations, action—as immediate as possible—will always be preferable to yet another debate over semantics among the well-meaning.

In the case of R2P, in the apparent possibilities that seemed to electrify its creators and advo-

cates, its merits were indeed shouted from the rooftops and given cursory support, including at least rhetorically by the UN Security Council, who lauded its merits in affirmation by resolution, but did not give it the standing of international law. It again seemed to be the *cause célèbre* of the international community to address a new era, and like with any idea bent on political will, in the short attention span of the international public, when it came time to prove its merits, with the current crisis in Syria, unlike in Kenya or in Libya, it came hard up against the brick wall of the very self-interests of those who would have the power—the P5 of the UN Security Council—to implement its ideas. As is often the case, in theory something may always be acceptable. In action, and when faced with the self-interests of the powerful, this is where any idea will win or lose according to its abilities to force those powers' hands toward practicable action when it matters, and R2P, with its self-professed political motives, has not proven to have that capacity.

In the book, *The Responsibility to Protect*, there are many opinions worth reading—both for and against R2P—if better to understand the nuances of its origin, its purpose, where it hopes to succeed and where it presents marked difficulty. (The chapter on the treaty creating and codifying participation in the African Union, by Ademola Abass, is excellent, showing that intervention is required according to treaty obligations when faced with atrocity within this as a regional (and actually continental) treaty organization. Though whether or not it is carried out is another matter, with the training and resources given

soldiers under the AU auspices.) The book also provides evidence and case studies regarding where R2P, according to proponents, did work and where it might have worked in context, both minus the clear interests and stakes that would trigger a veto against CH VII intervention from among the P5.

The value of information was predictably summed up by the following, in Nicole Deller's chapter on "Challenges and Controversies," and in similarity to the relegation of the importance of information solely in terms of early warning systems, rather than as irrefutable, actionable documentary evidence of significant atrocity to trigger intervention, as well as in the course of eventual adjudication of subsequent crimes:

The onus is now on those with the information of potential atrocities—within national governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations—to ensure that policy makers are aware of those situations at greatest risk and to present recommendations for action.

This is in no doubt, and is something of vast importance. And indeed, this onus to act is one that anyone in the field does and should know when faced with atrocity, including among any effective government intelligence apparatus, defense and state departments, in addition to those actors on the outside of any local or international government who has stakes on the ground. The question is whether or not those actors will raise the red flag when the time comes, and if they do, will they be able to put enough pressure on international actors, including the UN Security Council, inclusive of the P5,

enough to trigger intervention. And will such intervention come before the atrocity occurs, or will it come, as it has traditionally, and because of the necessity of evidence that forces the hand beyond stakeholder self-interest, after it has already begun to take place.

And in terms of pragmatic action, some who work with crisis-affected populations and whose anger is often palpable when faced with international inaction when the need for it can be proved right there on the ground, have instituted what has become a well-known, but difficult metaphor for many to hear, but one which is nevertheless brutally descriptive: the “butcher bill,” which was once used among military contingents as a brutal reminder of the costs of war, before being co-opted by others regarding all acute crisis. Among medical personnel responding to health crises, this analogy describes what

is actually a widely accepted statistical standard (also quoted in the book in the chapter on Darfur): if the mortality rate in crisis reaches more than 1 death per day per 10,000 people, an emergency exists that requires humanitarian—in this case—medical intervention.

In the case of information that is actionable, as brutal as this example may be, this is exactly the kind of information, again, as evidence, that makes it impossible for international stakeholders not to act without consequences, including international derision, especially when this is a figure, accurate, transparent, and verifiable, and coming from a specific and acceptable international standard, and is then subsequently disseminated among the international public.

Such as with Syria, given the evidence, there will need to be just that kind of tipping point

that demands international action, and beyond current resolutions—which have solely the force of rhetoric. To utilize another analogy, this is the equivalent of cloyingly placing a Band-Aid on the skin of someone who is suffering from metastatic cancer.

There is always some factor that can be found and can break whenever inaction or whatever stalemate, if sufficiently sought. And it will only be this hard, irrefutable, unassailable information, disseminated broadly and used as evidence to force action beyond P5 self-interest, that will make the difference, and in every imaginable case of intervention, and as it should, transcend the powerlessness of platitudes.