

Compilation of essays: Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: New Directions for International Peace and Security? IGRAPÈ Institute March 2013

(...) This publication considers the evolving discussion on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the Responsibility While Protecting (RwP). It features 12 papers by a diverse collection of military personnel, scholars and humanitarian experts from Brazil and abroad. Although focused primarily on the Brazilian perspective, it touches on issues striking the heart of international peace and security, such as state sovereignty, humanitarian intervention, the protection of civilians and peace-keeping operations. Indeed, the concepts of R2P and RwP are connected to twenty first century thinking on the very nature of the international state system and issues of global governance.

In bringing together professionals from across multiple disciplines, it is hardly surprising that there are areas of both convergence and divergence. One area where all authors agree is that R2P and RwP are ultimately highly political processes, even if they have significant technical implications. In making their contributions, all the authors also acknowledge that this edited volume represents the opening, rather than the closing, of a complex debate. Indeed, owing to generous support from Norway, the present edited discussion paper represents the first scholarly treatment of R2P and RwP in Brazil by Brazilians.(...)

The authors agree without exception that prevention is at the core of R2P and RwP, and must remain so. There are underlying legal, moral and ethical imperatives in promoting prevention embedded throughout the principles of R2P and accompanying concepts. In short, R2P advocates the right for prevention and not the right for intervention. It is a reformulation of sovereignty as responsibility. The authors all also acknowledge the necessary challenges and limits of using force to achieve peace and liberal outcomes. (...)

The edited volume focuses not just on the norms and principles shaping R2P and RwP, but also practical issues associated with their implementation. Credible and legitimate peacekeeping and R2P operations depend on effective implementation. On the one hand, field personnel must render distinctions between tactical and strategic protection and assume risks in the short-term for improvement in the long-term. But to do this, they need clear and unambiguous instruction from above. On the other hand, effective implementation requires credible institutions,

including the growing engagement of “southern” partners on the ground. (...)

Notwithstanding great enthusiasm about the promise of R2P and RwP, there are also concerns about its future. Indeed, there are major reservations about the direction of the concept - in particular its politicization and instrumentalization - in the wake of NATO-led intervention in Libya. Some authors are skeptical about the intentions of certain proponents of R2P, but also worry that interventions to “protect civilians” from mass atrocities may in fact have generated new forms of suffering and discontent. Similar concerns emerged in relation to hard military style interventions in Cote D’Ivoire and also the debate around what to do in Syria. At a more prosaic level, there are also some anxieties about the future of R2P and RwP as concepts. For example, there are concerns that Brazil itself has launched an important set of reflections on the limits on the use of force, but has not followed-through. Some fear that the dissenters are gaining ground, many of whom criticize R2P and RwP as a form of political manipulation, as trespassing on sovereignty, as a disproportionate act of force, as a new form of colonialism, as reflecting UN Security Council illegitimacy, or worse. As a result, some authors in this edition feel that R2P is in fact more controversial than ever before.

See the full publication

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