

**'R2P' Involves More Than Military Intervention** Rachel Gerber The Des Moines Register 2  
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(...) The speed with which the international community intervened to protect Libyans from atrocities committed by their own government was truly astounding. Consensus to act built momentum that strengthened United Nations peacekeeping mandates in the Ivory Coast, which recently resulted in a captive Laurent Gbagbo.

Yet, the

**responsibility to protect**

, or

**R2P**

, is a complex framework for mass atrocity prevention and response, and there is a danger in conflating its success with that of recent military engagements. (...)

(...) When preventive efforts fail,

**R2P**

insists the world take action. The use of military force, however, rests explicitly on the inadequacy of peaceful measures to protect populations under threat. Even coercive responses include non-military options such as economic sanctions, travel bans, asset freezes and other diplomatic maneuvers.

Force, once exercised, is difficult to manage. Uncertainties lead to inevitable miscalculations and unintended consequences. In many situations, geopolitical complexities lead even the most enthusiastic of "protectors" to conclude that military intervention will likely do more harm than good. (...)

(...) Many have been quick to criticize the apparent selectivity of a military response to the threat against Ivorian and Libyan civilians, given other cases in which nations have clearly failed to protect their people. If

**R2P**

were reduced to a simple doctrine of military intervention, such selectivity would be difficult to deny.

When you look at other ways **R2P** has been applied, however, the picture balances significantly. Large-scale ethnic violence was stemmed in Kenya in 2008 through mediation prompted by **R2P** principles. Key global players have

invested greatly in the peaceful transition of an independent southern Sudan. Civilian-based stabilization support has sought to diffuse risk in post-atrocity Kyrgyzstan. These efforts may be imperfect, but each reflects acceptance by the international community of its obligation to protect civilians.

**R2P's** ultimate success should be judged not by the number of military responses mobilized to halt mass killing, but rather by the full range of efforts made by the international community to ensure that all nations earn and retain the consent of the governed. The concept as a whole encompasses so much more than intervention. (...)

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