Article

Toward a Legal Theory on the Responsibility to Protect

Monica Hakimi†

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, the central focus of international law has shifted from protecting only sovereign states to protecting individuals.1 Still, the worst imaginable human rights violations—genocides, ethnic cleansings, crimes against humanity, and systemic war crimes—occur with alarming frequency.2 And the international response is often slow or ineffectual.

The most recent development for addressing this problem is the “respon-

† Associate Dean for Academic Programming & Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law School. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the May 2013 SHARES Conference at the University of Amsterdam Law School and the American Society of International Law Human Rights Workshop at the University of California at Berkeley Law School. I thank the participants in those events, in addition to Kristen Boon, Jacob Cogan, Karen Knop, Vijay Padmanabhan, Beth Van Schaack, and Ingrid Wuerth for helpful comments. I also thank Johanna Dennehy for exceptional research assistance.


2. For evidence that these violations are the worst of the worst, see the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 4, opened for signature July 17, 1998, 2187 U.N.T.S. 3; and U.N. Secretary-General, Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: Rep. of the Secretary-General, ¶ 10(b), U.N. Doc. A/63/677 (Jan. 12, 2009).
sibility to protect,” an idea that has received so much attention that it now goes simply by R2P. Almost all heads of state have endorsed R2P.3 The U.N. Secretary General has made R2P a top priority and issued multiple reports on the topic.4 The U.N. Security Council has recognized R2P in both thematic5 and case-specific resolutions.6 Civil society groups have invoked R2P to demand action in places like Libya and Syria.7 And the scholarly literature on R2P—in law, philosophy, and international relations—has mushroomed.8

Yet for all this attention, R2P’s contribution to international law or to the ultimate goal of protecting people from atrocities is uncertain. R2P stands for two basic propositions.9 First, each state must protect its population from atrocities. This proposition is well established in international law,10 but experience demonstrates that states sometimes fail their own populations. R2P’s key innovation is its second proposition: that the broader international community should step in, when necessary, to help at-risk populations. Unlike the first proposition, the second is widely understood not to be legally operative.11

8. See, e.g., ANNE ORFORD, INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (2011); JAMES PATTISON, HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: WHO SHOULD INTERVENE? (2010); RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE (Julia Hoffmann & André Nollkaemper eds., 2012); GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT (peer-reviewed journal published on a quarterly basis); Alex J. Bellamy & Paul D. Williams, On the Limits of Moral Hazard: The ‘Responsibility to Protect,’ Armed Conflict, and Mass Atrocities, 18 EUR. J. INT’L REL. 539 (2011); John F. Murphy, Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Comes of Age? A Skeptic’s View, 18 ILSA J. INT’L & COMP. L. 413 (2012); Esther D. Reed, Responsibility to Protect and Militarized Humanitarian Intervention: When and Why the Churches Failed to Discern Moral Hazard, 40 J. RELIGIOUS ETHICS 308 (2012); Carsten Stahn, Responsibility to Protect: Political Rhetoric or Emerging Legal Norm?, 101 AM. J. INT’L L. 99 (2007).
10. See infra Section IV.A.
11. Gareth Evans & Ramesh Thakur, Correspondence, HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION AND THE
the extent to which it otherwise influences outside states is, at best, speculative and contested.12

Part of R2P's challenge is conceptual.13 The United Nations and almost all of the scholarly literature support a particular vision for R2P—of outside states banding together and doing everything possible to help at-risk populations. R2P is said to fall simultaneously on all outside states or to favor their collective action.14 As for what these states should do, the possibilities are almost endless. R2P emerged from the debate on humanitarian interventions and has always been associated with the use of force.15 A forcible intervention might be the only way to avert ongoing atrocities. But R2P has never been exclusively about forcible interventions. Recently, the conversation about R2P within the United Nations has shifted to the varied non-forcible and proactive measures for trying to prevent atrocities from breaking out.16 Such measures include programs to build domestic institutions or alleviate internal tensions. In the end, then, the vision for R2P that dominates current thinking is incredibly diffuse and open-ended.

This Article critiques that vision and offers an alternative. I argue that R2P should not posit an all-encompassing duty that falls, at once, on the entire international community. It should instead posit a bundle of more discrete duties, and responsibility for each of these duties should attach to specific outside...
states at a time. In particular, an outside state should be responsible as a result of its own conduct or relationships. This vision for R2P is preferable to the one that now dominates R2P thinking because this vision builds on existing international law. International law has already begun to assign states duties for the benefit of foreign populations, and the trajectory is to continue expanding these duties. The duties are legally operative, however, only when responsibility can be pinned on particular states at a time.

My goal in this Article is to offer a framework for refining the R2P idea—that is, for identifying when atrocities do or should trigger an outside state’s responsibility. Rooting this framework in international law, as opposed to in mere policy proposals, might be beneficial for two reasons. First, because international law has already begun to account for the interests that animate R2P, existing legal arrangements have descriptive and predictive value for R2P. They shed light both on the extent to which global actors already support R2P and on the prospects for success going forward. Second, tethering R2P to international law might make it more effective. International law might help broaden R2P’s base of support, influence the behavior of outside states, or legitimize efforts to hold particular outside states responsible.

Because I focus on legal duties, I do not address the right to use armed force.

17. Some philosophers have argued that a moral duty to intervene militarily can fall on specific outside states. Compare, e.g., PATTISON, supra note 8, at 36-38, 182 (arguing for assigning the duty primarily on the basis of each actor’s capacity to achieve good consequences), and Luke Glanville, On the Meaning of ‘Responsibility’ in the ‘Responsibility to Protect’, 20 GRIFFITH L. REV. 482, 494-96 (2011) (arguing that emergent norms assign the duty on the basis of a state’s capacity or historical ties to the population), with Kok-Chor Tan, The Duty to Protect, in NOMOS XLVII: HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION 84, 102 (Terry Nardin & Melissa S. Williams eds., 2006) (arguing that assigning the duty on the basis of capacity might impose “unreasonably heavy burdens on a country just because it is capable of action”). My vision builds on that philosophical argument but differs from it in two respects. First, I focus on legal, not moral, duties. Second, I focus on duties that do not involve the use of armed force.

18. See infra Section IV.A.


force for humanitarian purposes. Though outside states sometimes have that right, \(^{21}\) any duty to use armed force would be completely out of touch with current expectations. First, the duty would be extraordinarily onerous if it were assigned to only one or a small handful of states. \(^{22}\) Second, international law never requires—and is skittish even about permitting—cross-border violence. \(^{23}\) Still, states might have to use other levers of power, like economic or diplomatic measures, to help a foreign population. These other measures might be less effective than force at averting a particular crisis, but they also are less burdensome for the acting state and less intrusive on the territorial state. As such, an outside state might realistically be expected to take these measures even if it would rather not.

The Article proceeds as follows. Part II briefly describes the emergence and development of R2P. Part III argues that framing R2P as a collective duty saps the idea of its legal potential. Part IV presents my alternative vision for R2P. I argue that international law already establishes a solid foundation for R2P. Human rights law and the law on state responsibility together provide the seeds both for defining discrete R2P duties and for distributing among outside states the associated responsibilities. After demonstrating that this foundation exists in international law, Part IV examines how global actors might build upon it to help satisfy R2P’s objectives.

II. R2P’S PROMISE AND CHALLENGE

R2P emerged from the international community’s broad sense of regret for the humanitarian crises in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo. \(^{24}\) These crises triggered an extensive debate among officials, practitioners, and scholars about how to improve the international response to atrocities. The debate initially focused on forcible humanitarian interventions. \(^{25}\) Such interventions are controversial—many would say unlawful—without authorization from the U.N. Security Council or consent from the territorial state. \(^{26}\) Yet the Kosovo crisis

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21. Although international lawyers debate whether outside states may use force for humanitarian ends in the absence of any authorization from the U.N. Security Council, states clearly have this right when they act pursuant to such authorization. See U.N. Charter ch. VII; 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, supra note 3, ¶¶ 138–39.

22. Cf. Eyal Benvenisti, Sovereigns as Trustees of Humanity: On the Accountability of States to Foreign Stakeholders, 107 AM. J. INT’L L. 295, 300-01 (2013) (“Absent strong reciprocal commitments and other institutional assurances, sovereigns are subject only to certain minimal obligations that do not impose substantial burdens on them and that may actually assist them in adopting optimal policies.”); Thomas Pogge, Moralizing Humanitarian Intervention: Why Jurying Fails and How Law Can Work, in NOMOS XLVII: HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION, supra note 17, at 158, 166-67 (discussing the unwillingness of states to commit resources for humanitarian interventions).

23. U.N. Charter art. 2, para. 4; id. ch. VII.

24. See ICISS REPORT, supra note 9, ¶¶ 1.1-4.


demonstrated that the Council might be paralyzed by a permanent member's veto, even when the weight of opinion overwhelmingly favors a military intervention.27 Further, Rwanda demonstrated that states might lack the political will to intervene or, therefore, to seek the Council's authorization.28 The early debate about improving the international response to atrocities thus struggled to overcome the practical impediments to a Council-authorized intervention.

The logjam in that debate began to break in 2001, when an independent commission established by Canada (the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty or ICISS) published a report entitled The Responsibility to Protect.29 The ICISS report made two key moves. First, instead of addressing the right of outside states to intervene militarily, the report declared a responsibility—something akin to a duty—to get involved.30 The report affirmatively encouraged states to try to protect foreign populations. Second, instead of focusing only on military actions, the ICISS report endorsed a broad range of measures for protecting at-risk populations, including measures to target the root causes of atrocity.31 Forcible interventions were just a small piece of the R2P idea.

A few years after the ICISS published its report, the U.N. Secretary General endorsed the R2P idea and then initiated a broader conversation about R2P within the United Nations.32 This conversation was, from the beginning, haunted by R2P's association with humanitarian interventions. States refused to support a new right—and especially a new duty—to intervene militarily in humanitarian crises.33 Thus, when almost all heads of state addressed R2P in...
their 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, they hedged on humanitarian interventions: "We are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council . . . on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations, as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations . . . ." That formulation retreats from the ICISS report, which supports unauthorized humanitarian interventions when all other options for averting a crisis have been exhausted. Many have therefore criticized the World Summit Outcome Document for watering down the R2P idea.

But the document still endorses the normative impulse behind R2P: that outside states should try to protect at-risk populations, even if not with armed force. The document declares that the "international community . . . has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means . . . to help to protect populations from [atrocities]." Moreover, once the outcome document put to the side the question of humanitarian interventions, R2P's popularity grew. Dozens of states have established so-called "focal points" on R2P—national offices that are designed to promote R2P internally and coordinate with other actors internationally. Within the United Nations, the Secretary General, Security Council, and General Assembly have all repeatedly engaged on R2P and, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, supported the basic idea. The Secretary General has also appointed two special advisers on R2P—one to focus on genocide, and the other to work on R2P more generally. With all this support, the Secretary General proudly proclaimed in 2011 that, notwithstanding the persistent question of how to implement R2P, "[n]o government questions the principle" itself.

And yet, the implementation question is real. R2P offers little concrete guidance on what outside states should do for at-risk populations. This, then, is R2P's principal challenge: translating its basic principle into an operational doctrine. To be clear, this doctrine need not be exclusively legal in form. Mere
policy proposals might induce certain outside states to act; states might themselves support the proposals or be responsive to constituents who do. But assigning outside states operative legal duties would mean establishing the expectation that helping at-risk populations is not always discretionary—and that not helping can legitimately trigger an outside state's responsibility.

III. THE UNFULFILLED PROMISE OF COLLECTIVE DUTIES

Almost all of the R2P literature envisions outside states implementing R2P collectively—by banding together to help at-risk populations. This vision drives even the language that is used to articulate R2P. R2P's burdens are said to fall first on the territorial state and then on the international community as a whole. Two kinds of legal claims support this vision. One is that an R2P duty falls simultaneously on all outside states, such that they all must satisfy the same basic standard in any R2P scenario. This claim tries to pin responsibility on every state that does not do enough for the at-risk population. The second claim is that the R2P duty falls not on states themselves but on states' collective organizations, like the United Nations or analogous regional organizations. Here, not satisfying the duty would trigger the organization's responsibility.

These legal claims have some intuitive appeal. Measures to help an at-risk population might well be more effective or legitimate if they are taken collectively than if they are taken by only one or a small handful of states. Moreover, if an R2P duty were widely distributed, then all outside states would have to pitch in. None would carry too heavy a burden. Nevertheless, neither of these claims is likely to gain legal traction in the near term.

A. Assigning R2P to All Outside States Simultaneously

The claim that R2P demands action by all outside states simultaneously has some authoritative support but remains almost entirely aspirational. This claim treats all outside states as if they are in the same boat; none is uniquely obligated to help the at-risk population or responsible when that population suffers. As David Miller has explained, "an undistributed duty . . . to which everybody is subject is likely to be discharged by nobody unless it can be allocated in some way." To appreciate the problem, consider three discrete contexts in which the claim appears, plus evidence that it is inoperative.
First, the 1949 Geneva Conventions require states to “ensure respect” for the Conventions “in all circumstances.”47 This language is widely interpreted to mean that every party must try to avert ongoing war crimes, no matter where or by whom the crimes are committed.48 State officials verbally endorse that interpretation49 but regularly ignore it in practice.50 What’s more, states that stand by in the face of ongoing war crimes are rarely, if ever, held responsible.

Second, the Draft Articles on State Responsibility, which the International Law Commission (ILC) adopted in 2001, aim to identify when states are responsible for violating international law and what follows from these violations. The ILC spent decades developing the draft articles and, from early on, sought to attach special consequences to especially egregious violations.51 In the end, the draft articles declare that all “[s]tates shall cooperate to bring to an end . . . serious breach[es]” of peremptory norms.52 The category of peremptory norms is notoriously indeterminate but, by all accounts, includes mass atrocities.53 Thus, any duty to cooperate on peremptory norms should come into play in scenarios that implicate R2P.

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50. See, e.g., INT’L COMM. OF THE RED CROSS, IMPROVING COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW: ICRC EXPERT SEMINARS, at 3-8 (Oct. 2003) (acknowledging that the supposed duty is not yet operational because states lack the political will to implement it); Carlo Focarelli, Common Article 1 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions: A Soap Bubble?, 21 EUR. J. INT’L L. 125 (2010) (arguing that the supposed duty is not meaningfully enforceable); Toni Pfanner, Various Mechanisms and Approaches for Implementing International Humanitarian Law and Protecting and Assisting War Victims, 91 INT’L REV. RED CROSS 279, 305-06 (2009) (recognizing that “states have rarely ventured beyond discreet representations behind the scenes” to try to avert others’ war crimes).

51. Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, ch. III, pmbl., cmt. 5 (“From the first it was recognized that these developments [on peremptory norms] had implications for the secondary rules of State responsibility which would need to be reflected in some way in the Articles.”). Initially, the ILC sought to establish a category of violations that were so serious that they qualified as “crimes of State.” See generally INTERNATIONAL CRIMES OF STATE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ILC’S DRAFT ARTICLE 19 ON STATE RESPONSIBILITY (Joseph H.H. Weiler et al. eds., 1989) (analyzing the ILC’s earlier efforts).

52. Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 41, § 1. The draft articles also articulate a duty not to recognize situations created by these breaches. See id. art. 41, § 2. The ILC commentary suggests that a duty not to recognize kicks in after the violation has ceased and is mostly relevant in cases involving aggressive force or the right to self-determination. It is not clear how, if at all, such a duty would help avert atrocities, so I do not address the idea here.

53. See id. at art. 40, cmts. 2-6; ALEXANDER ORAKHELASHVILI, PEREMPTORY NORMS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW 50-66 (2006).
Yet the ILC's draft articles do not even try to identify the conduct that would satisfy a duty to cooperate—or, therefore, when a state might be responsible for not cooperating. Though the ILC posits that cooperation can be “non-institutionalized,” it assumes that most cooperation will occur through international organizations. The ILC does not identify what states must do in these organizations, other than simply participate. More significantly, the ILC acknowledges that any duty to cooperate to end violations of peremptory norms might still be aspirational and not (yet) effective law.

Finally, in its 2007 judgment in the Bosnia-Serbia Genocide Case, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) determined that the Genocide Convention obligates states to try to avert genocidal conduct in and by third states. This interpretation is progressive and potentially far-reaching. It arguably requires every party to the Convention to act in the face of genocide. After all, every party has the same obligation under the Convention’s text. However, the ICJ limited that expansive implication. The court explained that the duty to prevent genocide requires different measures of each state, depending on that state’s particular tools for averting a crisis. As a practical matter, an outside state that lacks any nexus to or mechanisms for averting a crisis might not have to do anything at all. The claim that every state must try to avert genocide seems more expansive than the ICJ’s own interpretation and is, in any event, unsupported by state practice. Here again, the claim that a legal duty attaches simultaneously to all outside states is inoperative.

B. Assigning R2P to International Organizations

An alternative claim seeks to attach the R2P duty not to individual states but to their collective organizations. The claim that international organizations

54. Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 41, cmt. 2; see also Nina H.B. Jorgensen, The Responsibility to Protect and the Obligations of States and Organisations under the Law of International Responsibility, in RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: FROM PRINCIPLE TO PRACTICE, supra note 8, at 125, 129 (explaining that the ILC “appears to envisage a form of collective response through the organised international community, that is, the UN”).

55. Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 41, cmt. 2 (“Because of the diversity of circumstances which could possibly be involved, the [draft article] does not prescribe in detail what form this cooperation should take.”).

56. Id. art. 41, cmt. 3 (“It may be open to question whether general international law at present prescribes a positive duty of cooperation, and [any such duty] may reflect the progressive development of the law.”).


58. Id.; see also WILLIAM A. SCHABAS, GENOCIDE IN INTERNATIONAL LAW 545-46 (1st ed. 2000) (describing as “progressive” any interpretation that “requires States to take action not just within their own borders but outside them”); Marko Milanovic, State Responsibility for Genocide: A Follow-Up, 18 EUR. J. INT’L L. 669, 687 (2007) (describing the ICJ’s interpretation as “extremely progressive”).


60. But cf. HR 6 september 2013, m.nt. (Nederland/Nuhanovic) (Neth.). Case 12/03324 (Sept. 6, 2013) (finding that Dutch peacekeepers unlawfully evicted from their base Bosnian men who were later killed).
(IOs) must implement R2P is principally directed at the U.N. Security Council and reflects, at least in part, R2P’s historic association with the use of force.  

Some have argued for requiring the Council to act in humanitarian crises, or for restricting the use of the veto in such cases. Yet the claim against IOs is not directed exclusively at the Security Council. For example, the U.N. Secretary General has identified varied proactive measures that different kinds of IOs might coordinate or implement.

The claim that an R2P duty attaches to IOs is likely to confront serious hurdles in the near term. First, the U.N. Security Council and its regional analogs are run by states. If R2P duties are not functional when they demand that all outside states act simultaneously, why would the duties become functional simply by demanding that states act through collective organizations? The demand on any particular state would still be diluted, both because of the number of states involved and because holding particular states responsible would mean piercing the IO’s veil.

Second, the relevant IOs are, at bottom, political bodies. They have broad
discretion to decide whether and how to help an at-risk population, and they ultimately may decide to do nothing. This does not mean that IOs may do whatever they please. For example, the U.N. Security Council is generally expected to account for human rights interests when it makes decisions. But the Council has considerable discretion to weigh those interests against the countervailing considerations that favor or disfavor a particular decision. Proposals to further constrain the Council’s discretion, including proposals on R2P, have had little success. The idea that the Council is obligated to respond to humanitarian crises is, in José Alvarez’s words, “absurdly premature and not likely to be affirmed by state practice.”

Third, even if IOs had an R2P duty, the extent to which it could meaningfully be enforced is unclear. IOs are rarely held responsible for international


67. See, e.g., ANTONIOS TZANAKOPOULOS, DISOBeyING THE SECURITY COUNCIL 202 (2011) (“The threat of massive disobedience . . . is a potent tool for inducing compliance of a powerful organ [such as the Security Council] with international law.”); cf. Ian Hurd, The Strategic Use of Liberal Internationalism: Libya and the UN Sanctions, 1992–2003, 59 INT’L ORG. 495, 523 (2005) (“Once the dominant powers have come to rely in part on a legitimatized institution to provide order in the international system, . . . their influence thereafter relies on a perpetual effort to police and maintain the legitimacy of the institution.”).


69. See Nico Krisch, Introduction to Chapter VII: The General Framework, in 2 THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS: A COMMENTARY, supra note 66, at 1258 (“It is then up to the [Security Council] to strike the concrete balance between humanitarian and human rights concerns and the goal of maintaining peace.”).


73. See, e.g., Anastasia Telestsky, Binding the United Nations: Compulsory Review of Dis-
puts Involving UN International Responsibility Before the International Court of Justice, 21 MINN. J. INT’L L. 75, 80 (2012) (noting that the ILC’s recent draft articles on IO responsibility fail to answer how the U.N. might be held responsible).


76. See Draft Articles on IO Responsibility, supra note 65, art. 51, cmts. 4, 6 (recognizing that the “[p]ractice concerning countermeasures taken against international organizations is undoubtedly scarce,” and that countermeasures might be ill-suited for IOs because they might “hamper the functioning of the responsible international organization and therefore endanger the attainment of the objectives for which that organization was established”).
IV. THE POTENTIAL OF INDIVIDUAL DUTIES

The claim that outside states should collectively implement R2P translates poorly to international law. No matter whether the claim is directed at all outside states simultaneously or at states' collective organizations, it is unlikely to garner support from international law. Instead, R2P should offer a framework for obligating and then holding responsible particular outside states. Each state should have multiple, discrete duties relating to R2P. And in any given case, responsibility for one or another duty should attach to the state or small handful of states that, because of their own conduct or relationships, have unique ties to the situation. This alternative vision for R2P is appealing because it is already rooted in international law and thus has the potential to gain legal traction going forward.

Some readers might instinctively worry about encouraging outside states to act individualistically. Working through an IO or with other states can curb a state's opportunistic impulses or legitimize efforts to help the at-risk population. In contrast, acting alone gives the outside state more leeway to exploit its power for its own gains, to the potential detriment of the territorial state or population. This worry is understandable but should not be overstated. Outside states that want to act opportunistically may already do so. They may take non-forcible measures, without going through an IO, to help at-risk populations. The question is when to convert that right into a duty—when to require outside states to take measures that they might otherwise forego. Any such duty could be crafted to lessen, rather than increase, the risk of individual states acting invidiously. For instance, certain R2P duties might kick in only after an outside state has inserted itself into a situation. Such duties might dissuade states from getting involved in the first place or might influence states that are involved to act benevolently.

Other readers might object that my vision is instead too cautious. The duties that exist or realistically might emerge in international law will sometimes be too weak to protect people from atrocities. The chances of success might be


78. International law differentiates between non-forcible measures that comply with the acting state's legal obligations and non-forcible measures that do not comply. Compliant measures are lawful. See Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, at ch. II, cmt. 3; CHRISTIAN J. TAMS, ENFORCING OBLIGATIONS ERGA OMNES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW 8-9 (2005). Noncompliant measures are usually unlawful but can be excused as countermeasures, when they are taken against a scofflaw state. In most circumstances, countermeasures are available only to states that have been specifically injured by the scofflaw's breach. But the weight of state practice suggests that, in cases involving especially egregious human rights violations, countermeasures are available to all states. See ELENA KATS EllI PROUKAKI, THE PROBLEM OF ENFORCEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL LAW 204-07 (2010); TAMS, supra, at 208-51; Martin Dawidowicz, Public Law Enforcement Without Public Law Safeguards? An Analysis of State Practice on Third-Party Countermeasures and Their Relationship to the UN Security Council, 77 BRIT. Y.B. INT'L L. 333 (2006).

79. See infra Section IV.B.
higher if states banded together, or if responsibility fell on states that were not already implicated in the situation by virtue of their own conduct or relationships. Yet the vision that I advance would establish only a floor—not necessarily a ceiling—of what outside states might do. States that want to do more always could. Further, even if R2P’s legal articulation is limited in the ways that I suggest, its normative impulse and rhetoric might be available to advocate for more robust, discretionary, and collective action.

A. Theoretical Foundations

I turn, then, to demonstrating that this vision for R2P is rooted in existing international law. International law has two natural starting points for thinking about R2P: human rights law and the law on state responsibility. These two bodies of law provide a foundation for assigning outside states duties that benefit foreign populations and then for allocating the associated responsibilities.

1. The Seeds for Prescribing R2P-Relevant Conduct

Human rights law and the law on state responsibility both seek to prescribe R2P-relevant conduct. Like R2P, human rights law is fundamentally concerned with protecting people from harm. This body of law recognizes a broad range of rights—for instance, rights to life, liberty, health, and food. It then assigns states three kinds of duties to help realize those rights. Duties to respect are paradigmatic duties not to intrude on rights. For instance, a duty to respect the right to life prohibits states from arbitrarily killing people. A duty to respect the right to food prohibits states from actively depriving people of food. Duties to protect require states to try to restrain third parties from violating rights. Protecting the right to life means taking reasonable steps—or as sometimes stated, exercising due diligence—to prevent murder. Depending on the circumstances, a duty-holding state might have to clamp down on gang-related violence or try to incapacitate someone who is about to detonate a bomb. Finally, duties to fulfill require states to help realize positive liberties. These duties are unlike the other two in that they do not assume a single, identifiable abuser. Fulfilling the right to life might mean guaranteeing emergency medical care or responding competently to a natural disaster.

That taxonomy of human rights duties is conceptually useful for R2P. It reminds us that one objective—like avoiding unnecessary losses of life—can


81. See, e.g., Olivier De Schutter et al., Commentary to the Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations of States in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 34 HUM. RTS. Q. 1084, 1090 (2012) (“The obligation to comply with internationally recognized human rights imposes three levels of duties on states: to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights.”). For a review of various efforts to expand these duties, or to develop slightly different or more precise duties, see MAGDALENA SEPÚLVEDA, THE NATURE OF THE OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS 157-248 (2003).

82. Cf. Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoorsamity v. West Bengal, (1996) 4 S.C.C. 37 (India) (finding that the right to life grounds a duty to provide emergency medical care).
justify multiple duties. States might have to achieve that objective in different ways. Moreover, disaggregating the objective might make it more manageable. Rather than establish one daunting duty to avoid unnecessary losses of life, human rights law establishes three more concrete duties: a duty not to kill unnecessarily, a duty to try to protect people from third-party killings, and a duty to create conditions in which life is not unduly at risk. R2P would benefit from a similar approach. R2P is currently fashioned as an all-encompassing duty to protect—a duty to try to shield people from third-party atrocities. R2P might instead articulate a bundle of more discrete duties.

The question, then, is how to define those duties. Human rights law provides a potentially useful model for R2P but would have to be further developed to support R2P. As a matter of positive law, human rights law applies principally in a state’s own territory, for the benefit of its own population. The current trend is to expand the extraterritorial scope of application of human rights law. Yet this trend is contested and deeply under-theorized. Most decisions that apply human rights law extraterritorially do so by reference to state control. The more control a state exercises in an extraterritorial setting, the greater the likelihood that the state will be held to its human rights duties. But the relevant decisions lack a coherent account of when and why control matters. These decisions vary on the kinds of extraterritorial control that trigger a state’s human rights duties, on whether factors other than control can trig-

83. See, e.g., ICCPR, supra note 80, art. 2, § 1 (obligating each party to respect and ensure rights of individuals “within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction”); Legal Consequences of Construction of Wall in Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, 2004 I.C.J. 131, ¶ 109 (July 9 (“[T]he jurisdiction of States [for purposes of applying human rights law] is primarily territorial . . . .”)); Al-Skeini v. United Kingdom, App. No. 55721/07, 2011 Eur. H.R. Rep. ¶¶ 131–32 (explaining that state obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights are “primarily territorial” and apply extraterritorially only in “exceptional circumstances”).


86. MILANOVIC, supra note 84, at 264 (describing the relevant decisions—particularly the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights—as so “unprincipled and unworkable” that they “cannot be fixed with a minor ‘clarification’ here or a ‘distinguishing’ there” because “[w]hat it needs is radical surgery”).

87. See infra notes 88-89 and accompanying text.

The human rights duties and the supposed duty to cooperate raise a fol-

dge these duties;¹⁹ and on whether the duties are always triggered simultane-
ously or can be triggered piecemeal, depending on the circumstances of a case.¹⁰ Further, whatever the extraterritorial scope of a state’s ordinary human rights duties, its R2P duties might be more expansive. Outside states might rea-
sonably have more demanding duties in cases of atrocity. Indeed, the treaties that specifically regulate states on atrocities—the Geneva and Genocide Con-
vocations—are widely understood not to be territorially limited.¹¹ Thus, R2P might build on human rights law but needs its own conceptual work. R2P must justify assigning duties to outside states in cases of atrocity.

Likewise, R2P might build on the law on state responsibility. Recall that the Draft Articles on State Responsibility claim a unique enforcement duty—a duty to cooperate on enforcement—in cases of atrocity. Like R2P, this claim is motivated by the idea that some human rights violations are so egregious that they justify a serious response.¹² But alas, any duty to cooperate is not yet functional. The ILC could not identify the level or kind of cooperation that is required of outside states. Again, R2P must do more conceptual work.

2. The Seeds for Grounding R2P Responsibilities

The human rights duties and the supposed duty to cooperate raise a fol-


89. Compare, e.g., Cordula Droege, The Interplay Between International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law in Situations of Armed Conflict, 40 ISR. L. REV. 310, 325-35 (2007) (reviewing cases and concluding that “the basic requirement for extraterritorial application . . . is effective control, either over a territory or over a person”), and sources cited supra note 88 (predicating extraterritorial application on indicia of control), with, e.g., Saldaño v. Argentina, Petition, Inter-Am. Comm’n H.R., Report No. 38/99, OEA/Ser.L/V/II.102, doc. 6 rev. ¶ 17 (“[A] state . . . may be responsi-
bles under certain circumstances for the acts and omissions of its agents which produce effects . . . outside that state’s own territory.”), and De Schutter et al., supra note 81, at 1149-54 (asserting that duties to fulfill apply extraterritorially on the basis of states’ capacities).

90. Compare, e.g., Bankovic v. Belgium, App. No. 52207/99, 2001-XII Eur. Ct. H.R. ¶ 65 (asking about “the scope and reach of the entire Convention system of human rights protection”), with, e.g., Al-Skeini, App. No. 55721/07, 53 Eur. H.R. Rep. ¶ 137 (explaining that the duties can, at least in some sense, “be ‘divided and tailored’”), and Cerone, supra note 84, at 397 (2007) (“[I]t may be that negative obligations apply whenever a state acts extraterritorially . . . but that the degree of positive ob-
ligations will be dependent upon the type and degree of control (or power or authority) exercised by the state”).

91. 1949 Geneva Conventions, supra note 47, arts. 2-3; Application of Convention on Preven-

92. See Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 12, cmt. 7 (asserting that “states have a special role [in creating peremptory norms] as par excellence the holders of normative authority on behalf of the international community” and that the violation of such norms might trigger “a stricter regime of responsibility than that applied to other internationally wrongful acts”).
low-up question for my vision for R2P: if the duties go unsatisfied, when and why would particular outside states be responsible? The answer, I argue, must be extracted from the intersection between human rights law and the law on state responsibility. Under these two bodies of law, responsibility relating to human suffering stems from either the state’s own misconduct, the state’s unique relationship with the malefendant, or a messy combination of both.

To start, consider a state’s well-established duty not to commit atrocities in its territory. A territorial state that commits atrocities violates this duty and is responsible. But of course, the state cannot itself commit atrocities; the state is just a concept. A more accurate formulation is that the state is responsible if its agents commit atrocities. That formulation highlights three important points relating to state responsibility. First, state responsibility results from the concurrent application of so-called primary rules and secondary rules. The primary rules in human rights law prescribe certain conduct. Secondary rules in the law on state responsibility identify whether that conduct is attributable to a state and, if so, what follows from a breach.

Second, although these two bodies of law are understood to be distinct, one sometimes turns on the other. For example, any duty to cooperate on enforcement under the secondary rules on state responsibility would kick in for only some primary rules—namely, the primary rules on peremptory norms. Likewise, primary rules in human rights law require a state to prevent its agents from committing atrocities precisely because they are its agents—as defined by the secondary rules on state responsibility. Under the law on state responsibility, state agents have particular kinds of relationships with the state. State officials of course qualify as agents. So do people who are not formally officials but nevertheless act on the state’s behalf. For example, the Draft Articles on State Responsibility posit that if a state empowers a private entity to perform a classically governmental function, then the entity becomes an agent while performing that function. If the state effectively controls someone’s conduct, the person becomes an agent while committing the conduct.

Third, a state is strictly responsible for its agents’ misconduct because it is expected to oversee its agents and ensure that they behave. To be clear, the state is responsible even if it did not actually oversee or control a particular agent. Control over someone can create an agency relationship if that relationship does not otherwise exist, but a lack of control over someone who al-

93. This duty is both well established in human rights law, see supra Section IV.A, and part of the classic formulation on R2P, see INT’L COMM’N ON INTERVENTION & STATE SOVEREIGNTY [ICISS], THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: RESEARCH, BIBLIOGRAPHY, BACKGROUND 147 (2001); Sheri P. Rosenberg, Responsibility to Protect: A Framework for Prevention, 1 GLOBAL RESP. TO PROTECT 442, 450–53 (2009).
95. Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 4.
96. Id. art. 5.
97. Id. art. 8.
98. Id.
ready qualifies as an agent does not dissolve the agency relationship or relieve
the state of responsibility. The whole point of this strict responsibility regime
is to encourage the state to establish control over its agents.

I have argued in another work that human rights duties to protect reflect a
similar logic. A state is not expected to oversee third parties—that is, people
who are not its agents—to the same extent that it oversees its own agents. Con-
sequently, a state is not strictly responsible every time a third party violates
rights. Duties to protect are due diligence duties, meaning that the state is re-
sponsible only if it (or more precisely, its agents) should have done more to re-
strain the third party. Moreover, whether a state should have made that effort
depends largely on the nature of its relationship with the third party. A state
must try to restrain third parties in its territory because of its governance rela-
tionship with those actors. States exist, at least in part, to maintain order and
enforce the law against inhabitants who might intrude on individual liberties.

I demonstrate in Section IV.B that, where international law already holds
an outside state responsible for human suffering, it likewise does so on the ba-
sis of the state's own conduct or relationships. These grounds for pinning re-
ponsibility on a state are in tension with two other grounds that appear in the
R2P literature. First, most of the R2P literature assumes that all outside states
are in the same boat—that none has a legally relevant nexus to the at-risk popu-
lation that justifies holding it, but not all other outside states, responsible. In
fact, outside states can be differently situated relative to the at-risk population.
Some outside states might participate in or contribute to a humanitarian crisis,
or might have a unique relationship with the perpetrators. These factors justify
pinning responsibility on those outside states, even if not on all others.

Second, some have proposed grounding outside state responsibility in
each state's positive capacity to help the at-risk population. This proposal

99. Id. art. 4, cmt. 9 ("[T]r is . . . irrelevant whether the internal law of the State in question
gives the [State] power to compel the [agent] to abide by the State's international obligations."); id. art. 5,
cmt. 7 ([T]here is no need to show that the conduct was in fact carried out under the control of the State."); id. art. 7, cmt. 2 (asserting that the state is responsible even when an agent "has manifestly ex-
cceeded its competence").

100. Monica Hakimi, State Bystander Responsibility, 21 EUR. J. INT'L L. 341 (2010). Note that,
because both kinds of duties are relationally grounded, they sometimes are conflated or bleed into each
other at the margins. See id. at 353-54; infra notes 139-151 and accompanying text (discussing exam-

101. See, e.g., ICISS REPORT, supra note 9, ¶ 2.15; Rep. of the Secretary-General's High-Level
Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, supra note 32, ¶ 29; see also Michael Ignatieff, Intervention
and State Failure, DISSENT, Winter 2002, at 114, 119 ("[S]tate sovereignty, instead of being the enemy
of human rights, has to be seen as their basic precondition."). This idea has deep roots in political theory.
See, e.g., THOMAS HOBBES, LEVIATHAN 153 (Richard Tuck ed., Cambridge Univ. Press 1991) (1651);
JOHN LOCKE, SECOND TREATISE ON CIVIL GOVERNMENT §§ 7-13, 123-30 (Peter Laslett ed., Cambridge
Univ. Press 1988) (1689); ROBERT NOZICK, ANARCHY, STATE, AND UTOPIA 24-25 (1974); MICHAEL
WALZER, THINKING POLITICALLY 251-62 (2007); see also Steven J. Heyman, The First Duty of Gov-
ernment: Protection, Liberty and the Fourteenth Amendment, 41 DUKE L.J. 507, 512-20 (1991) (review-
ing political theories).

102. See PATTISON, supra note 8, at 36-38, 182 (arguing for assigning the duty primarily on the
basis of each actor's capacity to achieve good consequences); Luke Glanville, supra note 17, at 494-96
(arguing that emergent norms assign the duty on the basis of a state's capacity or historical ties to the
population); see also Arbour, supra note 30, at 455 (arguing that states "with the capacity to project
power and mobilise resources" have particular duties and that "powerful States may be reasonably ex-
arguably finds support in the *Genocide Case*. Recall that the ICJ interpreted the Genocide Convention to require outside states to try to prevent genocide. The ICJ then asserted that this duty is contingent on each state’s “capacity to influence” the perpetrators. Yet the ICJ did not define capacity in terms of the state’s overall military, financial, or diplomatic might. It defined capacity in relational terms:

This capacity itself depends, among other things, on the geographical distance of the State concerned from the scene of the events, and on the strength of the political links, as well as links of all other kinds, between the authorities of that State and the main actors in the events. The State’s capacity to influence must also be assessed by legal criteria, since it is clear that every State may only act within the limits permitted by international law; seen thus, a State’s capacity to influence may vary depending on its particular legal position vis-à-vis the situations and persons facing the danger . . . .

The nature of the state’s relationship with the perpetrators affects whether the state can and should exert its influence over them.

In the *Genocide Case*, the ICJ was clearly focused on that relational question. The ICJ underscored that, even though the perpetrators were not Serb agents, they received immense guidance and support from Serbia. Serbia’s dubious conduct—its support for an armed group in another state—gave it a unique relationship with that group. Precisely for that reason, Serbia both could and should have tried to restrain the group’s members from committing genocide. I return to the *Genocide Case* and its lessons for R2P below. The point here is that, although the judgment used the word “capacity,” it provides at best mild support for grounding responsibility in a state’s positive capacity to help. The judgment is instead consistent with my approach. Serbia’s responsibility is justifiable because of a messy mix of its conduct and relationship with the Bosnian Serbs.

In any event, grounding responsibility primarily in each state’s positive capacity would be misguided. States that are especially capable would repeatedly carry a disproportionate R2P burden, even if their involvement in the situation would lack legitimacy, even if other states are also highly capable (but expected to play a leading role in bolstering appropriate measures of prevention, dissuasion and remedy . . . commensurate with their weight, wealth, reach, and advanced capabilities”).


104. *Id.*


106. *See Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicar. v. U.S.)*, 1986 I.C.J. 14, ¶ 205 (June 27) (explaining that the customary principle of non-intervention prohibits states from supporting “subversive or terrorist armed activities within another State”).

less so,108 and even if those other states actually contributed to the problem. Moreover, grounding responsibility primarily in each state’s positive capacity would absolve states that are incapable, rather than encourage these states to develop some capacity.109 Of course, states are disparately capable and should not have to do more than they can reasonably bear. An outside state that cannot satisfy an R2P duty unless it abandons other, more important duties might have a more lenient R2P duty or be excused altogether from a particular duty.110 But if the vast majority of outside states can reasonably satisfy a duty, then their responsibilities should not be allocated on the basis of their positive capacities.

B. An Exemplary Bundle of R2P Duties

A foundation for outside state responsibility exists in international law but must be further developed to support R2P. I outline below four plausible bases for holding an outside state responsible—when it: (1) participates in extraterritorial atrocities, (2) does not make reasonable efforts to restrain third-party participants, (3) obstructs a third party’s protective measures, or (4) does not help lessen the risk of atrocities breaking out. These four bases vary in the extent to which they are already established in international law. But each builds on the law’s existing foundation and pins responsibility on particular

108. Tan, supra note 17, at 102.
109. Perhaps for these reasons, human rights bodies generally assume that states either have or can develop the capacity to secure basic rights, at least in their own territories. See, e.g., Assanidze v. Georgia, App. No. 71503/01, 2004-II Eur. Ct. H.R. 221, ¶ 139 (explaining that control over an autonomous republic in the state’s territory created a “presumption of competence”). For example, these bodies commonly recommend the same measures to states with vastly different capacities. Compare, e.g., Comm. on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 9 of the Convention: Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Germany, ¶ 18, U.N. Doc. CERD/C/DEU/CO/18 (Aug. 21, 2008) (recommend- ing that Germany “prevent and punish perpetrators of racially motivated acts of violence”), with, e.g., Comm. on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 9 of the Convention: Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Cote d’Ivoire, ¶ 12, U.N. Doc. CERD/C/62/CO/1 (June 3, 2003) (recommending that Cote d’Ivoire “prevent a repetition of [racial and xenophobic] violence and punish the persons responsible for it”). Moreover, treaty bodies are generally unsympathetic to the idea that a state is absolved of its human rights duties by virtue of its incapacity. See, e.g., Human Rights Comm., Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: Comments of the Human Rights Committee: Algeria, ¶ 3, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.95 (Aug. 18, 1998) (noting that “a general climate of violence heighten[s] [rather than mitigates] the responsibilities of the State party to re-establish and maintain the conditions necessary for the enjoyment and protection of fundamental rights ...”); Human Rights Comm., Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Convention: Comments of the Human Rights Committee: United Republic of Tanzania, ¶ 5, U.N. Doc. CCPR/79/Add.12 (Dec. 28, 1992) (emphasizing that a reduction in available resources “does not exempt the State party from the full and effective application of the Covenant”). Indeed, even the treaty body that oversees the ICESCR, which expressly defines states’ duties by reference to capacity, see ICESCR, supra note 80, art. 2, § 1, assumes that all states can and must realize a minimum core of ICESCR rights, see Comm. on Econ., Soc. & Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 3: The Nature of States Parties’ Obligations, ¶ 10 (Dec. 14, 1990), reprinted in 1 INT’L HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS, COMPILATION OF GENERAL COMMENTS AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES 7, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9 (May 27, 2008).
110. Cf. James W. Nickel, How Human Rights Generate Duties to Protect and Provide, 15 HUM. RTS. Q. 77, 81 (1993) (“When we ask whether a certain party can bear a burden, we really want to know whether that party can bear that burden without abandoning other responsibilities that ought not be abandoned.”).
outside states by virtue of their own conduct or relationships.

To be clear, my goal here is not to delineate precisely when outside states are or should be responsible. Neither is it to endorse this particular bundle of duties, or even to suggest that every duty in this bundle is realizable. My goal is to show that my vision for R2P—which would establish multiple R2P duties and assign responsibility on the basis of each state's conduct or relationships—has roots in and can continue to build on international law.

1. Duty to Respect

To begin, outside states might be responsible for participating in atrocities. This responsibility might seem obvious because it already has solid support in international law, but it is completely absent from the R2P discourse. The R2P literature typically asserts a duty to respect only for the territorial state. The omission for other states might be an unfortunate oversight, or it might reflect a lingering discomfort with applying human rights duties extraterritorially. In either event, responsibility for participating in extraterritorial atrocities exists or could easily develop in international law.

As discussed, the treaties that specifically address atrocities—the Geneva and Genocide Conventions—are not geographically limited. War crimes and genocide are prohibited no matter where they occur. Yet because international law regulates atrocities piecemeal, the grounds for prohibiting other extraterritorial atrocities are murkier. In particular, some conduct that qualifies as a crime against humanity might fall through the law's regulatory cracks. Crimes against humanity are catchall prohibitions that developed in customary law, primarily to penalize individuals.\footnote{See Steven R. Ratner, Jason S. Abrams & James L. Bischoff, Accountability for Human Rights Atrocities in International Law: Beyond the Nuremberg Legacy 48-51 (3d ed. 2009); Leila Nadya Sadat, Crimes against Humanity in the Modern Age, 107 AM. J. INT'L L. 334, 337-40 (2013).} State officials who perpetrate these crimes are individually responsible. But for the state to be responsible, the conduct must violate one of its obligations.\footnote{See Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 2., cmt. 7 & art. 58.} Although a state that commits crimes against humanity in its own territory clearly violates its human rights duties, the extent to which these duties apply extraterritorially is contested. The duties almost certainly apply when a state controls either foreign territory or persons on foreign soil, but the duties do not necessarily apply when the state's situational control is more tenuous.\footnote{See supra notes 88-89 and accompanying text.} For example, a state that sprays toxic chemicals over a foreign city or shares intelligence in order to assist with extraterritorial killings might not exercise the kind of control that clearly triggers human rights law.

The territorial limits in human rights law thus raise a conceptual question for R2P: why would duties to respect ever be territorially limited? In other words, why wouldn't international law always prohibit a state from intruding on human rights, no matter the state's location or level of control? The best an-

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The territorial limits in human rights law thus raise a conceptual question for R2P: why would duties to respect ever be territorially limited? In other words, why wouldn't international law always prohibit a state from intruding on human rights, no matter the state's location or level of control? The best an-
swer is that most duties to respect balance the interest in protecting people from state intrusions against countervailing interests that justify such intrusions. The duty not to kill permits killings to protect innocents.114 The duty not to restrict religious expressions permits restrictions for public safety.115 Extraterritorial duties to respect are justifiably limited, then, if the balance that has been struck for a domestic setting is off-kilter for an extraterritorial one. A state that acts extraterritorially and without control might lack the tools and institutions that, back home, enable it to satisfy its legitimate interests with only minimal intrusions on individual liberties.

This rationale for limiting duties to respect does not warrant giving states unbounded discretion to harm people abroad. It warrants accommodating the extraterritorial element by redefining the point at which a state intrusion is justifiable.116 Atrocities are, by definition, monstrous in kind or scale, so they cannot plausibly be justified by any countervailing interest. And indeed, it is difficult to imagine any state claiming a right to participate in atrocities just because it acts abroad. The best rationale for limiting duties to respect in more run-of-the-mill cases is inapt in cases of atrocity.

Under the Draft Articles on State Responsibility, a state would violate its R2P duty to respect not only by itself perpetrating atrocities but also by assisting the perpetrators "with a view to facilitating" the atrocities.117 An assisting state would be responsible if its agents had something between the intent to commit atrocities and the knowledge that atrocities would be committed.118 In the above examples, purposefully spraying chemicals over a foreign population or sharing intelligence to facilitate atrocities would render the outside state responsible.

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115. See ICCPR, supra note 80, art. 18; European Convention on Human Rights, supra note 114, art. 9.


117. Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 16, cmt. 5.

118. See id. art. 16, cmt. 4 (posing that the assisting state must "be aware of the circumstances making the conduct of the assisted State internationally wrongful"); see also Lea Brilmayer & Isaias Yemane Tesfaldet, Third State Obligations and the Enforcement of International Law, 44 N.Y.U. J. INT’L L. & POL. 1, 37-51 (2011) (arguing that states should be obligated not to facilitate, support, or encourage violations and acknowledging that international law already "go[es] a long way towards establishing [that] sort of general obligation").
2. Duty to Protect

An outside state that does not itself participate in atrocities might have to try to restrain third-party participants; it might have an extraterritorial duty to protect. Such duties have already begun to emerge in international law. So far, they appear to be triggered by two kinds of relationships. An outside state might have these duties if it either exercises governmental authority over or substantially supports a third-party perpetrator.

An outside state with governmental authority over an area might have to take measures to restrain the inhabitants from committing atrocities—as it would in its own territory. The ICJ’s *Armed Activities* decision is a case in point.\(^{119}\) The ICJ determined that Uganda had occupied portions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and, therefore, had “to protect the inhabitants of the occupied territory against acts of violence, and not to tolerate such violence by any third party.”\(^{120}\) An occupying state, by definition, exercises governmental authority over foreign inhabitants.\(^{121}\) The fact that the state already exercises such authority justifies requiring it to exercise that authority *in a particular way*—to prevent the inhabitants from intruding on one another’s rights.\(^{122}\)

Much of the legal literature articulates a slightly different proposition: that extraterritorial duties to protect are triggered by a state’s physical control over foreign territory.\(^{123}\) States that control foreign territory through their police or military forces often also exercise governmental authority. For example, the ICJ determined in *Armed Activities* that Ugandan forces “were not only stationed in particular locations but also . . . substituted their own authority for that of the Congolese Government.”\(^{124}\) In particular, Uganda appointed a governor to administer the occupied area.\(^{125}\) By contrast, duty-to-protect claims against states that exercise physical control *without* administrative authority have been unsuccessful.

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120. *Id.* ¶ 178.
121. Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land art. 42, annexed to Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, Oct. 18, 1907, 36 Stat. 2277, 1 Bevans 631 (“Territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation extends only to the territory where such authority has been established and can be exercised.”).
124. *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo*, 2005 I.C.J. 168, ¶ 173 (identifying this standard); *id.* ¶ 176 (concluding that the standard was satisfied).
125. *Id.* ¶ 175.
Consider two high-profile decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. In *Behrami v. France*, the petitioners argued that France should have done more to protect two children from unexploded ordnance in post-conflict Kosovo. French troops were stationed in the area, but a U.N. organ administered it and was in charge of the demining effort. The court did not hold France responsible. Likewise, in *Cyprus v. Turkey*, the petitioners sought to hold Turkey responsible for not restraining private actors who committed abuses in northern Cyprus. The court declined to do so.

Although Turkish troops were stationed in northern Cyprus, most governance authority rested with the local Turkish Cypriot administration (the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus or TRNC). Neither *Behrami* nor *Cyprus* offers a coherent account of why the duty-to-protect claims failed. The European Court of Human Rights itself asserts that control over foreign territory triggers the state’s human rights duties. But the results in *Behrami* and *Cyprus* suggest that territorial control is by itself insufficient. Likewise, the results suggest that the state’s positive capacity does not trigger the duties. After all, states with troops on the ground presumably can act to restrain third parties. The two decisions are instead consistent with my approach. Duties to protect reflect a normative judgment that a particular state should act, given its relationship with the third party. The duties are appropriate—in other words, the state should try to exert its power over the third party—if a governance relationship already exists. The duties become more suspect, however, if satisfying them would require an outside state to displace the entity that ordinarily or more legitimately governs, as the United Nations did in Kosovo and the TRNC did in northern Cyprus.

Separately, a state’s extraterritorial duties to protect might be triggered if it substantially supports the third party that perpetrates atrocities. *Cyprus* is again instructive. Although the *Cyprus* court dismissed the claims arising out of the abuses by private actors, it held Turkey responsible as a result of the TRNC’s abuses. Again, the court’s reasoning was unsatisfying. At some
points, the court suggested that the TRNC was a Turkish agent, despite the TRNC’s evident independence from Turkey. At other points, the court suggested that Turkey’s territorial control triggered its duties to protect. But if Turkey’s territorial control triggered these duties, then why wouldn’t the duties apply to the alleged abuses by private actors? All of the alleged abuses occurred in the same physical space. The bottom line is that, although the TRNC was not a Turkish agent under the general law on state responsibility, the TRNC did receive immense support from Turkey. Turkey propped up and supported the TRNC, so Turkey could not lawfully stand by in the face of the TRNC’s violations.

Cyprus is not alone in enforcing extraterritorial duties to protect where a state substantially supports a non-state group that violates rights. Recall that, in the Genocide Case, the ICJ highlighted Serbia’s support for the Bosnian Serbs who committed genocide. Serbia was responsible for not trying harder to prevent the genocide. In Ilaşcu v. Moldova, the European Court of Human Rights found that Russia had a similar relationship with Moldovan groups that violated rights in Moldova. According to the court, these groups “survive[d] by virtue of [Russia’s] military, economic, financial and political support.” The court held Russia responsible. In Georgia v. Russia, Georgia claimed that Russia likewise supported groups that violated rights in Georgia. The ICJ dismissed Georgia’s case on jurisdictional grounds, but an order on provisional measures directed the parties to “do all in their power to ensure that

324, 359.

135. See, e.g., id. ¶ 77 (“Having effective overall control over northern Cyprus, its responsibility cannot be confined to the acts of its own soldiers or officials in northern Cyprus but must also be engaged by virtue of the acts of the local administration . . . .”).

136. See, e.g., id. ¶ 76 (“It is not necessary to determine whether . . . Turkey actually exercises detailed control over the policies and actions of the authorities of the ‘TRNC.’” (quoting Loizidou v. Turkey, App. No. 15318/89, ser. A, no. 310, Eur. Ct. H.R. ¶ 56 (1995)); id. ¶¶ 76-77 (using language indicative of a duty to protect when asserting that Turkey had to “secure” rights).

137. Id. ¶ 77 (“The local administration . . . survives by virtue of Turkish military and other support.”).


141. Id. ¶ 392.

142. Id. ¶¶ 393-94. As in Cyprus, the court’s logic in Ilaşcu is unclear. The court sometimes suggested that Russia was directly responsible for the abuses. See id. ¶ 393 (“There was a continuous and uninterrupted link of responsibility on the part of the Russian Federation . . . .”). But the court also described Russia’s failings with language that is indicative of a duty to protect; Russia did not “attempt to put an end to the . . . situation.” Id.


public authorities and public institutions under their control or influence do not engage in . . . racial discrimination."\textsuperscript{145} The influence language hints at an extraterritorial duty to protect. Even if Russia did not control the groups' conduct so as to create an agency relationship and trigger a duty to respect, Russia should have satisfied a duty to protect. It should have pressured the groups not to violate rights.

Comparable relationships can also exist between two states. Consider France's extensive financial and military aid to the Rwandan regime that perpetrated genocide. Much of France's aid predated the genocide,\textsuperscript{146} but some of it seems to have continued thereafter.\textsuperscript{147} To the extent that France aided the regime "with a view to facilitating" genocide, it violated a duty to respect.\textsuperscript{148} But even if France did not itself participate in genocide, its substantial support might have triggered an extraterritorial duty to protect. Indeed, France was heavily criticized for not doing enough in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{149} And though France denied any legal responsibility, it accepted that it was "involved too much and for too long,"\textsuperscript{150} and that it had a "moral duty . . . to stop the genocide."\textsuperscript{151}

In short, certain kinds of relationships already seem to trigger extraterritorial duties to protect. An outside state might have these duties if it exercises governmental authority over or substantially supports the perpetrators. The state would be responsible in these circumstances if it failed to exercise due diligence to restrain the perpetrators. The diligence that is due would depend on the circumstances but might entail taking economic, diplomatic, or criminal measures against the perpetrators, or putting in place standards or processes that inhibit atrocities. A particular outside state would have to take those

\textsuperscript{145} Application of International Convention, Provisional Measures, 2008 I.C.J. 353, ¶ 149.
\textsuperscript{147} See Andrew Wallis, Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide 114-18 (2006); McNulty, supra note 146, at 115-20.
\textsuperscript{148} See supra note 117 and accompanying text.
measures, even though other outside states would not, because the one already involved itself in the situation and entangled itself with the third party.

3. Duty Not to Obstruct

No matter whether a state must actively try to restrain a third-party perpetrator, it might be prohibited from obstructing the protective measures that third parties pursue. A duty not to obstruct is, at best, nascent in current practice and so lacks precise content. But in essence, such a duty would prohibit outside states from impeding measures to protect at-risk populations. Because states can reasonably disagree about which such measures are appropriate, a state that obstructs one measure might be responsible only if it does not pursue a meaningful alternative, or only if it cannot justify its obstruction by a sufficiently weighty countervailing interest.

A duty not to obstruct would build on two claims that have become quite prominent in the R2P literature: (1) the claim that states must cooperate to end violations of peremptory norms, and (2) the claim that the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council must not use their veto in R2P cases. First, a duty not to obstruct overlaps with the claimed duty to cooperate because, by definition, an obstructing state fails to cooperate. Still, the duty not to obstruct would be less onerous. An outside state would not have to take affirmative steps to cooperate; it simply would have to avoid getting in the way. Moreover, whereas not cooperating is often passive and pervasive, obstructing usually involves overt acts that can be identified and pinned on particular states. Second, a duty not to obstruct overlaps with the claimed duty not to veto. Using the veto might be obstructive; it might prevent the Council from acting to protect an at-risk population. Yet the veto is only one of many ways in which states can act obstructively.

The early stages of the recent crisis in Syria illustrate these points. In the U.N. Security Council, China and Russia repeatedly vetoed or threatened to veto resolutions that would have put pressure on the Assad regime. This conduct might be evidence of obstruction but is not dispositive. States could reasonably disagree about what to do in Syria and, therefore, about the content of

152. See Draft Articles on State Responsibility, supra note 19, art. 41, § 1.
153. See supra note 63 and accompanying text.
154. Cf. Marcus G. Singer, Negative and Positive Duties, 15 Phil. Q. 97, 103 (1965) ("[P]ositive duties, when they have no corresponding or equivalent negative duties, are relatively less determinate than negative duties.").
155. See, e.g., Arbour, supra note 30, at 453 (arguing for restricting the use of the veto on the ground that the permanent members should not "inhibit[] other States from discharging their duty to protect when those States are willing and able to discharge their obligations").
particular Security Council resolutions. Indeed, China and Russia used their vetoes on some Syria resolutions even as they allowed others to pass.\textsuperscript{157} These two states also acquiesced in the Council’s various presidential\textsuperscript{158} and press\textsuperscript{159} statements on Syria.\textsuperscript{160}

Looking outside the Council reveals a broader pattern of obstructionism. China and Russia were consistently among a handful of states in the U.N. General Assembly\textsuperscript{161} and Human Rights Council\textsuperscript{162} that voted against resolutions condemning the Assad regime. These two states also declined to participate in multilateral meetings that sought to pressure Assad either to step down or to find a political solution to the crisis.\textsuperscript{163} Further, although China and Russia largely synchronized their positions in multilateral arenas, Russia did more of the dirty work.\textsuperscript{164} Russia’s early support for Assad undermined efforts to iso-
late him and lessened the likelihood that his regime would buckle under outside pressure.\footnote{165} Moreover, Russia continued to ship military equipment to the regime after its atrocities were apparent.\footnote{166} This broader pattern of behavior suggests that China might have acted obstructively and that Russia very likely did.

The Syria case is also illustrative because it suggests that a duty not to obstruct might be developing informally. States and other actors persistently pressured Russia\footnote{167} and, to a lesser extent, China\footnote{168} to stop obstructing international action in Syria. This pressure arguably yielded modest results. Some have speculated that, in December 2011, Russia proposed a Security Council resolution because “human rights organizations . . . made Russia seem like a partner in the Syrian regime’s crimes.”\footnote{169} Yet no matter whether Russia or

increasing-pressure-on-Syria ("[China] is not in the news every day and it is not materially giving assistance to the Syrian Government as Russia does.");\footnote{165} Evan Osnos, \textit{Why China Will Back Assad—Until it Won’}\texttt{
http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/evanosnos/2012/07/how-long-will-china-back-assad.html}\footnote{166} 


Nada Bakri, \textit{Protesters Convulse Several Cities in Syria, as Russia Offers New U.N. Reso-
China altered its behavior, the fact that other actors applied this pressure suggests that they understood the two states—and especially Russia—to be acting reprehensibly. Further, the fact that these other actors pressured Russia and China, but not states that neither obstructed nor cooperated in any international action, demonstrates that a duty not to obstruct might gain traction even if a duty to cooperate cannot.

4. Duty to Assist

Finally, outside states might have to help foster conditions that are inhospitable to atrocities. The nature of this assistance can vary, from transferring material resources, to training local actors, to rebuilding domestic institutions. Such assistance is similar in kind to that which satisfies human rights duties to fulfill. The R2P duty would differ from a duty to fulfill, however, because the R2P duty would focus on realizing negative, not positive, liberties. The goal would be to shield people from third-party harms by reducing the risk of atrocities breaking out. Still, the hurdles that have confronted extraterritorial duties to fulfill would almost certainly confront this R2P duty, as well.

The claim that states must give foreign assistance to help people abroad has circulated for decades, usually in the context of pressuring developed states to alleviate severe poverty in developing states. The claim arguably finds support in the text of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which requires states to “take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation,” to help realize rights. The body that monitors the ICESCR interprets that text to mean that “economically developed States parties have a special responsibility and interest to assist the poorer developing States” by providing “resources, financial and technical assistance, and... aid when required.” Other U.N. organs have advanced a similar claim. Moreover, U.N. documents repeatedly urge developed countries to commit 0.7 percent of their gross domestic products to development aid—a target that has been reinforced in recent years by the U.N. Millennium Development Goals, a high-profile effort to address severe poverty.


Yet the claim that developed states must give human rights or development aid is still of questionable authority and has not been especially effective in practice.\textsuperscript{175} The ICJ recognized in its \textit{Wall} opinion that the ICESCR—which includes duties to respect and protect but is driven by duties to fulfill—is "essentially territorial."	extsuperscript{176} Further, developed states have consistently resisted the idea that they are obligated to give foreign assistance.\textsuperscript{177} Thus, although the Millennium Development Goals have received sustained and high-level attention, these goals do not recognize or create binding obligations for developed states.\textsuperscript{178} And although many states endorse the 0.7 percent figure discursively, few have actually achieved that goal.\textsuperscript{179}

Claims relating to foreign assistance have been more successful in international environmental and trade law than they have been in human rights law. Some environmental treaties require developed states to transfer resources to developing states.\textsuperscript{180} Similarly, international trade law encourages developed states to give developing states technical assistance on implementing or adapting to trade law.\textsuperscript{181} These claims might be more effective than comparable claims in human rights law for various reasons. First, no single state is expected...
to care for the global environment or manage transnational trade. In contrast, each state generally is expected to provide for its own population. Second, the extent to which foreign aid helps realize rights in recipient states is still hotly contested. Third, human rights and development aid raise unique legitimacy concerns. Addressing the structural causes of poverty means reforming governmental institutions, establishing the rule of law, and targeting discriminatory cultural practices. This work strikes at the heart of a society’s political, economic, and social systems, and is deeply intrusive if it comes from external forces. Unsurprisingly, then, recipient states tend to bristle at restrictions on their aid that seem to intrude too heavily on their internal affairs.

Aid for R2P looks a lot like human rights and development aid. For example, the U.N. Secretary General has proposed using R2P aid to educate local actors about human rights, build domestic institutions, redress severe poverty, and enhance the positions of women and disadvantaged minorities. These proposals are unlikely to gain legal traction simply by linking them to R2P. On the contrary, the experience with the Millennium Development Goals demonstrates that developed states resist the claim that such assistance is obligatory even when the underlying policy objectives have broad and high-level support. The hurdles to establishing an R2P duty to assist are substantial.

For this duty to have any prospect of success, it must identify the grounds for holding specific tightfisted states responsible. Because an R2P duty to assist would entail redistributing wealth or expertise, it might account for states’ positive capacities in ways that other R2P duties do not. Still, positive capacity is an insufficient basis for assigning responsibility. In any given case, many outside states that have the capacity to give will not. Responsibility should instead be grounded in a state’s own conduct or relationships. For example, an outside state might be responsible for not helping a population if

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185. Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: Rep. of the Secretary-General, supra note 2, ¶¶ 28-48.

186. See Margot E. Salomon, Deprivation, Causation and the Law of International Cooperation, in GLOBAL JUSTICE, STATE DUTIES: THE EXTRA-TERRITORIAL SCOPE OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW 259, 279 (Malcolm Langford et al. eds., 2013) (“It is difficult . . . to determine when an obligation of international assistance and/or cooperation has been breached, thereby giving rise to a claim of international legal responsibility . . . . ”); Caliari & Darrow, supra note 182, at 324 (“No government, political group, or UN body has yet accepted the proposition that any given country is obligated to provide specific assistance to any other country, making it difficult to claim that such an obligation has become part of customary international law.”).

187. Cf. Salomon, supra note 186, at 280-282 (arguing that duties to fulfill economic and social rights might be assigned on a causal or historical basis).
the state contributed to the risk of atrocities breaking out,188 or if the state has a unique relationship with the population, such as one rooted in a colonial past. The point is that grounding responsibility in the state's conduct or relationships is consistent with the law's theoretical foundations and thus a way to develop the law going forward.

V. CONCLUSION

This Article has proposed a new vision for R2P and presented a rudimentary framework for implementing that vision. I have argued that R2P should not posit an all-encompassing duty that falls, at once, on the entire international community. R2P should instead posit a bundle of more discrete duties, and responsibility for each duty should attach to specific outside states at a time. This latter vision is appealing because it is anchored in existing international law and follows the law's current trajectory. As such, this vision has both descriptive and predictive value. It explains how international law already supports R2P and how international law might realistically develop to continue supporting R2P going forward.

Whether international law will actually develop along these lines is another question. States are highly unlikely to ratify a new treaty on R2P or to expand the jurisdiction of courts or other bodies that might develop and enforce new R2P duties. In the near term, any further prescription and enforcement on R2P is likely to occur informally—as states, international organizations, and civil society groups craft new norms on R2P and put pressure on states that deviate from those norms. These disparate actors might work together to articulate a set of non-binding norms on R2P. They might incorporate their preferred norms into official documents, like the U.N. Secretary General's reports on R2P. And they might apply these norms to sanction particular outside states.

The informality of that process presents both an opportunity and a challenge for R2P. The opportunity is that global actors who are committed to R2P can apply and enforce their preferred duties, even absent a clear consensus on what the duties require or whether the duties qualify as law. In other words, they can use my framework to try to push the law in their preferred direction. This is also R2P's challenge. Operative R2P duties will not develop unless the commitment to them is sufficiently broad and deep that enough global actors decide either to satisfy the duties voluntarily or to enforce the duties against deviant states.189 That level of commitment might not exist. But if it does—and

188. Some philosophers argue that a state has the moral duty to alleviate poverty abroad if the state has directly or indirectly contributed to the poverty. The more direct and discrete a state's contributions, the more feasible the effort to hold it legally responsible. See, e.g., Thomas Pogge, Severe Poverty as a Human Rights Violation, in FREEDOM FROM POVERTY AS A HUMAN RIGHT: WHO OWES WHAT TO THE VERY POOR? 11, 44-48 (Thomas Pogge ed., 2007).
189. See W. Michael Reisman, The Concept and Functions of Soft Law in International Politics, in 1 ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF JUDGE TASLIM OLAWALE ELIAS 135, 135-36 (Emmanuel G. Bello & Bola A. Ajibola eds., 1992) (explaining that, in order for a norm to be accepted and treated as law, there must be an expectation that the norm will be "effectuated enough . . . to sustain belief in its effectiveness").
there is some reason for optimism—R2P should offer a vision that resonates with different actors and can actually gain legal traction.

190. First and as discussed, states have almost uniformly endorsed the R2P idea. See supra Part II. Second, states have established multiple international tribunals, including the now permanent International Criminal Court, to prosecute people who perpetrate atrocities. See Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, Nov. 8, 1994, 33 I.L.M. 1598; Statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone-U.N., Jan. 16, 2002, 2178 U.N.T.S. 138; Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, supra note 2; Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, May 25, 1993, 32 I.L.M. 1159. Third, states regularly take modest measures to enforce human rights norms in cases of especially egregious violations. See PROUKAKI, supra note 78, at 204-07 (reviewing practice); TAMS, supra note 78, at 208-51 (same); Dawidowicz, supra note 78 (same). Fourth, outside states might be vulnerable to such enforcement, even if the territorial state is not, because states are disparately receptive to rights-related pressures. See, e.g., SIMMONS, supra note 20, at 357-58.