

July 2013

# Responsibility to Protect: Working Towards Global Peace and Security

Talk given by Professor Tim Dunne at a Roundtable event to celebrate the establishment of the Senator George Georges Peace and Nuclear Disarmament Scholarship on 25 July 2013 at the Anthropology Museum, University of Queensland

In the time available to me, I'd like to say something about the role of the responsibility to protect in relation to furthering the agenda of 'global peace and security'. But first I'd like to add my warm thanks to the Palm Sunday Rally for Peace for endowing the summer research scholarship which will no doubt be of significant personal benefit to the fortunate recipients – as well as taking us a few steps further in the long march for peace.

Endowments really do show us how big changes can come about through small steps. Think, for example, of the impact Andrew Carnegie's gift of US\$10m has had on a century of research and knowledge on peace and security issues worldwide. Or in the context of our discipline of International Relations, the benefits that were generated by other early 20th century internationalists such as David Davies who endowed the Woodrow Wilson Professorship in 1919, and the Montagu Burton family who endowed chairs at Oxford and the LSE in the 1930s.

One of those endowments did not go to plan. After E.H.Carr used the Wilson Chair to demolish the edifice of internationalism in his great 1939 work *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, David Davies reflected caustically on the gap between the ideals of the Wilson chair and the arguments that Carr had advanced in his influential writings: 'I wish to God', Davies remarked caustically, 'that I had never initiated this proposal'.

Had Lord Davies made his assessment from the vantage point of 2013, I am confident that he would have been overflowing with praise with the intellectual returns on his investment. For the last 13 years his Chair has been occupied by Andrew Linklater, surely one of the greatest internationalists working in International Relations today.

\*\*\*

The research centre that I co-direct, the Asia Pacific Centre for R2P is the result of a partnership between UQ and AusAID. It is the only dedicated Research

Centre working on R2P in the world – other R2P centres, such as the GC in NY, are mainly advocacy and policy-oriented.

The Centre was established in 2008 following an initiative taken by a former POLSIS colleague Alex Bellamy; as the apocryphal version goes, he mentioned to the Faculty research officer that he was going to ask for \$200,000 for a project on R2P, which was met with the suggestion that he should 'add a nought'. He duly received a \$2m cheque for three years of core funding from the Australian Agency for International Development.

The Centre is now well into its 2nd three-year term. The funding we receive enables a core staffing of six, with around 6-9 PhD students at any one time. Our activities include:

- training programs on R2P and professional level courses on 'international security' (in conjunction with colleagues in POLSIS);
- a lively intern program enabling visiting students from around the world to come and visit (the most recent was a fabulous Kenyan researcher called Faith);
- a new visiting fellows program;
- a Facebook site that has 600 plus followers;
- supporting the outstanding R2P student coalition
- finally, our core business, three major research programs: on gender & prevention, regional security & assistance, and a conceptual research program about how the doctrine of R2P is being modified in relation to new crises and altered contexts.

In terms of our identity, we do not see ourselves as being advocacy-led – not least because we are located in a research-intensive University in a top-rated research school of Political Science. But we do expect our research to be policy *relevant* – and if you were to visit our website you'll find many short briefings written for policy-makers and/or concerned members of the public. <http://www.r2pasiapacific.org>

Let me close with a few academic remarks about R2P in relation to the wider questions that animated George Georges. At its core, R2P makes two simple but powerful claims

- (i) that sovereign states are responsible and accountable to the international community for the protection of their populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity
- (ii) that the international community can act to protect populations when national authorities fail to do

As a diplomatic framework, R2P can more or less be sequenced in terms of prevention, protection, and re-building: in each of these phases R2P is convergent with various established peacebuilding strategies – including disarmament, demobilization, criminal accountability, and establishing the conditions for social justice and reconciliation.

What can meaningfully be said about R2P today in the context of the brief time I've been allocated? The invocation of R2P in the operative UN Security Council resolution in relation to Libya looked as though R2P had 'come of age' a decade after the Canadian sponsored commission had come up with the concept.

Likewise, many have reacted to the carnage in Syria by claiming the era of human protection is over, as Assad is left to brutalise over 100,000 civilians while the diplomatic world walks by on the other side of the road. RIP R2P as David Rieff put it in an *New York Times* article.

In my view, both these perspectives are flawed. R2P neither came of age with Libya nor died in Syria. What we can all agree on, however, is that the digits R2P, have entered the public lexicon in ways that its originators could not have imagined.

As for this region, we believe our Centre has played a key role in connecting R2P to a part of the world in which human security is often overlooked in the security strategies articulated by sovereign states. But this does not mean there are no prospects for change. Dr Edward Luck, former Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary General, pointed to the positive role the Centre has played in advancing R2P in the region.

In his words 'compared to four years ago at the time that the Centre was launched, the conversations about R2P in the region are much richer, broader, and deeper in part due to the work of the Centre. The challenge for the future is whether the Centre is able to live up to the expectations and standards it has created'.

We hope that future recipients of the George Georges scholarship will benefit from the activities of the Centre, as we will no doubt benefit from their ideas and their commitment to global peace and security.

**Professor Tim Dunne**  
**Research Director**  
**Email: [tim.dunne@uq.edu.au](mailto:tim.dunne@uq.edu.au)**

ASIA PACIFIC CENTRE FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT  
Building 91, 54 Walcott Street  
School of Political Science & International Studies  
The University of Queensland, St Lucia Brisbane QLD 4072  
phone +61 7 3346 6449 • email [r2pinfo@uq.edu.au](mailto:r2pinfo@uq.edu.au) • internet [www.r2pasiapacific.org](http://www.r2pasiapacific.org)

