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phone: 212-337-6541
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The Responsibility to Protect: Locating Norm Entrepreneurship

Cristina G. Stefan

Q1

The year 2021 marks the twentieth anniversary of *The Responsibility to Protect* report, issued by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001. September 2020 marked exactly twenty years since the government of Canada set up the ICISS, the ad hoc commission that produced the report. This initiative points to Canada as one of the first RtoP norm entrepreneurs. Thanks to the sustained efforts of a variety of norm entrepreneurs—ranging from individuals to states—RtoP was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in the “2005 World Summit Outcome” document (WSOD). As such, 2020 marked a second major RtoP anniversary, namely fifteen years since its institutionalization at the United Nations (UN). In the twenty years since its emergence in the 2001 *Responsibility to Protect* report, RtoP has become part of the global diplomatic language invoked by states, NGOs, and international and regional organizations, and it is now an established international norm. These anniversaries present an occasion to assess the success of RtoP norm entrepreneurship efforts over the last two decades, as well as to compare early norm entrepreneurship efforts to more recent ones.

This contribution starts by examining some of the key norm entrepreneurs who dedicated significant resources to advancing the RtoP framework in its early years, including individual leaders and state champions. Some early examples of indispensable norm entrepreneurs with enough drive and motivation to advance the RtoP agenda at the international level include Western middle powers, such as Canada and some European Union member states. The subsequent sections will

Cristina G. Stefan is associate professor of international relations in the School of Politics and International Studies at the University of Leeds, located in Leeds, England.

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37 discuss whether these initial RtoP champions have continued to invest resources
38 and moral leadership into transforming RtoP into a sustainable prevention agenda
39 or if a new set of norm entrepreneurs emerged in the changing global order. In the
40 course of addressing such questions, we must consider the challenges posed by the
41 political, military, and economic transformations that have occurred since RtoP's
42 adoption at the UN sixteen years ago. Those challenges include the global finan-
43 cial crisis, instability related to the Arab Spring and the military interventions in
44 Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya; the significant displacement and refugee crisis; the
45 economic and political rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
46 (BRICS); and an increase in countries subscribing to nationalistic and xenophobic
47 foreign policy agendas rather than liberal ones. These challenges have multiplied
48 during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to increase the vulnerability of
49 the least protected populations around the world and to aggravate the risk of
50 atrocity crimes in those areas where atrocities are still committed with impunity.

51 The second section of the essay examines contributions to RtoP by both
52 Western and non-Western norm entrepreneurs since the norm's endorsement
53 at the UN in 2005. It also discusses the different ways in which norm entrepre-
54 neurship has been used in conjunction with RtoP over the last fifteen years or
55 so. Norm entrepreneurship from the Global South is particularly important in
56 the context of a changing world order, as it challenges the criticism that the
57 RtoP framework and its implementation is a Western concept.

58 This essay then asks: Who are the norm entrepreneurs with enough drive,
59 moral leadership, and resources to keep RtoP on the international agenda during
60 these trying times? The last section considers this question when discussing two
61 recent and unexpected non-Western norm entrepreneurs, the governments of
62 Qatar and Egypt. Both of these unexpected RtoP champions highlight prevention
63 as the single focus of RtoP, going forward. I argue that the drive and adaptability
64 manifested by these non-Western norm entrepreneurs with regional ambitions
65 increase the legitimacy of the RtoP norm itself.
66

67 WHO WERE THE FIRST RTO P NORM ENTREPRENEURS? 68

69 The literature on international agenda setting and normative progress points to
70 specific actors, such as individuals, civil society, and nongovernmental groups,
71 that seize windows of political opportunity to convince states to agree to new stan-
72 dards of behavior.¹ These actors are known as norm entrepreneurs. Under this

73 definition, Canada can be viewed as an example of state-led norm entrepreneur-
74 ship through its role in developing and promoting RtoP in its infant years.
75 Canada's efforts in this sense helped advance RtoP toward its current status as
76 an established international norm, despite some lingering controversies surround-
77 ing the use of force.

78 In order to understand how RtoP became an international norm,² one needs to
79 consider first and foremost the role that the ICISS played as a norm entrepreneur.
80 The Canadian government appointed the ICISS "to wrestle with the whole range
81 of questions—legal, moral, operational, and political—rolled up in this [humani-
82 tarian intervention] debate, to consult with the widest possible range of opinion
83 around the world, and to bring back a report that would help . . . find some
84 new common ground."³ As a demand-driven commission, the ICISS demon-
85 strated intellectual leadership in reconceptualizing the contentious notion of
86 humanitarian intervention into the RtoP framework. The commission worked
87 to ensure that the research and ideas in the resulting report would build political
88 momentum to advance the RtoP principle by shipping thirty thousand free copies
89 around the world, including it in ministerial speeches, and keeping the issue on
90 the agenda of multilateral and regional fora.⁴ In the ICISS's reconceptualization,
91 RtoP encompassed respect for both state sovereignty and human rights, with
92 the latter reflected in guidelines to prevent and halt atrocities amounting to geno-
93 cide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.⁵

94 Individual norm entrepreneurs can play a critical role when a new norm
95 emerges, and RtoP was no exception. After the release of the *Responsibility to*
96 *Protect* report, several individuals, including the co-chairs of the commission, dis-
97 played moral leadership in promoting the new RtoP principle in international,
98 regional, and national fora. The two co-chairs, reflective of the balanced compo-
99 sition of the commission, were Mohamed Sahnoun, the late Algerian diplomat
100 representing the Global South, and Gareth Evans, the Australian diplomat repre-
101 senting the Global North. Sahnoun and Evans mobilized a global public to iden-
102 tify the responsibility to protect against mass atrocity crimes as the responsibility
103 of all states, and they articulated this responsibility as central to maintaining inter-
104 national peace and security.

105 The work of the ICISS built on existing ideas, particularly those from the
106 African continent. This was in no small part the result of previous individual
107 norm entrepreneurship and moral leadership on the part of African diplomats,
108 including Mohamed Sahnoun. As Sahnoun argued, RtoP can be summed up as

109 an African contribution to global human rights.⁶ Conceptually, RtoP also captures
110 another notion coined by the South Sudanese diplomat and scholar Francis Deng,
111 namely the notion of “sovereignty as responsibility.”⁷ This conceptual clarification
112 insists on reframing sovereignty as a form of responsibility toward a state’s pop-
113 ulation and is fundamental to the meaning of the RtoP.

114 Gareth Evans has also remained one of the most vocal supporters of RtoP since
115 his role as ICISS co-chair concluded. He further promoted RtoP when serving on
116 the UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, convened by then-
117 UN secretary-general Kofi Annan to identify ways in which the UN could respond
118 more efficiently to challenges to international peace and security. At every oppor-
119 tunity, Evans used the UN as an organizational platform for promoting RtoP by
120 employing language that resonated with different constituencies.

121 Kofi Annan is another example of an effective individual norm entrepreneur
122 and champion of RtoP. As the UN secretary-general, Annan personally supported
123 the ICISS and its findings and proved essential for keeping the RtoP principle on
124 the UN agenda. He was instrumental in advancing RtoP at the UN, and he did so
125 against the opposition of every one of his senior advisors, who recommended
126 moving away from what was regarded as a very contentious agenda. During the
127 difficult negotiations that preceded the 2005 World Summit, the meetings he orga-
128 nized with permanent representatives proved key to keeping RtoP on the agenda
129 and getting it into the WSOD. Annan’s early support for RtoP as the UN
130 secretary-general cemented the UN as the primary organizational platform for
131 launching and advancing it further onto its normative track. Annan’s successor
132 as UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, also kept RtoP on the UN agenda after
133 his departure. Ban consolidated RtoP within the UN bureaucracy by referring
134 to its implementation as one of his priorities as secretary-general and by making
135 two appointments to “translate” R2P into practice. First, in May 2007 he
136 appointed Francis Deng as his special adviser for the prevention of genocide
137 and then upgraded his position to under-secretary general. Then in February
138 2008 he appointed scholar Edward C. Luck as his special adviser on the
139 Responsibility to Protect, at the level of assistant secretary-general.⁸

140 In addition to individuals, states can also act as norm entrepreneurs. As noted
141 earlier, Canada acted as a norm entrepreneur when it heeded Kofi Annan’s 1999
142 call to find a compromise on humanitarian intervention. Canada invested time,
143 money, and reputation in the RtoP campaign prior to its 2005 inclusion in the
144 WSOD. The country helped “build” the language of RtoP globally by ensuring

145 that such rhetoric was included in declarations, official documents, political state-
146 ments, and placed on the agendas of workshops and conferences on security.
147 Canadian initiatives were directed toward convincing a critical mass of actors to
148 embrace RtoP in the lead up to the 2005 World Summit.⁹ Such efforts included per-
149 sonal phone calls made by then-Canadian prime minister Paul Martin to the five
150 heads of the strongest opponents to RtoP in the UNGA to win their support.¹⁰

151 Another important factor that influenced the adoption of RtoP in the WSOD is
152 the support for the principle from key African countries, such as South Africa,
153 Rwanda, and Tanzania. In the General Assembly, Rwanda and South Africa
154 argued that RtoP was not a Western interventionist concept, but one that per-
155 tained to protection in general and was thus needed to deal with problems in
156 Africa. To prepare for the first UNGA debate on the topic of the Responsibility
157 to Protect in 2009, a coalition of supportive states created the Group of Friends
158 of the Responsibility to Protect in New York, and Rwanda was one of its initial
159 co-chairs.¹¹ The African roots of RtoP carry more weight once we focus on devel-
160 opments at the regional level. The African Union was the first organization to
161 include the right to intervene in a member state where there are mass atrocity sit-
162 uations occurring that are covered by RtoP in Article 4(h) of the AU's Constitutive
163 Act of 2000, and again in its 2005 Ezulwini Consensus.¹²

164 165 CHALLENGES IN CHAMPIONING RTO P IN A CHANGING GLOBAL 166 ORDER 167

168 After the UNGA unanimously adopted RtoP in 2005, the following decade only
169 witnessed a handful of notable RtoP leadership initiatives, globally. Were the
170 Western states that had previously acted as indispensable norm entrepreneurs
171 during RtoP's early years of existence still displaying norm entrepreneurship dur-
172 ing this time? Or, rather, was it non-Western contributions that further advanced
173 the RtoP agenda? This query is not meant to position the debate over RtoP as a
174 North-South or Western vs. non-Western issue, though as Ramesh Thakur notes,
175 "There are risks of it turning into one if the legitimate concerns of emerging pow-
176 ers are neglected by a declining West."¹³ Instead, it aims to consider recent devel-
177 opments that point toward what scholars dub the crisis of the Western-dominated
178 liberal international order. This was not anticipated in the early years of RtoP.

179 The years following RtoP's 2005 endorsement at the UN appeared promising,
180 with examples of the UN making institutional progress on RtoP, institutional

181 capacity building in regional and subregional fora, and dozens of states across the
182 globe appointing RtoP focal points at national levels. An RtoP focal point is a
183 senior official within a government who facilitates national mechanisms for atroc-
184 ity prevention and promotes international cooperation by participating in the
185 Global Network of RtoP focal points. By appointing an RtoP focal point at a
186 senior level of government, states signal their commitment to engage with RtoP
187 and its implementation.¹⁴ The primary focus of these various RtoP efforts was
188 on the prevention of atrocities, as opposed to simply reacting to conflicts and
189 atrocities.¹⁵ A major test for RtoP came in 2011 with the debates surrounding
190 the NATO-led intervention in Libya. Out of these debates and the ensuing back-
191 lash against the implementation of the intervention came one of the most notable
192 examples of norm entrepreneurship on RtoP since 2005, in the form of Brazil's
193 Responsibility while Protecting (RwP) initiative.

194 Resolution 1973 on Libya passed on March 17, 2011, marking the first time the
195 Security Council approved the use of force against a functioning state using the
196 language of RtoP, under the authority of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
197 Brazil, an elected UN Security Council member that year, abstained in this
198 vote, expressing concerns over operative paragraph 4 of the resolution, which
199 includes the "all necessary measures" provision.¹⁶ During the UN General
200 Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect on July
201 12, 2011, Brazil criticized how RtoP's pillar three was implemented in Libya
202 and warned against using such mandates as an excuse for regime change. The
203 Brazilian ambassador to the UN at the time, Maria Luiza Viotti, argued that "cau-
204 tion and moderation are the best advisers" when implementing pillar three of
205 RtoP and that "we must exercise responsibility as we protect."¹⁷ In opening the
206 general debate of the UNGA's sixty-sixth session on September 21, 2011,
207 Brazil's then-president, Dilma Rousseff, asked for further discussion of the
208 "responsibility in protecting alongside the responsibility to protect."¹⁸

209 This presidential discourse points to another example of individual norm entre-
210 preneurship that influenced Brazil's drive to engage with RtoP and to clarify
211 its implementation. Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Brazil's former
212 minister of external relations, is the architect of the RwP concept. Among
213 other challenges, he had to overcome resistance in the presidential office. In
214 response to President Rousseff's query as to why she should refer to RtoP in
215 her opening statement at the 66th Session of the United Nations General
216 Assembly in New York, Ambassador Patriota wrote a five-page paper presenting

217 his reasoning behind RWP.¹⁹ This was subsequently taken up by Ambassador
218 Viotti, Brazil's permanent representative to the UN, during the Security Council
219 open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict on November 9,
220 2011, in a statement delivered on behalf of the foreign minister of Brazil, Patriota.

221 A concept paper entitled "Responsibility while Protecting: Elements for the
222 Development and Promotion of a Concept,"²⁰ which served as the annex to a let-
223 ter addressed to the UN secretary-general dated November 9, 2011, included all
224 the proposed RWP elements. This paper framed the clarification "*while protecting*"
225 that would mark Brazil's lasting legacy on RtoP, and implicitly be Ambassador
226 Patriota's normative stamp. Brazil promoted RWP at the UN in following years,
227 especially once the country became a key member of the cross-regional group
228 that worked on a draft UNGA resolution to celebrate RtoP's tenth anniversary.
229 While this resolution did not materialize, it is notable that Brazil was invited to
230 be part of this eight-state cross-regional group because of its leadership and visi-
231 bility on RWP, as well as for being viewed as representing non-Western constitu-
232 encies on these issues.

233 Arguably, what is needed to advance the RtoP norm globally is greater
234 non-Western engagement with this agenda. Brazil led this engagement by example
235 through its involvement in this cross-regional group tasked with producing a
236 General Assembly resolution on RtoP.²¹ Prior to that, in another example of
237 non-Western entrepreneurial leadership, Guatemala introduced the first UNGA
238 resolution on RtoP, cosponsored by sixty-seven states and adopted twelve years
239 ago, on September 14, 2009.²² Guatemala has subsequently displayed leadership
240 on other issues related to international peace and security at the UN, as when
241 chairing the secretary-general's Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) on the 2015
242 Review of the UN peacebuilding architecture. This important review exercise
243 informed subsequent UN policy, including the 2020 report "Peacebuilding and
244 Sustaining Peace" by the current UN secretary-general, António Guterres. The
245 AGE's report for the 2015 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture, entitled
246 "The Challenge of Sustaining Peace," suggested that "sustaining peace" must
247 run through the complete cycle of UN engagement, from preventive action, to
248 deployment, to subsequent drawdown of peace operations, and beyond to post-
249 conflict reconstruction.

250 Norm entrepreneurship can also take other forms than developing, advancing,
251 and sponsoring norms, such as leading, and encouraging, efforts toward criminal
252 accountability for mass atrocities.²³ For instance, the Gambia filed a case against

253 Myanmar at the International Court of Justice alleging that Myanmar had carried
254 out mass murder, rape, and destruction of communities in Rakhine State. The
255 Gambia, a member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, drafted the
256 claim against Myanmar in order to “send a clear message to Myanmar and to
257 the rest of the international community that the world must not stand by and
258 do nothing in the face of terrible atrocities that are occurring around us.”²⁴ The
259 Gambia’s vice president described her state as “a small country with a big voice
260 on matters of human rights on the continent and beyond.”²⁵

261 These examples point to some of the new RtoP champions that have emerged
262 since its endorsement at the UN in 2005, as new loci of entrepreneurial agency on
263 RtoP, different from the very active Western norm entrepreneurs who had initially
264 displayed strong leadership on RtoP, as had been the case with Canada. In recent
265 years, many of the initial norm champions have not identified RtoP or atrocity
266 prevention as one of their foreign policy priorities. Indeed, European countries
267 have shown greater commitment to conflict and atrocity prevention through
268 development assistance and mediation. Some of the more recent norm entrepre-
269 neurs prioritize preventive strategies that focus on addressing the root causes of
270 conflict, preventive diplomacy, and conflict management and resolution, without
271 necessarily referencing RtoP per se.

272 Unlike Canada, some European countries that had promoted RtoP before 2005
273 continued their work as Western norm entrepreneurs. One example of a collective
274 European commitment to RtoP came in 2013, when the European Parliament
275 produced the most substantive European statement on RtoP to date, which called
276 for consensus and coordination on RtoP across the European Union. The EU has
277 been the only regional organization to contribute to each of the annual UNGA
278 interactive dialogues on RtoP to date, since the first one in 2009. The EU was
279 also the first regional organization—and the only one in the world until
280 2019²⁶—to appoint an RtoP focal point, at a very senior level in the organization.
281 Indeed, Christian Leffler, who acted as the EU’s RtoP focal point from when the
282 position was first created at the EU level in 2016 up until his retirement in March
283 2020, was the deputy secretary-general of the European External Action Service
284 (EEAS). This marked an important display of collective endorsement of the
285 RtoP norm. In addition to the organization’s RtoP main focal point, the EU
286 also has a very active group of RtoP focal points in its individual member states.
287 As Gareth Evans argued, there is great potential for the EU to implement RtoP
288 both because of the union’s standing as a model for conflict prevention across

289 Europe and because of the large set of practical instruments and policies on pre-
290 vention and rebuilding that it possesses.²⁷ In January 2019, the EEAS launched the
291 “Atrocity Prevention Toolkit,” the most comprehensive policy document to refer-
292 ence RtoP, which was designed to support EU practitioners through specific
293 hands-on knowledge of how they can contribute to atrocity prevention.²⁸

294 The intervention in Libya demonstrated that it is desirable, for legitimacy rea-
295 sons, to engage the emerging and regional powers in redefining the conduct of
296 RtoP interventions, for the benefit of both the emerging powers and their regional
297 interests alongside Western RtoP supporters. However, action in Libya was fol-
298 lowed by inaction and failures to protect in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, South
299 Sudan, and elsewhere. Scholars and practitioners have dubbed the failure of the
300 international community to stop atrocities and ameliorate the complex humani-
301 tarian emergency in Syria as an instance of the disintegrating liberal world
302 order.²⁹ Non-Western norm entrepreneurship becomes particularly important
303 in the context of the changing world order, as it responds to the criticism that
304 the RtoP framework and its implementation is Western.

305 306 RECENT NON-WESTERN CHAMPIONING EFFORTS: EMPHASIZING 307 RTO P’S FOCUS ON PREVENTION 308

309 In the last decade, scholars such as John Ikenberry have argued that “the old order
310 dominated by the United States and Europe” is being replaced by one that is grad-
311 ually shared more and more with non-Western rising powers.³⁰ As contestation
312 from the Global South has steadily increased, international cooperation around
313 liberal values and norms such as RtoP has been reduced, as shown by Brexit
314 and Donald Trump’s presidency. If “the crisis of the liberal order is a crisis of
315 legitimacy and social purpose,”³¹ it becomes paramount to turn our attention to
316 instances where key non-Western states have exhibited strong leadership on issues
317 traditionally regarded as liberal norms, which are often associated—incorrectly, in
318 the case of RtoP—with Western champions.

319 The following two examples point to the increasing role of non-Western states
320 in global governance and in the promotion of prevention measures to protect the
321 most vulnerable. These examples contain two contextual observations on what
322 might boost the display of leadership in regard to the latter. First, we notice
323 that small states can gather enough drive and financial resources to become cham-
324 pions of RtoP and atrocity prevention for strategic considerations in their region.

325 Second, we see that giving non-Western states a visible regional or international
326 platform allows them to display leadership in reframing prevention. Recent
327 emphasis on atrocity prevention as the key component of RtoP refocuses attention
328 on pillars one and two of the RtoP framework. Pillar one refers to a state's respon-
329 sibilities to protect its population and derives from existing international legal
330 obligations. This includes a state's responsibility to build national resilience and
331 to address the root causes of atrocity crimes. Pillar two refers to the commitment
332 of the international community, including states, the UN, regional and subre-
333 gional organizations, and civil society to assist states in meeting their pillar one
334 responsibilities.

335 Qatar is a notable example of the non-Western efforts to advance atrocity pre-
336 vention as the key component of RtoP amid a shifting global order. Qatar is cur-
337 rently one of the co-chairs of the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect,
338 a group that includes over fifty states from across the globe and the European
339 Union. The Group of Friends meets regularly both in New York and Geneva to
340 discuss transnational concerns related to RtoP and atrocity prevention. Qatar
341 has displayed entrepreneurial drive in several key initiatives both in New York
342 and Geneva.

343 Qatar has also recently worked closely with three other non-Western states
344 (Costa Rica, Morocco, and Peru) to consolidate the role of the UN Human
345 Rights Council in Geneva in advancing the RtoP framework.³² The Human
346 Rights Council adopted its first-ever thematic resolution on the Responsibility
347 to Protect in July 2020 entitled, "Fifteenth Anniversary of the Responsibility to
348 Protect Populations from Genocide, War Crimes, Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes
349 against Humanity, as Enshrined in the World Summit Outcome of 2005." While
350 this resolution came after fifty country-specific and thematic Human
351 Rights Council resolutions referring to RtoP, including on South Sudan, Syria,
352 and transitional justice, this was the first Human Rights Council thematic resolu-
353 tion on RtoP since the 2009 UNGA resolution. And it was the result of diplomatic
354 efforts and leadership from the core group within the Group of Friends of the
355 Responsibility to Protect, which includes Qatar.

356 In other international settings, including during the ministerial event organized
357 on the sidelines of the opening of the 75th United Nations General Assembly in
358 New York, Qatar offered its support for "all international efforts to protect civil-
359 ians in countries facing armed conflict," while describing RtoP as "the first line of
360 defence for civilians."³³ Through its clear commitment to RtoP, Qatar seems

361 intent on sending a message that the international community is committed to
362 civilian protection, to ending atrocity crimes and impunity, and to holding
363 accountable those responsible for atrocity crimes.

364 Given the increasing rate of atrocity crimes both in terms of numbers and geo-
365 graphic scope, Qatar is investing resources to develop partnerships at the regional
366 and international levels to implement the responsibility to protect. Qatar describes
367 this as “conducive to strengthening regional and international peace and secur-
368 ity.”³⁴ By actively pursuing diplomatic initiatives within its sphere of influence
369 to address the failure of implementing RtoP to fully prevent atrocity crimes,
370 Qatar is a remarkable example of a small state using strategic considerations in
371 the cause of “overcoming smallness.”³⁵ The country increases its impact on the
372 regional system and beyond though its foreign policy committed to championing
373 atrocity prevention and the R2P framework. As a small state bordering the aspir-
374 ing regional hegemon, Saudi Arabia, Qatar is pursuing a foreign policy that also
375 safeguards its sovereignty. At the same time, allegations have also emerged that
376 Qatar backs some of the region’s most destabilizing forces and that it financially
377 supports international terrorist groups.³⁶ Scholars such as Aidan Hehir have fur-
378 ther argued that Qatar is engaging in systematic human rights violations domes-
379 tically, despite expressing its commitment to RtoP.³⁷ While such concerns need to
380 be considered in tandem with Qatar’s more explicit actions on RtoP, the contri-
381 butions a small state like Qatar can make to champion the RtoP norm—and to
382 broader international prevention and protection efforts—illustrate the power of
383 agents willing to invest financial and diplomatic resources to secure their regional
384 legitimacy.

385 When countries from the Global South are given a visible platform, at either the
386 international or regional level, as was the case when Brazil had a seat at the UN
387 Security Council table in 2011, they are given the space to display leadership
388 and show initiative. As mentioned above, Brazil used this international platform
389 to create a more constructive dialogue about prevention within the noncoercive
390 pillars of the RtoP. Similarly, when Egypt held the presidency of the African
391 Union in 2019, it used this as an opportunity to put forward its proposal to
392 approach prevention not as a threat to state sovereignty but rather as a “*sover-*
393 *eignty enhancer*.”³⁸ And Egypt introduced its proposal for African states to
394 “own the prevention agenda” at the inaugural meeting of the Aswan Forum
395 under the theme “An Agenda for Sustainable Peace, Security and Development
396 in Africa,” which took place in Aswan, Egypt, in December 2019. Acting as the

397 chairman of the African Union, while holding the regional body's presidency, pro-
398 vided Egypt the platform to showcase this proposal. Egypt argued that the preven-
399 tion agenda, when nationally owned, "becomes a sovereignty enhancer," and that
400 acting preventively entails fostering systems that create incentives for peaceful and
401 cooperative behavior.³⁹

402 Approaching prevention from the angle proposed by Egypt could diminish the
403 interventionist impulse still in the minds of some RtoP supporters, an impulse
404 that has been detrimental to the credibility of RtoP in the African region. This
405 Egyptian proposal clarifies how responsibilities for atrocity prevention and protec-
406 tion provide value for *both* vulnerable populations and state sovereignty. Although
407 the document that emerged from the Aswan Forum is not a consensus declara-
408 tion, it is nonetheless a summary provided by the host country that details the
409 advantages of subscribing to Egypt's idea of prevention as a sovereignty enhancer
410 in the African context.

411 In line with individual leadership and champions of RtoP mentioned earlier,
412 the Egyptian initiative was led by an individual norm entrepreneur,
413 Ambassador Ihab Awad, who was Egypt's deputy assistant foreign minister for
414 UN affairs at the time. Awad had previously been exposed to the UN's "sustaining
415 peace"⁴⁰ initiative and the need to prioritize atrocity prevention while working at
416 the UN Secretariat in New York for eight years. This included his work with Oscar
417 Fernandez-Taranco, the current assistant secretary-general for peacebuilding sup-
418 port, in the UN Peacebuilding Support Office. Such exposure informed his posi-
419 tion that prevention should be approached as something that enhances a state's
420 own sovereignty and capacity to deal early on with tensions, before they threaten
421 to degenerate into open conflict or atrocities committed against certain groups,
422 rather than as an entry point for outside interference into a state's internal affairs.
423 While Egypt needs to invest further resources to convince developing states from
424 areas of the world subject to instability that prevention is a sovereignty enhancer,
425 it displayed leadership in putting forward this proposal in a regional setting.

426 Qatar and Egypt are two recent examples that show how non-Western states
427 can, and do, enhance their regional leadership and legitimacy by finding solutions
428 to one of the most serious global problems of our time, namely the prevention of
429 mass atrocities. States from regions of the world where addressing conflict is par-
430 amount can invest financial and diplomatic resources to champion human-rights
431 protection norms, such as RtoP. As the cases in this essay have shown, when a
432 state assumes a higher and more visible position *either* internationally (as was

433 the case with Brazil while on the UN Security Council) or regionally (as was the
434 case with Egypt while acting as chairman of the African Union), that state has
435 room to display initiative and drive to champion the preventive elements of
436 RtoP. The adaptability and mobilization efforts of these unexpected,
437 non-Western RtoP norm entrepreneurs can only increase the legitimacy of the
438 RtoP norm itself. This is because their contributions carry the highest potential
439 to address the legitimacy deficit of norms such as RtoP. We know that norms
440 spread faster if the responsibility for their creation and promotion is more broadly
441 shared, and if their tenets are reflective of both Western and non-Western per-
442 spectives and interests. When non-Western states such as Brazil, Qatar, and
443 Egypt are able to claim agency in developing and championing prevention and
444 protection norms such as RtoP, they can acquire a strong voice in a realm that
445 was, until recently, perceived as the exclusive domain of Western powers.

446
447 NOTES

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470 ⁷ For one example of Francis Deng’s contributions in this sense, see Francis M. Deng, “Reconciling
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474 ⁸ For a more detailed coverage of individual norm entrepreneurs, see Badescu, *Humanitarian*
475 *Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect*, pp. 122–25.

476 ⁹ For a discussion of Canada’s engagement with R2P, see *ibid.*, pp. 126–27; and also, Kirsten Fisher and
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470 *Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect*, pp. 126–27.
- 471 ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.
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- 477 ¹³ Ramesh Thakur, “R2P after Libya and Syria: Engaging Emerging Powers,” *Washington Quarterly* 36, no.
478 2 (April 2013), pp. 61–76, at p. 62.
- 479 ¹⁴ Currently, two regional organizations—the European Union and the Organization of American States—
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481 over sixty governmental RtoP focal points, appointed by states from across all regions of the world as
482 senior-level representatives. The Global Network of RtoP focal points was established in 2010. The
483 Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the very active advocacy organization in New York,
484 acts as its secretariat, with all member states getting together on a yearly basis.
- 485 ¹⁵ Such efforts were spearheaded by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to
486 Protect, which released *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes* in October 2014. See UN,
487 *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention* (New York: UN Office on
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531 all segments of society are included and empowered, which is in line with the people-centered approach
532 of the UN’s *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015).

533
534 Abstract: As part of the roundtable “The Responsibility to Protect in a Changing World Order:
535 Twenty Years since Its Inception,” this essay examines the issue of norm entrepreneurship as it
536 has been used in conjunction with the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP), twenty years after the emer-
537 gence of *The Responsibility to Protect* report produced by the International Commission on
538 Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). It examines norm entrepreneurs with enough drive,
539 motivation, and resources to keep RtoP on the international agenda in a changing world order,
540 after Western middle powers, such as Canada and some European Union member states, had pre-
541 viously acted as indispensable norm entrepreneurs. An examination of both Western and non-
542 Western entrepreneurship efforts to date reveals three key observations. First, RtoP champions
543 are now facing additional challenges in today’s transitional global order, where nationalistic foreign
544 policy agendas are replacing liberal agendas, such as RtoP. Second, the drive and adaptability of
545 non-Western norm entrepreneurs with regional ambitions mean that small states can emerge as
546 rather-unexpected RtoP champions. Third, giving non-Western states a visible regional or interna-
547 tional platform allows them to display leadership in reframing prevention under the RtoP frame-
548 work. The last two observations point to the increasing role of non-Western states in global
549 governance and in the promotion of prevention measures to protect the most vulnerable, which
550 in turn increases the legitimacy of the RtoP norm itself.

551
552 Keywords: Responsibility to Protect norm entrepreneurs, prevention, non-Western norm entrepre-
553 neurship, Western normative champions, Canada, Brazil, European Union, Qatar, Egypt