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**An International Responsibility to Develop in order to Protect?**

**A Responsibility too Far**

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**Abstract**

The Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) norm has a controversial relationship with development which has led to divisions between both academics and governments. The article differentiates between three camps i) minimalist, ii) middle ground, and iii) radical whilst arguing that the debate is hindered by the lack of data on this specific issue. Helping to address this lacuna, the article puts forward the first thematic analysis on development and mass atrocities in the 21$^{st}$ century. To do this it analyses thirty-seven countries and Human Development Index (HDI) data (1990-2020) to establish patterns in HDI data for countries that have experienced mass atrocities or for which there were serious concerns of, both with regard to status/absolute positions in the ranking and with regard to change/trajectory. It puts forward eight key findings which collectively show that there are no patterns that link mass atrocities, or serious concerns of them taking place, to status, rank, or a particular direction of change. Drawing on these findings, the article defends the minimalist position that the RtoP should not engage with long-term development issues.

**Keywords**

**Introduction**

The Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) norm that sets out to prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing has a controversial relationship with development which has led to divisions between academics and government. Regarding the former, the article differentiates between three camps i) minimalist, ii) middle ground, and iii) radical. The first two defend the RtoP but are divided over the extent to which it should engage with development. Minimalists offer a narrow view of the RtoP, seek to distance the norm from long-term structural prevention and argue that it *should not* engage with long-term development (Mani and Weiss 2011; Stamnes 2010; 2009; Bellamy 2009; Weiss 2007). Middle ground academics claim that the RtoP *should* engage with development but refrain from broader debates which call for international socioeconomic reforms to be included in 'mass atrocity'[i] prevention strategies (Bellamy and Luck 2018; Bellamy 2011a; Welsh 2016; McLoughlin 2014a; Reike, Sharma, and Welsh 2015). Finally, radicals either challenge (Bohm and Brown 2020; Brown and Bohm 2015) or reject the RtoP (Dunford and Neu 2019a, 2019b; Zimmerman 2014), for two reasons. First, they argue the RtoP legitimises underlying structures and on-going practices which enable mass atrocities to occur in the first place. Second, because they view underdevelopment as a significant root cause of mass atrocities they put forward a normative argument that global socioeconomic structures need to be changed in order to prevent atrocities crimes. As will be evidenced, these concerns are also raised by governments as they debate the RtoP in forums such as the United Nations General Assembly. The result is that academics and governments are divided over the question 'should the Responsibility to Protect engage with development issues?'

It is important to stress that nobody thinks that socioeconomic factors are the sole cause of mass atrocities. Interdisciplinary studies reveal a complex web of variables including ideology, coups, gender, history of atrocities, war and civil wars, socioeconomics, transition to

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democracy, and regime type, to name a few (Sharma and Welsh, 2015; Davies, Teitt and Nwkora 2015; Stewart 2013; Straus 2012, Midlarsky 2005; Valentino 2004; Harff 2003; Staub 1999; Krain 1997). Consider that in 2014, the United Nations launched its *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes* and identified 14 risk factors and 143 indicators (United Nations 2014). The sheer number of factors and indicators illustrate the complex challenge facing mass atrocity prevention as academics and policymakers identify short-term catalysts and long-term drivers. The article focuses on socioeconomics because of the aforementioned controversy combined with the fact that this remains a chronically unresearched theme in studies on mass atrocity prevention.

The article analyses thirty-seven countries and Human Development Index (HDI) data (1990-2020) to establish patterns in HDI data for countries that have experienced mass atrocities, or for which there were serious concerns of, both with regard to HDI status/absolute positions in the ranking and with regard to change/trajectory. In so doing, it builds on calls to go beyond comparative case study analysis in order to better understand contemporary patterns of mass violence (see Shaw 2013: 8-11; 2011). This is not to downplay the importance of other approaches. Case study research continues to provide rich insight into specific cases of mass atrocities (Sharma and Welsh 2015) as well as national and regional approaches (Jacob and Mennecke 2019; Mani and Weiss 2011). Comparative case study analysis strove to move beyond qualitative and quantitative approaches (see Ragin 1989) and draw comparative lessons (Bellamy and Luck 2018). Quantitative studies have analysed the relative risks of different factors when applied to a set of specific cases (Harff 2003; Sabinas 2001) and produced large datasets on specific forms of mass violence (Butcher, Goldsmith, Nanlohy et. al. 2020; Eck and Hultman 2007). When faced with the complexity of mass atrocities, all these approaches are needed as they help to provide a more informed understanding of why these events take

place. To return to the sentiment expressed by Shaw (2013: 191) the objective here is not to 'complete' the debate but to inform it.

This article is structured in four parts. First, it explains academic and government perspectives on this issue. It divides the academic studies into three camps, i) minimalist ii) middle ground, and iii) radical. It goes on to evidence that this should not be viewed as some abstract academic exercise as these themes are raised by governments as they debate the RtoP. Second, it explains the case selection underpinning the thirty-seven countries chosen as well as the data selection. In so doing, it raises the limitations with this approach which will aid future research. The third section looks at HDI 'index scores', 'ranking' and the 'change of HDI rank' for all thirty-seven countries. It then narrows its focuses to better understand 'trajectory' through an analysis of twenty-two of these countries and HDI 'index scores' for the years leading up to the atrocities, or serious concerns over the threat of them, as well as the year after. Fourth, the conclusion summarises the key findings and draws on these to defend the minimalist view that the RtoP should not engage in long-term development issues.

**Socioeconomics and the RtoP**

In 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty seminal report entitled *The Responsibility to Protect*, raised socioeconomic issues linked to development

> Root cause prevention *may* also mean tackling economic deprivation and the
> lack of economic opportunities. This *might* involve development assistance and
> cooperation to address inequities in the distribution of resources or
> opportunities; promotion of economic growth and opportunity; better terms of
> trade and permitting greater access to external markets for developing
> economies; encouraging necessary economic and structural reform; and

technical assistance for strengthening regulatory instruments and institutions

(2001: 23, emphasis added).

The Commission upheld the view that prevention is better than reaction and that tackling root causes aids the former. A range of factors are raised including distribution of resources, economic growth and trade agreements. Yet the fact that the Commission used language such as 'may' and 'might' highlights a sense of uncertainty around the normative recommendations being put forward. By the time the RtoP was endorsed at the 2005 World Summit, explicit references to such aspects had gone. The outcome document includes broader language such as a responsibility to help the UN establish 'early warning capability' and a responsibility to 'assisting those [states] which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out' (United Nations 2005: 30). Ever since, academics and governments have expressed a range of views. To make sense of these, this section divides the academic debates into three camps: minimalist, middle ground, and radical, and goes on to explain government perspectives.

*Academic debates*

The minimalist position sets out narrow RtoP parameters as academics argue long-term prevention should not come under the remit of the RtoP which instead should focus on short-term prevention and response (Mani and Weiss 2011; Stamnes 2010; 2009; Bellamy 2009; Weiss 2007). Although his views have changed over time, Bellamy's earlier writings on this topic set the scene as he feared that linking the RtoP with development would first, 'overwhelm the R2P agenda with human security, political, economic, social and cultural agendas linked to the right to development' and second, 'diminish the global consensus on the R2P' due to scepticism over the right of development and fears over interference in domestic affairs (2009: 101). From this perspective, the RtoP should not engage with long-term development issues as it could undermine the consensus underpinning the RtoP. Around the same time, Stamnes

argued that linking the RtoP with a 'whole plethora of activities' such as 'development, good governance, human rights, gender equality, the rule of law and security sector reform' undermines the RtoP's 'exclusive character' (2009: 75). Echoing this sentiment Mani and Weiss proclaimed 'if the R2P means everything it amounts to nothing' (2011: 4). The minimalist stance is three fold in that, a) because there is no causal relationship between underdevelopment and mass atrocities, b) we can never know that the resources we are committing toward development are actually aiding mass atrocity prevention, and as a result, c) the RtoP would be served better if resources focused on immediate prevention and response (Stamnes 2009; Weiss 2007: 104).

Normatively, these academics put forward a series of recommendations. For Stamnes, the RtoP and mass atrocity prevention should be pursued as two parallel activities with direct prevention done under the former and root cause prevention under the latter (2009: 78-83). Drawing on the 'Copenhagen School' of securitization theory, the hope was that the RtoP would work as a 'speech act' which would be used when the threat of atrocities loomed large and help elevate the crisis above 'normal decision making procedures' (2009: 89). Yet over time, there appears to be little evidence that the RtoP has functioned in this manner with the majority of scholars debating whether the norm is a habit former (Bellamy 2013). Putting forward an alternative approach, Mani and Weiss argue the 2005 agreement embodies an 'erroneous desire to use R2P to mobilize more support for root-cause prevention, including investments in economics and social development' which should not, in their judgment, form part of the RtoP (2011: 4). From this perspective, the 2005 parameters are too broad. To put this in a contemporary setting, the RtoP's focus should be on halting mass atrocities in countries such as China, Myanmar, and Ethiopia rather than development concerns in countries X, Y, and Z which may, or may not, lead to mass atrocities.

Moving on to the middle ground position, these academics argue that because long-term structural factors act as a precondition for mass atrocities, upstream prevention *should* come under the RtoP. Capturing this standpoint, Reike, Sharma, and Welsh view 'economic and/or social instability' as one of the 'eight main risk factors' that form a 'path of escalation' alongside other factors such as war, ideology, and regime type (2015: 29-31). Socioeconomics are an enabling condition which when combined with other factors can facilitate the likelihood of mass atrocities. To be clear, these academics do not claim there is a causal relationship but that factors such as 'poverty and inequality have the potential to increase the risk of mass atrocities' (McLoughlin 2014a: 433) or that 'economic underdevelopment is an important precondition for atrocities' (Bellamy 2011a: 127). Here we see that Bellamy's views changed over time as he includes discussions of economic development and democratization under the remit of the RtoP (2011: 93-121; also, Bellamy 2015: 12; Bellamy and Luck 2018: 125). This has become the mainstream position as development is viewed as an integral part of the RtoP.

If, one accepts that the RtoP should engage with long-term development issues, the pressing question is, how should this be done? The middle ground position has dominated UN-led policy discussions which is to be expected because two of the leading academics identified in this camp have been Special Advisors to the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) on the RtoP: Ed Luck and Jennifer Welsh. The latter also authored the aforementioned UN *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*. The first UNSG report addressed this theme explicitly 'expanding development assistance to the "bottom billion" would undoubtedly have a net positive effect on prevention' (Report of the Secretary-General 2009: 19). Since then, UNSG reports have adopted a more conservative tone as they paint broader brushstrokes that do not include such specific details. Links are made between development and early warning on the grounds that, a) meeting sustainable development goals can aid mass atrocity prevention, b) development partnerships between governments and non-governmental organisations can help atrocity

prevention and, c) that states can improve the capacity of other states to prevent atrocities by contributing to development aid (Report of the Secretary-General 2018: 4; 5; 11; also, Report of the Secretary-General 2013). Essentially, the UN reports put forward a liberal agenda.

The radical position is dominated by cosmopolitan theorists but as we will see, the intellectual lineage can be traced back to critical genocide scholars. The former argue that cosmopolitan ethics can guide state-led solutions to contemporary global security challenges (see Beardsworth, Brown and Shapcott, 2019). With regard to the RtoP, they share the middle ground view that socioeconomic factors are a stress condition but call for a fundamental rethink. In expansive critiques that go beyond the parameters of this article, a wide range of issues are raised including the legitimacy of intervention, the arms trade, and socioeconomics as they criticize the RtoP for failing to acknowledge the role that states and companies play in creating and upholding the underlying structures that create these conditions in the first place (Bohm and Brown 2020; Dunford and Neu 2019a, 2019b; Brown and Bohm 2015). As these accounts are so far ranging, the question 'why focus on socioeconomics?' comes to the fore yet evidently, this is one of the major themes identified within these studies as they argue that powerful actors (states and companies), are at least partly responsible for mass atrocities. For Bohm and Brown, socio-economic justice is a pre-requisite for a more effective mass atrocity prevention strategy (2020: 80). This is because '[c]onditions of economic hardship, market inequalities and global poverty *significantly increase* the likelihood of conflict and mass killing' (Brown and Bohm 2015: 903, emphasis added). In a similar vein, Dunford and Neu claim that 'low levels of economic development are a *major risk* factor for civil conflict and for the atrocity crimes that occur therein' (2019a: 1084, emphasis added). Although these authors acknowledge that socioeconomics in and of themselves do not cause mass atrocities, the statements made give more weight to such factors than middle ground scholars.

Normatively, these academics put forward a much more radical agenda. Analysing the policy recommendations put forward by the 2001 Commission and the annual UNSG RtoP reports, Bohm and Brown speak of a 'mismatch' between 'causes' and 'solutions' (2020: 67) as the latter, even though framed as long-term measures, fail to consider 'the international community's active systemic role in perpetuating poverty, repression, and uneven source distribution' (2020: 65). To address this, Bohm and Brown call for an overhaul of overseas development aid, global finance, and trade, for example, through a 'fair global tax system' to pay for prevention (2020: 31-32). They see organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and practices such as Overseas Development Assistance to be a part of the problem rather than the solution and have a very different view of how development should be done to that of many RtoP defenders (see Bohm and Brown 2020: 88-94). Going further, Dunford and Neu argue that the RtoP should not be 'supported' by '*adding* a focus on wider structural injustices' and instead should be side-stepped (2019a: 1097). Whilst they accept that ideas such as sovereign responsibility and practices such as international assistance may be beneficial, they argue that these would be better situated 'outside of the R2P and in a different, anti-militaristic framework orientated towards the construction of a peaceful world' (2019b: 16).

Although these cosmopolitan scholars do not engage with genocide studies, such thinking can be traced back to what Shaw labels 'critical genocide studies' which rejects the mainstream view that genocide is a 'phenomenon of domestic politics' and instead investigates the 'international production of genocide' (2011: 645). Critical genocide scholars argue that one cannot explain genocide by focusing on the 'events occurring within a single country' and seek to identify the international dynamics that enable genocide (Midlarsky 2005: 18). Whether it is the genocide in Armenia (Bloxham 2005) or Rwanda (Uvin 1998), the global context is deemed to be critical. Broadly speaking, critical genocide scholars view the RtoP as a part of the status quo and as a result, it is either ignored or dismissed. In a rare engagement with the

RtoP, Zimmerer argues that the norm embodies a 'perpetrator and victim dichotomy' in which certain states are blamed whilst the rest are viewed as innocent (2014: 273). This dichotomy inhibits any discussion over the 'systemic, transnational and global roots of genocide' (2014: 273). In a normative position embodying a cosmopolitan tone, Zimmerer raises socioeconomics as a key theme within his 'global social justice approach' which he argues is needed to prevent mass atrocities (2014: 276). Again, it should be stressed that his research parameters go far beyond socioeconomics yet equally, we see this as a key theme, '*global social and economic inequality as a major root cause of violence*, since the latter destabilises social communities and increases the likelihood of war over resources, of intra-societal fights for wealth distribution, and of an export of violence through refugees, to name just a few examples' (2014: 276). As a result, Zimmerer rejects the RtoP on the grounds that it cannot address the structural facilitators of genocide whilst claiming that addressing 'extreme social inequality and social tensions' may be 'the most promising' way of preventing genocide (2014: 276).

Whatever one's view of the RtoP, the problem is that evidencing the links between socioeconomic factors and mass atrocities is notoriously difficult (see McLoughlin, 2014b). To their credit, Brown and Bohm acknowledge this, 'one potential criticism of our focus ...is to suggest that the links between global structural socio-economic conditions and humanitarian crises are spurious' (2015: 903). To address this, they draw on the civil wars literature and what we see is that all sides of the debate also rely on these studies. Brown and Bohm cite studies by Fearon and Laitin, Suzuki and Krause and Collier and Sambanis (2020: 22; 2015: 903) amongst other whilst Dunford and Neu (2019: 1084) cite Collier et. al., to link economic underdevelopment with civil wars *and* atrocity crimes. But these do not necessarily shed new light because these studies have been discussed by those that defend the RtoP (Bellamy 2011a: 118-145). Genocide scholars have conducted extensive case study and comparative case study

research but yet also draw on the civil wars literature (Shaw 2013: 153-155). As Jones explains, this trend in genocide studies 'dovetailed' with the *Political Science* focus on the local dynamics of civil war (2017: 29). Ultimately, the reliance on this literature is problematic for two reasons. First, as Sharma and Welsh (2015: 1) explain, such thinking tends to view mass atrocity prevention through 'the lens of conflict prevention' and whilst the two are related (see Hegre, Nygard and Raeder 2017; Ulfelder and Valentino 2008) the former can occur outside the latter. Second, in one of the very few explicit studies on genocide and civil wars, Stewart found that 'countries with low per capita incomes present high risks for civil war, intermediate levels of income are most strongly associated with genocide' (2013: 70). This has policy implications for the recommendations she puts forth as increasing per capita income may reduce the risk of civil war but not genocide 'where risks are highest at intermediate levels of per capita income' (2013: 72). Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to get a more informed understanding of the relationship between socioeconomics and mass atrocities.

*Government perspectives*

In 2011, Bellamy (2011a: 93) highlighted the relationship between the RtoP and development was proving to be 'controversial' amongst states as Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam supported the idea that development should be part of the RtoP whilst many other governments and even an International Coalition of NGOs opposed the link, claiming it to be 'unhelpful'. To get a more up to date understanding, let us turn to the 2019 UN General Assembly informal interactive dialogue on the RtoP as this allowed governments to respond to the UNSG report 'Responsibility to Protect: lessons learned from prevention' (A/73/898-S/2019/463).

At first glance, it seems that minimalist fears that RtoP links with development would undermine consensus did not come to fruition. Notably, seventy-three states and the European

Union spoke in favour of sustainable development aiding mass atrocity prevention (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2019). States such as Albania (A/73/PV.94: 28), Latvia (A/73/PV.93: 9), China (A/73/PV.94: 12), Costa Rica (A/73/PV.93: 11), Chile (A/73/PV.94 1), and the Netherlands (A/73/PV.94: 19), to name just a few, are in favour of a 'integrated' or 'cross-cutting' approach. This sees the RtoP linked with sustainable development but also, education, peace and security, human rights, sustainable peace, peacekeeping, democratic institutions, the rule of law, health, preserving natural resources and their fair use, and the eradication of poverty, marginalization and discrimination. It is here that minimalist concerns come to the fore as it does seem that the 'exclusive character' of the RtoP (to use Stamnes words) is lost.

The fact that the RtoP is linked with so many different themes begins to illustrate that there is significant division over what development means and how it should be done. For instance, the EU (A/73/PV.93: 5), Japan (A/73/PV.93: 24-25) and Ireland speak of 'development assistance' (A/73/PV.94: 8). China goes further, 'development is a fundamental priority' and that countries should help 'developing countries' to 'reduce and eradicate poverty' to aid 'conflict prevention' (A/73/PV.94: 12). The problem here, as Foot has evidenced (2020: 132-162) is that China is using language such as 'state-led development' as it tries to 'transform' the RtoP norm into something that approves of state-assistance but never challenges state-behaviour (Foot 2021). Whilst norm contestation is to be expected, and can be positive, it appears that there is very little consensus on what development means within the debates over RtoP. To give further examples, Pakistan argues the RtoP must include 'the right to development' which it defines as

> the right to food, shelter, fair terms of trade, debt relief and adequate access to
> finance and technology. After all, in a world best by socioeconomic inequalities,

many situations that lead to turmoil and conflict are the result of deprivation, underdevelopment and poverty (A/73/PV.93: 17)

To offer another example, Portugal states

> Emphasis should be placed on early prevention action. That includes addressing socioeconomic inequalities, promoting the rule of law, ensuring access to education, ensuring strong democratic institutions and the sharing of political power, addressing ethnic mistrust and violence, implementing economic policies focused on sustainable development and preserving natural resources and their fair use (A/73/PV.94: 29)

The two statements embody many of the concerns raised by minimalists. Whilst the government representatives express noble goals, minimalists question whether such activities should come under the purview of the RtoP. To give another example, Columbia agrees that the RtoP should be linked to development whilst claiming 'access to equitable social welfare' is 'our best weapon to prevent atrocity crimes' (A/73/PV.96: 6). If this is the case, does this entail that states have an international responsibility to ensure people around the world have access to equitable social welfare as part of the RtoP?

Finally, a small number of states, including Cuba, Egypt, and Venezuela, question the RtoP as a liberal project. In the 2016 General Assembly discussion on the RtoP, Egypt was suspicious of 'international strategies' aimed at prevention as they fear these policies may be 'manipulated to intervene in the internal affairs of vulnerable countries for political gain' (Arab Republic of Egypt 2016). Meanwhile, Cuba argued that the RtoP in its current form does not address the root cause of atrocities which it views as 'underdevelopment and poverty' (Republic of Cuba 2016). Speaking to the United Nations fifth committee in 2019, Cuba rejected the idea that the UN Special Advisor on RtoP position should be funded whilst claiming the RtoP poses 'serious concerns' especially to 'small and developing countries' as the issue of mass atrocity prevention is 'manipulated for political purposes' which undermine state sovereignty, international law, and the UN Charter (Republic of Cuba, 2019). This was

reiterated in the 2021 debate over Myanmar 'the responsibility to protect hides another approach to advance interventionism', with Venezuela sharing concerns over manipulation and double standards (United Nations, 2021). Echoing the sentiment expressed by those in the radical camp, these states are highly critical of the RtoP and view powerful states as part of the problem.

The government statements reveal that the question of whether states have an international responsibility to develop in order to protect is not an abstract academic exercise. Furthermore,  as these discussions are raised in relation to real world examples there appears to be an urgent need for more research.

**Data selection**

The case selection focuses on countries which have experienced mass atrocities in the 21st century or have been identified as at serious risk. The latter are included in order to address concerns over what Straus calls 'negative cases' where preconditions exist yet mass atrocity did not take place (2012: 343-345, see also Welsh 2016: 224 and Levene 2005a: 48). The thirty-seven cases identified are an aggregate of three data sources produced by organisations that specifically focus on mass atrocities, i) the International Criminal Court, ii) the Global Centre for the RtoP and iii) the International Coalition for the RtoP. Whilst there are other datasets (discussed below), the fact that critics have specifically targeted the RtoP gives further credence to applying an RtoP lens when identifying the cases to be analysed. Liberia is the only country added here because although there was no investigation by the International Criminal Court, Charles Taylor was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.[2] Finally, a cut-off point of January 2020 is incorporated in order to focus on the first twenty years of this century.

Afghanistan (2001-on)                                    Libya  (2011-on)

Burkina Faso (2015 -on)

Burundi (2015-on)

Cameroon (2016-on)

Central African Republic (2013 – on)

China (2017-on)

Colombia (2002 – on, 2009 – on)

Cote d'Ivoire (2010-2011)

DPRK: North Korea (2000 – on)

Democratic Republic of Congo (2000-on)

Egypt (2013, 2019)

Eritrea (2005 – on)

Georgia (2008)

Guinea (2009-2010)

Iraq (2003- on)

Israel (2008, 2014, 2019)

Kenya (2007-2008)

Kyrgyzstan (2010)

Liberia (1999-2003)

Mali (2013-on)

Myanmar (2017 – on)

Nicaragua (2018)

Nigeria(2009 – on)

Pakistan (2018)

Palestine (2000 – on)

Philippines (2016-on)

Somalia (2007 - on)

South Sudan (2013 – on)

Sri Lanka (2009)

Sudan (2003 -on)

Syria (2011- on)

Uganda (2000-, 2014, 2016)

Ukraine (2014)

Venezuela (2017 – on)

Yemen (2015 – on)

Zimbabwe (2005, 2008, 2019)

The cases reveal a diverse range of factors in terms of geographical location (three continents), actors involved (state and non-state armed groups), regime type (democracies and non-democracies), atrocities in times of 'peace' (such as Philippines and North Korea) and atrocities in times of 'civil war' (Ukraine, Sudan, and Sri Lanka). Thus, when it comes to the question, 'what are the key drivers of mass atrocities?' these remind us that there is no easy answer.

The sensitive nature of this subject matter may raise two challenges. First, case study selection. Someone could passionately argue that case *x* should, or should not, be included. For instance, the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) State Failure Problem Set 1955-2018 includes datasets on 'genocide and politicide' 2000-2018 (Centre for Systemic Peace, 2020a) and 'ethnic wars' 2000-2018 (Centre for Systemic Peace, 2020b). The former identifies six cases, whilst the latter includes twenty-eight cases. Whilst these datasets have many strengths there are limitations for this project because, a) they do not include countries of serious concern, b) they do not include cases such as Kenya, Zimbabwe or post-2015 atrocities in China, and c) their cut-off date is 2018 as opposed to 2020. Having said that, the PITF datasets include eight cases that are not raised here.[3] A seemingly simple solution would be to merge the datasets thus creating a list of forty-five countries, but this is problematic because the PITF datasets have different dates for their respective atrocities and even different dates for five of the six countries that experienced genocide or politicide at one time and ethnic wars at another time. As a result, these datasets cannot be merged as they would prevent an analysis of trajectory which requires specific dates. Another approach would be to use model-forecasting datasets such as the Atrocity Forecasting Project but here it is important to bear in mind, as the authors explain, that such modelling 'is not about what causes genocide; it is about how best to predict it' (Goldsmith and Butcher 2018: 91). Furthermore, whilst there are many related datasets such as the 'Targeted Mass Killing Data Set' (Butcher, Goldsmith, Nanlohy et. al. 2020) or the Uppsala Conflict Data Program 'One-sided Violence Dataset' (Eck and Hultman 2007) these do not set out to include all the acts that come under the four crimes associated with the RtoP.

Second, in terms of dates, the author is aware that these are also controversial. The long-term historical oppression of groups such as the Rohingya in Myanmar or Shia Muslims in Pakistan dictate that any apparent 'start' date could be viewed as misleading. Moreover, there are cases where we simply do not know exactly what has gone on, North Korea being the

most obvious. Broadly speaking, the dates indicate when the mass atrocity threshold was passed, or serious concerns were expressed. That said, this author expects that there will be debates as different accounts utilise different dates. For example, the PITF's focus on China's 'sporadic violence' against the Uighurs as beginning in 2009 but somewhat bizarrely only goes up to 2015 (Centre for Systemic Peace 2020c: 4) thus omitting what many would regard as genocide since. Quite simply, there is no perfect solution and as discussed below, the thirty-seven countries are reduced down to twenty-two whose start date is less controversial in order to analyse trajectory.

The socioeconomic data is taken from the HDI which will also be a source of debate as the HDI has been scrutinized and at times rejected (Telleria 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2018; Ura, Alkire, Zangmo and Wangdi 2012; Alkire and Santos 2010; Ranis, Stewart, and Samman 2006: 323). There are many different ways of defining and measuring social and economic development. Writing in *Social Indicators Research,* Khan (1991: 153-175) surveyed the different strategies that arose as analysts attempt to capture 'equity' and 'basic needs'. As part of which, 'income', 'social indictors', and 'composite indices' emerged as three approaches which, first, measured income (GNP and GDP), second, captured social factors such as health, nutrition, and housing and third, developed composite indices such as the Physical Quality of Life Index. In the post-Cold War era, the HDI global reports (published every year accept 2007, 2012, 2017 and 2018) have become hugely influential as they use Sen's capability approach to provide a more holistic view of a country's development by focusing on GDP per capita, life expectancy and adult literacy rate (United Nations Development Programme 1990: 9-16). Accordingly, the HDI does include the global data needed over a thirty year time period to enable this study.

When it comes to the relationship between socioeconomics and mass atrocities there are further limitations. First, in the 21st century more and more attention has been paid to the

relationship between conflict and horizonal inequalities which refers to inequalities between groups as opposed to individuals (Stewart 2016; Stewart and Fitzgerald 2000). The idea is that the nature of inequality matters and that inequalities between groups can act as a key facilitator of conflict. A key limitation, of using a HDI approach is that it does not capture this type of inequality. This raises the question, why use a HDI approach? Here it is important to recall that HDI data can be used to 'complement analyses of horizontal inequalities' (Alkire, Seth, Zavaleta and Yalonetzky 2011: 15) and at a broader level, that '[t]he human development index cannot capture the full complexity and richness of the concept of human development—but it does give a powerful picture of the basic conditions of people's lives' (United Nations Development Programme 2000: 96). The hope then is that the research findings can contribute to an on-going conversation about the relationship between socioeconomics and mass atrocities. Second, because HDI is an aggregate measure, we do not know whether one or more of the variables it captures may be facilitating mass atrocities. This is correct and this is precisely why more research is needed.

**Data Analysis**

For each of the thirty-seven countries, Table 1 provides the overall status (Low, Medium, High or Very High), index score (I), and rank for that year (R).[4] In addition, and in order to help us understand trajectory, the table includes the 'change in HDI rank' for two time periods 2005-2010 and 2014-2019.[5] If there is no data available, N.D. is inserted.

*Table 1*

| Country | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 2019 | Change in HDI rank 2005-2010 | Change in HDI rank 2014-2019 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | | | | | | |

| | | Low | Low | Low | 1 | -5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | Low<br>I: 0.302 | I: 0.350<br>R: N.D.[6] | I: 0.472<br>R: 155 | I: 0.511<br>R: 169 | | |
| Burkina Faso | Low<br>I: N.D | Low<br>I: 0.293<br>R:169 | Low<br>I: 0.384<br>R: 161 | Low<br>I: 0.452<br>R:182 | 0 | 3 |
| Burundi | Low<br>I: 0.299 | Low<br>I: 0.3<br>R: 171 | Low<br>I: 0.411<br>R:166 | Low<br>I: 0.433<br>R: 185 | 1 | - 5 |
| Cameroon | Low<br>I: 0.448 | Medium<br>I: 0.44<br>R:135 | Medium<br>I: 0.505<br>R: 131 | Medium<br>I: 0.563<br>R: 153 | -2 | 1 |
| Central African Republic (CAR) | Low<br>0.334 | Low<br>I: 0.325<br>R: 165 | Low<br>I: 0.365<br>R: 159 | Low:<br>I: 0.374<br>R: 188 | -1 | -1 |
| China | Medium<br>I: 0.499 | Medium<br>I: 0.588<br>R: 96 | Medium<br>I: 0.699<br>R: 89 | High<br>I: 0.761<br>R: 85 | 8 | 12 |

| Country | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colombia | High<br>I: 0.603 | Medium<br>I: 0.666<br>R: 68 | High<br>I: 0.729<br>R: 79 | High<br>I: 0.767<br>R: 83 | 2 | 2 |
| Cote d'Ivoire | Low<br>I: 0.404 | Low<br>I: 0.421<br>R: 156 | Low<br>I: 0.468<br>R: 149 | Low<br>I: 0.538<br>R: 162 | -4 | 7 |
| North Korea | Medium<br>I: N.D. | N.D<br>Assume<br>Medium | N.D<br>Assume<br>Medium | N.D<br>Assume<br>Medium | N.D | N.D |
| Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) | Low<br>I: 0.369 | Low<br>I: 0.349<br>R: 155 | Low<br>I: 0.435<br>R: 168 | Low<br>I: 0.48<br>R: 175 | 0 | 0 |
| Egypt | Medium<br>I: 0.548 | Medium<br>I: 0.613<br>R: 115 | Medium<br>I: 0.668<br>R: 101 | High<br>I: 0.707<br>R: 116 | 2 | 1 |
| Eritrea | N.D. | Low<br>I: 0.421<br>R: 157 | Low<br>I: 0.436<br>R: N.D. | Low<br>I: 0.459<br>R: 182 | N.D. | -3 |
| Georgia | N.D. | Medium<br>I: 0.69<br>R: 81 | High<br>I: 0.751<br>R: 74 | High<br>I: 0.812<br>R: 61 | -3 | 7 |
| Guinea | Low<br>I: 0.278 | Low<br>I: 0.335 | Low<br>I: 0.408 | Low<br>I: 0.477 | -1 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | R: 159 | R: 156 | R: 178 | | |
| Iraq | Medium I: 0.56 | Medium I: 0595 R: N.D. | Medium I: 0.636 R: N.D. | Medium I: 0.674 R: 123 | N.D. | 4 |
| Israel | High 0.801 | High I: 0.861 R: 22 | V High I: 0.895 R: 15 | V High I: 0919 R:22 19 | 0 | 1 |
| Kenya | Low I: 0.482 | Medium I: 0.461 R: 134 | Low I: 0.551 R: 128 | Medium I: 0.601 R: 143 | -1 | -3 |
| Kyrgyzstan | Medium I: 0.64 | Medium I: 0.62 R: 102 | Medium I: 0.662 R: 109 | Medium I: 0.697 R: 122 120 | 0 | -4 |
| Liberia | Low I: N.D. | Low I: 0.435 R: N.D. | Low I: 0.455 R: 162 | Low I: 0.48 R: 175 | 2 | -3 |
| Libya | Medium I: 0.724 | Medium I: 0.78 R: 64 | High I: 0.798 R: 53 | High I: 0.724 R: 105 | 3 | -4 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mali | Low<br>I: 0.234 | Low<br>I: 0.312<br>R: 164 | Low<br>I: 0.408<br>R: 160 | Low<br>I: 0.434<br>R: 184 | 2 | 0 |
| Myanmar | Medium<br>I: 0.350 | Medium<br>I: 0.424<br>R: 127 | Medium<br>I: 0.523<br>R: 132 | Medium<br>I: 0583<br>R: 147 | 6 | 3 |
| Nicaragua | Medium<br>I: 0.497 | Medium<br>I: 0.577<br>R: 118 | Medium<br>I: 0.622<br>R: 115 | Medium<br>I: 0.66<br>R: 128 | -2 | -3 |
| Nigeria | Low<br>I: N.D. | Low<br>I: N.D.<br>R: 148 | Low<br>I: 0.482<br>R: 142 | Low<br>I: 0.539<br>R: 161 | 0 | -3 |
| Pakistan | Low<br>I: 0.402 | Medium<br>I: 0.447<br>R: 138 | Medium<br>I: 0.512<br>R: 125 | Medium<br>I: 0.557<br>R: 154 | -2 | 2 |
| Palestine | N.D. | N.D. | Medium<br>I: 0.684<br>R: N.D. | Medium<br>I: 0.708<br>R: 115 | N.D. | -6 |
| Philippines | Medium | Medium | Medium | High | -2 | 3 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I: 0.593 | I: 0.632 R: 77 | I: 0.671 R: 97 | I: 0.718 R: 107 | | |
| Somalia | Low | N.D. Assume Low | N.D. Assume Low | N.D. Assume Low | N.D. | N.D |
| South Sudan | N.D. | N.D. | Low I: 0.41 R: N.D. | Low I: 0.433 R: 185 | N.D. | -3 |
| Sri Lanka | Medium I: 0.629 | Medium I: 0.691 R: 89 | Medium I: 0.754 R: 91 | High I: 0.782 R: 72 | 0 | 0 |
| Sudan | Low I: 0.331 | Low I: 0.403 R: 139 | Low I: 0.469 R: 154 | Low I: 0.51 R: 170 | -2 | -5 |
| Syria | Medium I: 0.55 | Medium I: 0.6 R: 108 | Medium I: 0.672 R: 111 | Low I: 0.567 R: 151 | -3 | -2 |
| Uganda | Low 0.32 | Low I: 0.404 R: 150 | Low I: 0.498 R: 143 | Low I: 0.544 R: 159 | 4 | 2 |
| Ukraine | Medium | Medium | High | High | -3 | -1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I: 0.725 | I: 0.694 R: 80 | I: 0.755 R: 69 | I: 0.779 R: 74 | | |
| Venezuela | High I: 0.644 | Medium I: 0.676 R: 69 | High I: 0.757 R: 75 | High I: 0.711 R: 113 | 3 | -44 |
| Yemen | Low I: 0.401 | Low I: 0.444 R: 144 | Low I: 0.506 R: 133 | Low I: 0.47 R: 179 | 8 | -16 |
| Zimbabwe | Medium I: 0.478 | Medium I: 0.43 R: 128 | Low I: 0.482 R: 169 | Medium I: 0.571 R: 150 | 0 | 1 |

At the outset it is important to say a few words about the data. First, the HDI did not rank countries in 1990 hence there is no individual rank for that particular year.[7] Second, the index does not include data entries for all thirty-seven countries since 1990 because the HDI researchers were either unable to gather the necessary information or the country was not yet independent. Third, the table includes 'snapshot' statistics from 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2019, to provide a broad brushstroke insight yet the analysis below also draws on data from the years in-between. Fourth, rankings cannot be compared across reports for several reasons, i) new countries are added each year which changes the ranking of all countries, ii) methodologies are tweaked each year and, iii) the raw data that makes up HDI provided by international agencies are sometimes revised backward. This is why HDI researchers created Table 2 (in each report), in order to show trends based on the latest available data which is what is captured in the 'change in HDI rank' columns. There are six key research findings.

First, mass atrocities occur in *each type* of HDI country: Low, Medium, High, and Very High (albeit only one of the latter). For the year 1990, there are data for thirty-three countries.[8] Of these, seventeen countries are ranked Low, thirteen Medium and three High. For the year 2000 there are data for thirty-two countries as Afghanistan, North Korea, Somalia, and South Sudan are missing but here we insert 'assumed rankings' based on their initial classification. This means that we have data for thirty-five countries in total for the year 2000. Breaking these down, there are fifteen Low ranking countries, nineteen Medium ranked countries and one High ranking country (Israel). For the year 2010, there are data for all thirty-seven countries, within which there are eighteen ranked Low, thirteen Medium, five High and one Very High. For the year 2019, there were seventeen ranked Low, ten Medium, nine High and one Very High. The fact that atrocities occur in each type of HDI country illustrates minimalist concerns because it is unclear where resources should be allocated in order to prevent mass atrocities.

Second, whilst it is true that all types of countries experience atrocity crimes it is also clear that the *vast majority* of crimes occur in countries that have been recognised as either Low or Medium. In 1990, thirty of the thirty-three countries we have data for were ranked Low or Medium. In 2000, thirty-four of the thirty-five countries we have data for were ranked Low or Medium. In 2010, thirty-one of the thirty-seven countries were ranked Low or Medium. In 2019, twenty-seven of the thirty-seven were ranked Low or Medium.

Third, the lowest ranking countries (bottom twenty) do seem to be disproportionately vulnerable to atrocity crimes. Consider that in 2010 the bottom twenty of the HDI index consisted of Zimbabwe, DRC, Niger, Burundi, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Liberia, Burkina Faso, Mali, CAR, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Guinea, Afghanistan, Sudan, Malawi, Rwanda, Gambia, and Zambia (United Nations Development Programme 2010: 145-146). Fifty per cent of these appear on the list of thirty-seven countries, and seven of these ten went onto experience atrocities between 2010 and 2019. Whilst it may be the case that these have

experienced mass atrocities in the past, the fact that they went on to experience atrocities post-2010 does suggest that the second and third findings give some empirical support to the idea that underdevelopment facilitates mass atrocities. Yet this does need to be headed with caution for the other reasons discussed here.

Fourth, it is clear that Medium ranked countries are responsible for their fair share of atrocities. Consider that at the turn of the century, there were nineteen Medium countries compared to fifteen Low. By 2010, there were more Low than Medium ranked countries, but this is not because these Medium countries had fallen down the rankings but in fact because five of them (Colombia, Georgia, Libya, Ukraine and Venezuela) had risen to the status of High. Accordingly, in 2010 there were actually more Medium and High-ranking countries (nineteen) than Low (eighteen). As to be discussed, Table 2 below identifies twenty-two countries that we have specific start dates for. Of these, nine were ranked Low (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Mali and Yemen) nine were ranked Medium (Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Philippines, Georgia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Syria) and three were ranked High (China, Libya, Ukraine) in the year that their atrocities, or serious concerns over them, occurred.[9] Thus, of the countries that we have specific start dates for, *just as many Medium ranking as Low ranking countries experienced atrocities*. Again, such findings illustrate the minimalist concern because how do we know where to commit resources?

Fifth, if we look at all the countries ranked Very High and High, we can see that people living in the top-ranking countries have a much lower chance of experiencing atrocities. For instance, in 2010, there were 85 countries ranked High or Very High yet only Colombia, Israel, Libya, Ukraine, Venezuela went on to experience atrocities in the following decade.[10] Of these, only Israel was ranked Very High with the remaining four ranked 53rd to 79th in the world. That said, the data also reminds us that we should not be complacent in terms of mass atrocity

prevention in so-called developed states. For example, scholars have raised concerns over human rights violations in Qatar and Bahrain (Hehir 2019: 12) both of which were ranked Very High at the time of their mass atrocities or serious concerns being raised.

Sixth, it is equally important to recognise that many countries ranked Low have not experienced mass atrocity crimes in the 21$^{st}$ century. In the 2010 HDI report there were forty-two countries ranked Low yet only seventeen appear in the atrocity dataset. This is actually a conservative estimate because there were a further twenty-five 'other countries or territories' that were not categorised due to lack of data (United Nations Development Programme 2010: 146). Many of these would have undoubtedly been ranked as Low but only five appear in Table 1, Eritrea, Iraq, North Korea, Palestine, and Somalia. Evidently, the vast majority of countries ranked Low have not experienced mass atrocities in the 21$^{st}$ century. To give another example, why is it that a country such as Zimbabwe did not experience more mass violence in the second decade of the 21$^{st}$ century? In 2010, Zimbabwe was actually ranked bottom of the HDI index (169$^{th}$) which, when juxtaposed with a history of mass violence and an alleged genocidal leader, set the scene for large scale atrocities. But the reality is that the culture of violence continued at a low level. During which time, Zimbabwe climbed up the HDI rankings: +4 between 2013-2018. HDI progress may have helped ease tensions within the country yet it is also important to recall that many countries improved their HDI ranking and still experienced mass atrocities or serious concerns of them were raised. Although complex, this reinforces the minimalist concern as many of the most underdeveloped countries are not experiencing mass atrocities. RtoP resources would be better spent addressing immediate threats.

*Trajectory*

In Bellamy and Luck's study they found five of the eight cases evidenced 'marked social and economic decline prior to the crisis' (2018: 167). This leads them to warn that 'it may be, however, that the direction of economic change matters more than the absolute level of poverty'

(2018: 167). With this in mind, it is important to get a better understanding of the trajectory surrounding each case.

First, let us look at the change in HDI ranking for 2005 – 2010 and 2013-2018 (see table 1) for which there are data for thirty-five countries (excluding North Korea and Somalia). This is important because it gives us an insight into their growth relative to other countries. To make sense of this we can divide the countries into four categories, a) those that increased by three ranks or more, b) those that decreased by three ranks or more, c) those that changed very little in that they stayed within a -2 to + 2 remit and finally, d) those in a state of 'flux' in that they experienced both an increase of three or more ranks but also a decrease of three or more ranks. What we see is that sixteen out of thirty-five countries changed very little. In other words, *almost half the countries that experienced mass atrocities, or serious concerns of them, fit into category c*. Moreover, whereas nine countries fit into category b, five countries experienced the opposite and are thus classified as category a. This leaves the final five in category d which experienced a period of progress and also decline: Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Libya, Yemen, and Venezuela. Such a mixed bag of results reinforces the minimalist concern that we cannot say with confidence that investing in the development of country X will reduce the threat of mass atrocities as twenty-six out of thirty-five categories experienced progress, little change, or progress and decline.

Second, if we look at overall status ranking from 1990-2010 (see Table 1) by which I mean whether a country is ranked Low, Medium, High or Very High. Notably, *only one country has a worse ranking in 2010 than in 1990* (Zimbabwe) as it went from a status of Medium to Low. In contrast, six countries improved their overall status as they moved from Low to Medium or Medium to High in this same time period (Cameroon, Georgia, Kenya, Libya, Pakistan and Ukraine). Finally, two countries experienced a state of flux in that they went from High in 1990 to Medium in 2000 back to High in 2010 (Venezuela and Columbia). The vast

majority of countries stayed in the same status ranking despite atrocities, or serious concerns of them, occurring.

Third, going beyond the data in Table 1, we can also factor in 'average annual HDI growth' rates (see United Nations Development Programme, 2020: 347-350). Of the thirty-five countries we have data for (excluding Somalia and North Korea), only four experienced negative average annual growth rates in the 21st century. In fact, not a single country experienced negative growth between 2000-2010 with the four cases all taking place between 2010-2019: Yemen (- 0.82), Syria (- 1.87) Libya (- 1.08), Venezuela (- 0.69). That said, other countries also had negative HDI growth rates in this period such as Jordan (-0.12), and Lebanon (-0.32), but did not experience mass atrocities, or serious concerns of them. In HDI terms, it would appear that the vast majority of countries were experiencing positive annual HDI growth yet still experienced atrocities and that they continued to progress after the atrocities, or serious concerns of them, occurred. Again, this illustrates the minimalist concern that links between underdevelopment and mass atrocities are overstated and that resources would be better spent focusing on short-term prevention and response.

Yet the trajectory findings above are presented with a point of caution because they do not capture year on year sudden changes. With this in mind, Table 2 presents data for twenty-two countries year-on-year changes. The number of cases is reduced from thirty-seven to twenty-two in order to navigate the aforementioned problem of start date.

*Table 2*

| Country | Index score | Index score | Index score | Index score two years before | Index score one year before | Index score in the year of | Index score one year after |
|---------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|         |             |             |             |                              |                             |                            |                            |

|  | five years before | four years before | three years before |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Burkina Faso | 2010 0.384 | **2011 0.394** | **2012 0.403** | **2013 0.410** | **2014 0.413** | **2015 0.422** | **2016: 0.428** |
| Burundi | 2010 0.411 | **2011 0.419** | **2012 0.426** | **2013 0.432** | **2014 0.438** | <u>2015 0.437</u> | **2016 0.438** |
| Cameroon | 2011 0.514 | **2012 0.525** | **2013 0.534** | **2014 0.540** | **2015 0.549** | **2016 0.553** | **2017 0.557** |
| C.A.R | 2008 0.352 | **2009 0.356** | **2010 0.365** | **2011 0.374** | **2012 0.381** | <u>2013 0.363</u> | **2014 0.368** |
| China | 2012: 0.716 | **2013 0.724** | **2014 0.731** | **2015 0.739** | **2016 0.746** | **2017 0.75** | **2018 0.755** |
| Côte d'Ivoire | 2005 0.438 | **2006 0.443** | **2007: 0.449** | **2008 0.455** | **2009 0.462** | **2010 0.468** | **2011 0.472** |
| Egypt | 2008 0.66 | **2009 0.662** | **2010 0.668** | **2011 0.671** | **2012 0.677** | **2013 0.683** | **2014 0.685** |
| Georgia | 2003 0.708 | **2004 0.715** | **2005 0.725** | **2006 0.731** | **2007 0.743** | <u>2008 0.742</u> | **2009 0.746** |
| Guinea | 2004 0.372 | **2005 0.383** | **2006 0.392** | **2007 0.4** | **2008 0.408** | *2009 0.408* | **2010 0.416** |
| Kenya | 2002 0.465 | **2003 0.478** | **2004 0.49** | **2005 0.5** | **2006 0.515** | **2007 0.523** | **2008 0.532** |
| Kyrgyzstan | 2005 0.642 | **2006 0.647** | **2007 0.654** | **2008 0.656** | **2009 0.661** | **2010 0.662** | **2011 0.664** |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Libya | 2006 | **2007** | **2008** | <u>2009</u> | <u>2010</u> | <u>2011</u> | **2012** |
| | 0.8 | **0.8** | **0.8** | <u>0.799</u> | <u>0.798</u> | <u>0.764</u> | **0.789** |
| Mali | 2007 | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** | **2011** | *2012* | *2013* |
| | 0.371 | **0.394** | **0.401** | **0.408** | **0.413** | *0.413* | *0.413* |
| Myanmar | 2012 | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** |
| | 0.533 | **0.543** | **0.55** | **0.557** | **0.563** | **0.572** | **0.579** |
| Nicaragua | 2013 | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | <u>2018</u> | **2019** |
| | 0.639 | **0.649** | **0.652** | **0.657** | **0.661** | <u>0.659</u> | **0.66** |
| Philippines | 2011 | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** |
| | 0.676 | **0.684** | **0.691** | **0.696** | **0.701** | **0.704** | **0.708** |
| Sri Lanka | 2004 | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** | **2010** |
| | 0.719 | **0.725** | **0.732** | **0.738** | **0.746** | **0.749** | **0.754** |
| Sudan | 1998 | **1999** | **2000** | **2001** | **2002** | **2003** | **2004** |
| | 0.39 | **0.396** | **0.403** | **0.409** | **0.415** | **0.422** | **0.43** |
| Syria | 2006 | **2007** | **2008:** | **2009** | <u>2010</u> | **2011** | <u>2012</u> |
| | 0.662 | **0.673** | **0.676** | **0.674** | <u>0.672</u> | **0.678** | <u>0.664</u> |
| Ukraine | 2009 | **2010** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | <u>2015</u> |
| | 0.749 | **0.755** | **0.76** | **0.764** | **0.767** | **0.771** | <u>0.765</u> |
| Venezuela | 2012 | **2013** | **2014** | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> | <u>2017</u> | <u>2018</u> |
| | 0.772 | **0.777** | **0.775** | <u>0.769</u> | <u>0.759</u> | <u>0.743</u> | <u>0.733</u> |
| Yemen | 2010 | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | <u>2014</u> | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> |
| | 0.506 | **0.506** | **0.504** | **0.509** | <u>0.502</u> | <u>0.483</u> | <u>0.474</u> |

To help make sense of the data,[11] three categories are created, i) bold data represents countries

that have experienced positive growth, ii) underlined date reflects those that have experienced

negative growth and iii) italicised data refers to countries that have stayed the same from one year to the next.

First, fourteen countries experienced positive growth in the lead up to their atrocities or serious concern of atrocities being raised, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mali Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Ukraine. Although Guinea and Mali experienced no growth in the year of their respective crisis, they experienced year on year positive growth prior to this and are included in this category. This narrow focus on twenty-two countries underlines the initial finding that many countries experience atrocities during times of HDI progress. The data shows that twice as many countries experienced positive growth.[12] This finding again makes it difficult to subscribe to a view that 'we' should put more into development in order to aid mass atrocity prevention as it seems that many atrocities, or significant concern of them, occurred during times of HDI progress.

Second, seven countries had negative growth in the lead up to, or in the year of, the atrocities or serious concerns being raised of them: Burundi, CAR, Georgia, Libya, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Yemen. After experiencing year on year positive growth, these seven countries had negative growth. Simply speaking, they did a U-turn. If we look closer at these seven countries, using the data in Table 1 we see that three are ranked Low (Burundi, CAR, and Yemen), two are ranked Medium (Nicaragua and Georgia), and two are ranked High (Libya and Venezuela) at the time of their atrocities or serious concern of them being raised. This supports the middle ground view put forward by Bellamy and Luck's that it might be the direction of change that has more significance than a country's overall status.

Third, of the fourteen countries growing year on year prior to the mass atrocities or serious concern being raised, only one experienced negative growth in the year following the atrocities: Ukraine. Again, this reaffirms the initial finding in that the vast majority of countries

do not experience post-atrocity decline, at least in HDI terms. To test this further, the research extended the timeframe beyond the first year after the atrocities or serious concern being raised. We see that *all fourteen countries* (including Ukraine) go on to experience year on year positive growth (United Nations Development Programme 2020, 347-35). Furthermore, eight of these fourteen countries actually improved their HDI rank: Burkina Faso (+3 2014-2019), Cameroon (+1 2013-2019), China (+12 2014-2019), Cote d'Ivoire (+7 2014-2019), Egypt (+1 2014 – 2019), Kyrgyzstan 2010 (+2 2010-2015), Myanmar (+3 2014 – 2019) and the Philippines (+3 2014-2019).[13] In other words, they did not just experience HDI growth during the aftermath, they were actually developing faster than those around them which underlines the minimalist point that this relationship is so complex it is difficult to see how the RtoP can engage with it and not be overwhelmed by it.

Fourth, it is worth noting that four countries had a lower HDI index score in the year of their atrocities or serious concern being raise of them, than they did five years prior: Libya, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen. Going forward, HDI regression should be looked at more closely as part of RtoP prevention strategies. Whilst some may view this as a violation of the minimalist approach, it is clear that the number of cases will not overwhelm the RtoP and may aid our understanding of short-term prevention as these changes took place within a five-year time frame.

**Conclusion**

The Responsibility to Protect norm has a controversial relationship with socioeconomics which has led to divisions between both academics and governments. The debate is hindered by the lack of data on this specific issue. To help address this lacuna, the article puts forward the first thematic analysis on development and mass atrocities in the 21st century by analysing thirty-seven countries and HDI data (1990-2020). There are eight key findings, i) mass atrocities or

serious concern of such atrocities occur in each type of HDI country: Low, Medium, High and Very High (albeit just once in the latter), ii) the vast majority of atrocities or serious concerns of atrocities being raised occur in Low and Medium ranked countries, iii) Medium ranked countries are just as likely to experience atrocities as Low ranked countries, iv) the lowest ranking countries (bottom twenty) are disproportionately vulnerable to atrocity crimes, v) many low ranking countries have not experienced mass atrocities this century, vi) the majority of countries experience positive HDI growth in the lead up to and after their atrocities or serious concerns being raised of atrocities, vii) only one country experienced a decline in HDI status in the year following their crisis and, viii) a smaller yet significant number of cases evidence HDI regression in the lead up to their atrocities or serious concerns being raised of atrocities. The findings underline just how complex the relationship between mass atrocities and socioeconomics is but this in itself is important because it reflects minimalist concerns. In closing, therefore, this author defends the minimalist position.

To return to the data, three things stand out. First, whilst it is true the vast majority of atrocities, or serious concerns of atrocities being raised occur in Low and Medium ranked countries (research finding two), the fact that the vast majority of Low ranked countries have not experienced mass atrocities this century (research finding five) highlights that we simply cannot know that investing RtoP resources in development issues will aid mass atrocity prevention. Second, the fact that Medium ranked countries are just as likely to experience mass atrocities (research finding three) further complicates the issue as again, where is the UN meant to channel its resources? Third, if we accept that, a) the vast majority of countries that experience mass atrocities or serious concerns of them are ranked Low or Medium (in 2000, thirty-four out of thirty-five countries we have data for were in these two categories) and, b) that many countries ranked Low have not experienced atrocity crimes, or serious concerns of them in the 21st Century, then we can derive that there it is another factor or set of factors

(perhaps working in relation with socioeconomic factors), that make mass atrocities more likely. Accordingly, I would need to see more definitive evidence that underdevelopment leads to mass atrocities in order to defend the middle ground or radical position.

To add a few more words on why this author rejects the middle ground and radical positions. Regarding the former, consider Bellamy and Luck's study as they speak of 'direct' and 'indirect' connections between socioeconomic factors and atrocity crimes but claim 'precisely what this connection is or how it operates is less clear' (2018: 125). Whether research will ever reveal the precise nature of this connection is questionable but in many ways this reinforces the concerns raised by minimalists as policymakers cannot know that practices such as development assistance are aiding the objective of mass atrocity prevention. Regarding the latter, before I can support a radical overhaul of international structures in the name of mass atrocity prevention, I would need to see more definitive evidence that a) underdevelopment is a major root cause and b) that current international structures produce underdevelopment. As discussed, radicals tend to draw on the civil wars literature to substantiate this claim, but those studies focus on civil wars as opposed to mass atrocities. The radical position seems to hinge on this idea that underdevelopment is a 'significant' or 'major' root cause, yet this is not substantiated in their own studies nor this one.

With hindsight, the last ten years has seen the RtoP discourse develop in a manner that minimalists would disapprove of. This author shares their concerns. The parameters of RtoP prevention have been broadened to the point that the norm is linked to more and more cases and more and more themes. The fact that this article looks at thirty-seven RtoP cases underlines the concern that 'broadening perspectives away from reaction has opened the floodgates to an overflow of appeals to address too many problems' (Mani and Weiss 2011: 4). Consider that in December 2020, Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall of the Global Centre for RtoP, explained that the Centre had analysed over 30 countries in its RtoP 'monitor' and another 20 in its 'atrocity alert'

(Streitfeld-Hall 2020). Although such analysis embodies a good intentioned effort to aid early warning, to return to the sentiment expressed by minimalists, where does this leave the RtoP? A norm that was created to prevent another Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo (Evans 2008: 27-30) is now being linked to over a quarter of all UN Member States. Simply speaking, the RtoP is an overwhelmed norm and the idea that states have a responsibility to develop in order to prevent is a responsibility too far.

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[i] The term 'mass atrocity' is used to refer to four crimes associated with the RtoP, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

[2] This corresponds with related studies. Ulfelder and Valentino (2008) identify 120 episodes, two of which are from the 21st century: Liberia and Sudan.

[3] Angola, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Russia, Rwanda, Thailand and Turkey.

[4] The index scores are taken from the HDI data centre (http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/data) but this does not include rankings. They are taken from each individual HDI report. The bibliography does not list every report because this would add too much to the word count.

[5] The 'change in HDI rank' 2005-2010 is taken from UNDP, 2010, 148-151. The 'change in HDI rank' 2014-2019 data is taken from UNDP 2020a, 347-350. Table One above omits data for the change in HDI rank between 2010-2015 in order to prevent overlap because the 2013 and 2014 data would appear in two columns (2010-2015 and 2014-2019) without us knowing the influence of these years on the overall trend. For the cases that specifically occurred in 2009 and 2010 the analysis below includes the data 2010-2015 which is taken from UNDP 2016, 202-205.

[6] If there is an index score but no rank this means the country in question was retrospectively given an index score but not ranked. In this case, Afghanistan is classified as a 'other' state in

the HDI report of 2000 with no index score or rank given. The index score has, therefore, been included later but no rank was given.

[7] At times the HDI researchers have retrospectively inserted data for a year even if, a) there was no HDI report for that year, and b) there was an HDI report, but it did not contain data on that country.

[8] Data is missing for Eritrea, Georgia, Palestine, and South Sudan.

[9] These rankings are taken from the HDI reports for the year in question.

[10] Georgia is excluded from this list of countries because it was ranked High in 2010 but its violence predated it.

[11] The data is taken from United Nations Development Programme (2020b)

[12] The only outlier is Syria, as it was in flux (negative-positive-negative) and is not included in either category.

[13] This leaves six countries, of these, Guinea and Mali did not move and four regressed Kenya (-1 2005 -2010 and -1 2010-2015), Sri Lanka 2009 (- 2 2010-2015) Sudan (-2 2005-2010) and Ukraine (-1 2014-2019). The data for 2005-2010 and 2014-2019 is taken from Table 1 above which comes from the aforementioned HDI reports. For 2010-2015 data see United Nations Development Programme, 2016, 202-205.

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