

# Trust but Verify: Building Cultures of Support for the Responsibility to Protect Norm

**Robert Zuber and Ana Carolina Barry Laso**

Global Action to Prevent War  
zuber@globalactionpw.org; ana\_barry\_laso@brown.edu

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## Abstract

Whether we wish to acknowledge it or not, trust issues permeate all security policy deliberations, including recent discussions at United Nations headquarters focused on building acceptance of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) norm and laying out plans for the full implementation of all three of its programmatic ‘pillars.’ This paper assesses resources for and commitments to trust building in three core areas – trust in the viability of the norm itself, trust in the persons most closely associated with the norm, and trust in the institutions (UN and Regional Bodies) projected to ‘house’ the norm and oversee all phases of its implementation. As this implementation process moves from consideration of state-focused, ‘first pillar’ preventive and early warning capacities to ‘third pillar,’ last-resort, direct responses to threats of atrocity crimes, the need for durable and dependable bonds of trust between RtoP advocates, diplomats and policymakers becomes more acute.

## Keywords

Trust, Responsibility to Protect, UNEPS, Political Feasibility, Security Council, Implementation

## Introduction

As the secretariat for the Project for a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS), and an enthusiastic member of the International Coalition on the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P) we have long concerned ourselves with matters of trust building. The system in which we do most of our work – at United Nations Headquarters – is one in which personal relationships and integrated security concerns seem forever subsidiary to state priorities and discrete policy interests. It is also a system with some fundamental security-related inequities, including the dominance of the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council and the wildly divergent staff capacities of diplomatic missions that make it almost impossible for smaller countries to keep track of issues – from illicit arms to civilian protection – on which they should

reasonably have the opportunity to weigh in. And it is a system that often appears closed to diverse voices that have a direct stake in ensuring that the international community acts as an honest, trustworthy broker for global security interests, including each of the three ‘pillars’ of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) norm needed to prevent and, if necessary, halt atrocity crimes against vulnerable civilian populations.

Whether we wish to acknowledge it or not, trust issues permeate all security policy discussions, including our work to gain a workable acceptance of the RtoP norm and fortify the UN system with tools and capacities for RtoP implementation. Diplomats and civil society representatives have concerns not always manifested through voice votes and carefully crafted policy statements, but which nevertheless impact full acceptance of the norm and a more robust interest in its practical implementation. If we are indeed committed to strong, effective civilian protection measures, we must broaden and deepen our dialogue with both diplomats and diverse civil society representatives in order to hear and address the legitimate concerns that impede full acceptance of the RtoP norm and the tools that will eventually be needed to make it fully operational.

The following piece is based in large measure on the work of Annie Herro of the Sydney Peace Foundation and Kavitha Suthanthiraj of New York-based Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW). In their paper, ‘Trust and the Development of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service’,<sup>1</sup> the authors elevate a dimension of social change that is often overlooked (and at times even scorned) by academics, policymakers and even some civil society advocates – the need to cultivate trusting relationships to enhance the viability of new ideas, tools and policies – in this instance capacities we believe should be adopted by the international community to address the threat of atrocity crimes and other severe violations of human rights in an effective and timely manner.

The heart of this effort is a lengthy series of interviews conducted largely by Herro and Suthanthiraj in Sydney and New York respectively during 2008 and 2009 with diverse stakeholders in the peace and security field. From Uganda to Timor-Leste, the views of activists, academics and policymakers on a variety of security and civilian protection issues – including the viability of

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<sup>1</sup> Annie Herro and Kavitha Suthanthiraj, *Trust and the Development of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service*, unpublished paper delivered at the International Studies Association Annual Conference in New Orleans, 18 February 2010. <http://www.globalactionpw.org/wp-content/uploads/trust-and-the-development-of-a-united-nations-emergency-peace-service-feb-17.pdf>.

the UN itself – were gathered and distilled. The findings have been incorporated into both the Herro-Suthanthiraraj paper and our ‘Standing for Change in Peacekeeping Operations’<sup>2</sup> volume that was used as the basic text for 2009–2010 regional workshops in South Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brazil, Cameroon and Costa Rica. In these workshops, government officials, policy-makers, academics and civil society leaders gathered to discuss civilian protection priorities, the role of the UN in promoting global security, prospects for new peacekeeping tools and ways to enhance support for the Responsibility to Protect norm. These gatherings had interest and even direct support from the ICR2P as part of their own commitment to enhanced understanding, cooperation and trust building among a variety of stakeholders in diverse global regions.

An organising assumption of Herro and Suthanthiraraj – and of much of the UN-based advocacy conducted by Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW) – is that proposals for new tools and norms to promote greater human security in the international community that seem perfectly feasible within the confines of our university libraries and NGO offices are often found wanting when placed in broader cultural and political contexts. And what is found to be most wanting is not so much the integrity of the proposals themselves (though legitimate questions can be raised here as well) but the ability of those proposing change to cultivate the trust and confidence of policymakers, civil society leaders and especially diplomats who must both come to embrace the proposed norms and tools and then manage the implications of those capacities for the system as a whole.

Herro and Suthanthiraraj remind us that with most proposals for significant policy change, and especially controversial capacities such as UNEPS, trust building must accompany policy development at every stage. It thus follows that trust issues also permeate RtoP discussions at many levels, including concerns that any application of the norm – especially ‘third pillar’ applications – might be motivated by political factors or other concerns extrinsic to the core moral interests of protecting civilians from atrocity crimes.

Originally adopted at the 2005 World Summit by consensus, the RtoP norm continues to face challenges towards full acceptance as delegates wrestle with both the legitimacy and limits of the Security Council’s authority and the lack of tools within the UN system – both preventive and reactive – to adequately address the threat of atrocity crimes or to respond quickly and appropriately in cases where robust, preventive diplomacy fails to stem the violence.

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<sup>2</sup> Kavitha Suthanthiraraj and Mariah Quinn (with Juan Mendez), *Standing for Change in Peacekeeping Operations*. <http://www.globalactionpw.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/standing-for-change-final-may-09.pdf>.

While some of the more cautious and even antagonistic comments by states during UN discussions on RtoP (including those made at last summer's General Assembly debate) seem a bit disingenuous, there are legitimate state concerns about the application of norms and tools for intervention during atrocity crimes – applications not preceded by sufficient preventive and diplomatic robustness – that we who are committed to the full implementation of the RtoP norm must forthrightly address.

Fortunately, the interviews conducted and incorporated by Herro and Suthanthiraraj point towards many fruitful avenues for trust building, all stemming from the firm belief that the cultivation of trust is a core strategy in any social or policy change. Despite the skepticism that is present in large portions of both the academy and social policy organisations (especially in the west), examples of personal and policy transformation abound. One only has to sit down with a 10 year old newspaper to appreciate the robust pace of change – some intentional, some incidental. Of course, there is no transformation on the cheap. Lasting change requires much scrutiny of our policy priorities and even more of our motives and strategies of engagement. It is this self-scrutiny that is an essential precondition for trusting relations.

Herro and Suthanthiraraj remind us that there is no more urgent task than to protect the dreams of a global community longing for an end to atrocity crimes and other forms of armed violence. Henry David Thoreau once remarked that 'we can safely trust a good deal more than we do.' The work of our GAPW colleagues as well as this paper attest to the fact that, where RtoP is concerned, we can also cultivate a good deal more trust than we have so far.

## Dimensions of Trust

We have shown that respondents' support of the proposal has just as much to do with their constructs on trust as their national, political or regional affiliation. We have also shown that trust is not just an attitude or set of beliefs and intentions. It is an aspect of culture and, for some, a skill that can be cultivated.<sup>3</sup>

Trust is a difficult thing to measure in part because it is such a difficult thing to define. Efforts to describe the architecture of trust, such as those documented by Peri K. Blind<sup>4</sup> have made valuable contributions to our understanding,

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<sup>3</sup> Herro and Suthanthiraraj, *Trust and the Development of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Peri K. Blind, *Building Trust in Government in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Review of Literature and Emerging Issues*, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan025062.pdf>. This paper was written in November 2006 for UNDESA and delivered at the June 2007

though these characterisations often seem too categorical in our judgment. That is, they fail to recognise the continuum on which trust is built and ascertained. No person or government trusts completely – that is, enters into relationships that are completely void of any means of or desire for verification. At the same time, no one of sound mind could be said to mistrust completely. (We generally assume that even our worst enemies will pay their taxes, avoid child abuse and observe road safety standards.) But there are levels of trust that are able to justify more and more concessions on policy, more and more patience in listening, more and more sincere negotiation, more and more openness to reassess opinions and the justifications for those opinions. These levels can be impacted by more skillful, strategic attention to the concerns that citizens and diplomats have towards the policies for which we advocate – in this case the full implementation of the RtoP norm.

At the same time, commentators on trust often do insufficient justice to the affective implications of trust building – that is, the extent to which feelings of trust are as important as actual conditions conducive to trust. Trust may be, as noted by Blind, a function of careful negotiations and a rational recognition of mutual dependence. But the existence of trust is often confirmed by the feelings of confidence and comfort that people have in and with each other. And it is those levels of personal confidence that we have a special power to impact. As we will see below, striking a better balance between the policies we seek to promote and the concerns of critics we honestly endeavor to understand and address will do much to build confidence in our norms and proposals.

Indeed, we believe that there are three essential domains for trust building on RtoP that we would do well to heed. These dimensions are all on a continuum of skills and action and all combine rational and affective elements. They will be taken up in kind in the sections that follow:

### **Political Feasibility**

There are certain words or concepts in international relations which immediately arouse a defensive response. RtoP is one such word. (A former Secretary-General of ASEAN)

Two advantages that we have in our efforts to implement the RtoP norm are that it embodies common, compelling language and that it responds to a very

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Global Forum on Reinventing Government in Vienna. It is an excellent overview of trust issues facing governments and their citizens, but many of the issues pertain to the pursuit of RtoP implementation as well.

deep longing in many communities in diverse global regions. A ‘responsibility to protect’ is a fundamental canon of family and community life. The phrase (or something akin to it) is written on police vehicles and adopted by schools and other social institutions responsible for the welfare of children. While ‘protection’ can have paternalistic overtones, the responsibility to ensure the safety of others is wholly consistent with many of our most cherished moral traditions.

In broader geopolitical terms, the Responsibility to Protect engenders hope that the international community can finally muster the consistent political will and create the competent tools and capacities needed to end both the conduct of and impunity for atrocity crimes. The deep wounds inflicted on communities through the atrocity crimes recognised under RtoP create a consistent motivation to support robust civilian protection capacities. Even most critics of the norm, including some of the voices raised with us during our regional workshops, long for a just, normative and practical framework for responding quickly and effectively to the threat of atrocity crimes. They know that something needs to be done; indeed, that it should have been done long ago. They simply don’t trust that we can find the wisdom and political will to create response mechanisms untainted by political bias and a ‘rush to intervention’, rather than capacities to enhance robust diplomacy and preventive engagements.

Nevertheless, there are a variety of concerns that states and communities have about the norm and its application, concerns that are not always valid, but which impact political feasibility. Indeed, one of the primary concerns of the policy community involved in the promotion of RtoP has been to free the norm from its misconceptions. Among those misconceptions is the belief that RtoP is simply a new ‘cover’ for humanitarian intervention; that it seeks to overturn fundamental notions of state sovereignty; or that it gives the powerful nations – especially P5 members of the Security Council – more tools and justifications for an ad hoc imposition of their will on more vulnerable, less powerful countries. A senior policy analyst at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta who has worked on security policy issues involving Australia and Indonesia, shared his ‘take’ on the suspicions surrounding RtoP: ‘RtoP is problematic’, he noted, ‘because it’s so selective’.

Another perspective on the limitations of RtoP acceptance is provided by a Nigerian colonel currently on study leave at the University for Peace in Costa Rica.

Like all new phenomena or concepts, RtoP came with its challenges. It is therefore not surprising that despite its noble aspirations, it has not enjoyed much success in practical terms. A number of reasons such as unilateralism by some

super powers, the issue of hegemony or authority vis-à-vis subjectivity or selectivity as well as institutional and political preparedness could be added to its lack of success; in addition to these inherent challenges, the concept of RtoP also poses unique challenges to some traditional and fundamental concepts of International Law such as sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention or non-interference.<sup>5</sup>

These cautions are well known to the ICR2P, the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect and other organisations and institutions promoting RtoP with governments and civil society actors. In response, these groups have formulated cogent, viable responses to each of the major objections. It is particularly important, for instance, to reinforce that RtoP is absolutely not a license for intervention, but is an effort to bring together a range of capacities – prevention, early warning and direct assistance for states – that must precede any consideration of direct intervention in internal affairs (especially given that the UN has no viable tools currently at its disposal for such purposes).

But as we have discovered through our own regional interactions, the ‘end game’ in terms of RtoP acceptance is less about winning an argument and more about addressing legitimate concerns in a way that honors their intent rather than assuming motives that are manipulative and non-transparent. In some less developed regions, government officials and civil society leaders have had to cope with the devastating consequences of atrocity crimes, and they have also had to help heal some of the unintended effects of poorly planned and executed efforts to address those crimes. Such leaders are skittish of proposals for intervention occurring at the end of a long road of prevention that has yet to be built. They understand – as we in New York should – that the best policy for dealing with atrocity crimes is to address their threats rather than their aftermath.

As is widely known, the report on the Responsibility to Protect by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty outlined three areas of action: responsibility to prevent, to react and to rebuild. Only in ‘extreme and exceptional cases’ does the report justify any resort to military action.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, some recent flawed and misleading interpretations of RtoP have contributed to an excessive focus on military intervention and not enough emphasis on the prevention components of the proposal. As noted by

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<sup>5</sup> Colonel Emmanuel Kabuk, *The Dilemma of Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention: The Way Forward*, 2010, p. 3. Unpublished article available at [www.globalactionpw.org](http://www.globalactionpw.org).

<sup>6</sup> International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, December 2001), especially pp. 31-35.

an interview respondent from an Australian university, RtoP is being interpreted in some quarters as a tool of powerful states against less powerful ones and, at times, a moral cover for politically motivated unilateral interventions.

Building political feasibility for the norm is partially about getting people to ‘understand’ what the norm does and doesn’t propose to do. But it is also about recognising the legitimate concerns that people have, including a lack of robustness in all three ‘pillars,’ the western orientation of those that guide development of the norm, and the shaky reputation of the UN on any and all matters related to intervention. Simply put, if we can somehow find the means to fully and fairly exercise our ‘responsibility to prevent,’ we will have fewer objections coming from diverse global regions, not to mention less of a need to react and certainly to rebuild.

### **Authors of Change**

The face of UNEPS is critical. To sell it I need a non-western face. (Japanese Senator)

In an institution like the UN which we all respect but in some ways is stuck in an unresponsive, unrepresentative model of governance, the UN-based ‘sponsors’ most closely associated with the RtoP norm are widely seen (rightly or not) as too immersed in western culture, too male, too much a product of elite backgrounds and expectations, too concerned with what happens at the UN and too little concerned about the communities threatened or impacted by atrocity crimes. The same ‘sponsors’ have also been seen sometimes as being too concerned with controlling access to the norm rather than investing it through dialogue with diverse, community aspirations in the peace and security field.

We, of course, are equally tainted with these broad brushstrokes. In promoting UNEPS and other ‘third pillar’ capacities in diverse regional settings around the world, we have encountered visceral resistance to (among other things) our style of presentation, our cultural biases, our UN-centric discourse and our insufficient knowledge of local issues and expectations. People have treated us respectfully in these workshop settings, and they have generally been more responsive to our ‘pitch’ for RtoP and a variety of UN-based implementation capacities than we might otherwise have anticipated. Still it is clear, in virtually every instance, that trust deficits related to the presenters of our workshops (and those organisational interests they represent) persisted and remained highly unlikely to be overcome by a single presentation or seminar.

Trust-building is a practice that requires more than a few encouraging words and the exchange of business cards. It requires an ongoing commitment to dialogue beyond the finalising of reports for our colleagues and funders. And, for us, part of that dialogue involves identifying and creating (as much as we are able) mutually-reinforcing relationships between our UN-based office and our global partners. If we in New York want to ensure the full adoption of the RtoP norm, we must remind ourselves each and every day that it will take much more than robust UN advocacy on our part to make this possible. It will also require the sincere and thorough integration of key perspectives, tools and aspirations from diverse global regions.

At GAPW, one of our primary organisational assets seems to be our access. We use the analogy of ‘letter carrier’ to describe our complementary functional priorities. We don’t write most of the ‘letters,’ but we can offer to diverse audiences our commitment that we will deliver ‘letters’ written by our global partners in places where they are likely to be acknowledged and hopefully acted upon. When we do it right, this ‘conduit’ function is indispensable to building broad confidence in our work as well building active national and regional coalitions that can continue to lobby governments, form local coalitions and promote increased understanding of the norm and its implications.

Whether we like to admit it or not, it matters a great deal whose face appears in front of the (metaphorical) camera. It is that much more difficult to overcome alleged ‘western biases’ in the formulation and application of RtoP when there are so many western faces speaking out on behalf of the norm. This point is made indirectly by Peri Blind,<sup>7</sup> who speaks of ‘regulations’ that seek to make even the appearance of corruption an offense in itself. The application to the RtoP process is obviously not related to laws but rather to the understanding that trust building requires attention to appearances as much as to competencies. This is not about patronising audiences, but about accommodating diverse levels of comfort and understanding. It is about creating conditions that make it easier for people to listen and respond. In cases where being heard really matters, it also matters who says things almost as much as what things are said.

## **An Institutional Home**

You could say that I am a man on a mission. And my mission could be dubbed ‘Operation Restore Trust’: trust in the Organization, and trust between Member

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<sup>7</sup> Blind, *Building Trust in Government in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 12.

States and the Secretariat. I hope this mission is not Mission Impossible. (Ban ki-Moon on the occasion of his inauguration as Secretary-General, 14 December 2006)

Few UN leaders have raised trust issues in the context of the UN to quite the degree that Mr. Ban has. In a speech given to the Albach Political Symposium,<sup>8</sup> he raised multiple issues and needs where trust building within the UN is concerned. “Building trust”, he noted, “and building a better world both depend on each other and go hand in hand”. Moreover, he noted that, “We aim to create a more modern, more trustworthy United Nations – a UN that is faster, more flexible and more effective in delivering on the growing demands place on it”.

What we have here is the blending of an aspiration to trust, key competencies that must be made operational for trust to exist (rapid, flexible response), and positive outcomes associated with trust building (a better world). This blend is particularly amenable to the evolving norm of the Responsibility to Protect, which itself posits a blend of aspirations, competencies and constructive outcomes. Indeed, the Ban speech made numerous references to RtoP, decrying the ‘complacency and cynicism’ that have prevented the UN from acting as early or as effectively as it should to address atrocity crimes.

The challenge with Ban’s speeches on trust is that he seems to position his office as a crusader on behalf of persons who have been ‘let down’ by their governments and other international institutions. “I will continue to speak out wherever peoples’ trust is being betrayed,” Ban affirmed in the Albach speech. This noble sentiment, however, was not supported by many of the leaders in diverse global regions whom we have interviewed. They believe that, at least in the security area, the UN has its own major trust issues that it needs to contend with. These leaders note that, despite the good work that the UN does in terms of poverty reduction, maternal health, disease prevention and other global challenges, most people judge its work through the lens of security. And it is this lens through which the UN is deemed less than fully trustworthy by many of the world’s peoples.

Ban embraces (not surprisingly) uncritical support for the fundamental legitimacy of the UN. However, this enthusiasm is reflected less and less by citizens and policymakers in diverse global communities who have been disappointed, over and over, by the failure of the UN and the international community to effectively prevent and/or resolve critical security threats that undermine social development and even threaten the viability of states.

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<sup>8</sup> Ban ki-Moon, Speech to Albach Political Symposium, 30 August 2009. [http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/speeches/search\\_full.asp?statID=560](http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/speeches/search_full.asp?statID=560).

From Brazil to Indonesia, government officials and civil society leaders have confided to us that the structure of the UN, including the Security Council's stranglehold (albeit often ineffective) on the UN's security apparatus, makes them reluctant to authorise even more capacities for use by the Council. This reluctance persists despite (hopefully not because of) our conversations and presentations in diverse global regions.

Some of the concerns raised through interviews were stated succinctly by Herro and Suthanthiraraj. These responses were in specific relation to UNEPS, but are indicative of larger concerns that could impact trust in the viability of the RtoP norm, at least insofar as its implementation would be based at the United Nations.

Based on his experience working at UN missions in Chad and Darfur, a Central African government official said: 'UN International peace and security role is far below expectations in terms of timing and quality of its actions. The procedures [in place] as well as the reactions of Member States in times of need are too low to be of importance and impact'. His distrust stemmed from operational concerns over communications, training and resources as well as a politicized Security Council with members that 'are influenced by their own interests and not forward thinking'. This sentiment was also voiced by a former UN Under-Secretary General (USG) who had worked in the UN for 25 years: 'Anybody with the least knowledge on the Security Council procedures will tell you that it is ineffective and inconsistent. It is unnecessarily slow, takes months of discussion and in most cases takes off with far less resources than needed to make any significant impact'. His experience interacting with Security Council Members tainted his view on the effectiveness of this UN body.<sup>9</sup>

In all of our workshops, the Security Council was singled out for its role in compromising the trust needed for the full implementation of the RtoP norm at the United Nations. One senior Brazilian official, citing competency issues, went so far to remark that 'if the Security Council would ever do its job, we might not even need RtoP'. But for most, the issues have mostly to do with power disparities inside the UN security system – the vast distance that appears to separate the permanent members of the Security Council from all other states. This manifests itself in many ways, including commonly articulated concerns regarding the Council's insufficient consultation with Troop Contributing Countries in the establishing of peacekeeping mandates. There is a pervasive sense in the diverse communities we visited that Council members are too willing to impose their security priorities on smaller, more vulnerable countries without much consultation and without any concern

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<sup>9</sup> Herro and Suthanthiraraj, *Trust and the Development of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service*, p. 10.

that the standards applied to these other countries would ever be applied to their own.

These observations correspond to analyses by Henry Farrell regarding the difficulties in maintaining conditions of trust in situations of extreme power disparities.<sup>10</sup> Farrell uses the ‘encapsulated interest account of trust’ concept put forth by Russell Hardin to describe conditions in which parties are actually paying attention to each other – their needs, contexts, aspirations, commitments and more. But in this context, he also describes situations of power imbalance where the powerful are incapable of making commitments which are credible, because there is no way for those at the bottom of the power structure to hold the powerful accountable. In other words, there are no credible ways for the smallest countries to ensure that the P5 and other large powers honour commitments, including commitments to implement RtoP in ways that are fair, reliable and dedicated to building preventive capacity so that intervention is truly the absolute measure of last resort.

And it is not only the Security Council that aroused the concern of participants in our regional gatherings:

A director of an influential military association in Australia was also distrustful of the UN, especially the General Assembly and, by extension, UNEPS. This retired military officer who had served in a number of UN peace operations was not concerned about the politicization of the UN but rather his belief about which countries should wield power. He also argued that UNEPS’ personnel would not be committed to its mandate: ‘What motivates people to lay down their life? Not the UN because it’s so corrupt’.<sup>11</sup>

There are many levels of comment to unpack here, but the most important dimension is the notion that, at least in the minds of some interested veterans of UN operations, the organisation itself is deemed ‘corrupt’ to the point where peoples’ loyalty to its purposes is severely compromised. This brings us back to a point made earlier in this section, that appearances do matter. Those of us who believe that the UN can and must continue to play a leading role in promoting and implementing RtoP must also do all that we can to ensure that the institution is not only doing the responsible thing, but ‘projecting responsibility’ to diverse communities worldwide.

In the end, this matter of trust in the UN may or may not be ‘mission impossible’. It is clear, however, that trust levels in the UN, especially in terms

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<sup>10</sup> Henry Farrell, ‘Trust, Distrust and Power’, in Russell Hardin (ed.), *Distrust*, (Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), esp. pp. 8–15. Russell Hardin is perhaps the leading scholar on trust in the US today.

<sup>11</sup> Herro and Suthanthiraraj, *Trust and the Development of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service*, p. 10.

of its management of global security, are not high. The global public is still searching for transparent, competent, rapid-response mechanisms that can prevent violence and respond to outbreaks of atrocity crimes in those (hopefully) rare instances when diplomacy and other preventive mechanisms have failed. UN member states are searching for response norms that can be applied rapidly, fairly, competently and with a clear reliance on diplomacy and prevention rather than on intervention. The UN is still considered even by its critics to be the obvious ‘home base’ for efforts to fully endorse and implement RtoP. Nevertheless, the UN is widely seen as possessing structural flaws, especially in relation to the Security Council (as well as capacity deficits regarding prevention and early warning mechanisms), that continue to make governments and civil society organisations in diverse global regions quite nervous.

What is clear to us is that despite the sophomoric nature of many arguments in opposition to RtoP, ‘nervousness’ about the capacity and viability of the UN system when it comes to civilian protection and prevention is one reaction that is not without merit. We have to do more to affirm the UN’s viability in the security realm, to demonstrate that the UN is capable of preventive robustness and practicing exceeding carefulness in the formulation and exercise of any intervention mandate. Trust in the United Nations (and in RtoP) will not come about through sentimental pronouncements by the Secretary General but through a systemic willingness to invest in structural changes relevant to RtoP and civilian protection, and to incorporate diverse regional security interests into its strategic planning. Unless the UN, member states and affiliated NGO partners find a way to pay more attention to these diverse security interests, there will likely come a time when people from diverse global regions will stop paying attention to the norms and institutions that we are trying to promote. At that point, we are in danger of losing their good will as well as the skills and access they have on hand to help build political will for robust measures to prevent and address atrocity crimes.

### **Practical Recommendations**

We join with Herro and Suthanthiraraj in advocating for a ‘spectrum of trust’<sup>12</sup> to advance interest in and support for the Responsibility to Protect norm. This ‘spectrum’ includes much relationship building that stresses reliable collaboration and careful engagement of concerns and aspirations from diverse

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<sup>12</sup> Herro and Suthanthiraraj, *Trust and the Development of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service*, p. 7.

global regions, among other attributes. In our view, the spectrum also suggests movement on the following activities and objectives:

- Working with diverse governments to affirm civilian protection priorities and support practical implementation wherever possible of RtoP consistent with governments' commitments to the norm made in 2005.
- Reaching out to diverse global regions to carefully assess their security needs and aspirations, offering our access to and engagement with policymakers as one contribution to efforts to address their concerns about the trustworthiness and viability of the UN in protecting civilians from atrocity crimes and related abuse.
- Creating occasions for dialogue with UN officials and diplomatic representatives about the need for much more robustness on the preventive end of UN security operations coupled with more restraint at the intervention end.
- Clarifying strategies for implementing the RtoP norm that address areas of legitimate mistrust that many smaller nations have of the Security Council's performance in the areas of peacekeeping and civilian protection.
- Exploring national and regional responses to threats of atrocity crimes that can simultaneously build capacity and ensure the involvement of diverse community stakeholders in any proposed solutions to those threats.

Those responsible for defining and promoting RtoP policy have a special obligation (if not sufficient resources) to practice responsible stewardship in reference to the norm and its implementation. If we want (and we do) RtoP to move steadily beyond rhetorical support to the development of practical tools and strategies to prevent and address atrocity crimes, we will need active support in capitals and communities far from UN headquarters. We will need to do all we can to move the spectrum towards more reliably trusting relations with diverse stakeholders.

## **Conclusion**

I was part of the High Level Panel that included the concept of the Responsibility to Protect in its report. I certainly endorse RtoP, but it will not find universal acceptance easily. The idea will need to be discreetly nurtured. (A UN Force Commander and member of a UN Experts Panel)

RtoP must certainly be 'discreetly nurtured' within a framework that recognises the essentially personal nature of the problem and its proposed solutions. As much as the global public yearns for a solution to the threat of atrocity crimes, there are compelling reasons to resist giving full trust to proposed RtoP solutions including, as we have seen, the persons most visibly representing the

norm and the institution deemed most worthy to house the capacities developed to respond to threats or outbreaks of atrocity crimes.

None of us has the skill or capacity to ensure trust by ourselves. Nor can we open every mind closed to the possibility that we and our institutions can become more responsible stewards of a norm with the vast potential of RtoP. But we can nurture the norm and its application in a manner that is both discrete and generous. We can invest more of our time and resources in sustained dialogue with diverse global stakeholders. We can also invest more of our institutional capital in privately reminding government representatives and UN officials that an unfairly or incompetently implemented norm will discredit the norm itself and diminish the viability of the UN security system in ways that none of us can afford. The stakes for us are as high as the crimes we seek to prevent are vicious.

The US theologian H. Richard Niebuhr was an active student of emerging science, and particularly the thought of Michael Polanyi.<sup>13</sup> Niebuhr pointed out with some real admiration that the scientific community has been able to win and sustain the public trust in ways that most disciplines and institutions have failed to do. He also admired the way that scientists seem to trust each other; faithfulness as he noted is very much a mark of relationships among scientists and between the scientific community and the larger public.

In reflecting on the reasons for this, the notion of ‘trust but verify’ came to mind. Scientists engage in research that is often collaborative and always transparent. There is competition towards breakthroughs but there is also a sense that those breakthroughs can be traced to building blocks created from the work of many scientists in many contexts. Moreover, the transparency of the scientific community allows for competent scientists to repeat experiments themselves rather than relying solely on the assessment of other researchers.

Obviously, policy on RtoP and atrocity crimes diverges at many key points from lab-based scientific research. But we also believe that two of the core attributes that contribute to trust in science – specifically its generosity towards other stakeholders and its transparent methodologies – would serve our interests as well. The more we can honor the work and concerns of others, and the more our UN-based strategies and working methods are transparent to diverse stakeholders facing a host of local and regional challenges, the more likely we will succeed in building strong, trust bonds of support for the high promise represented by the RtoP norm.

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<sup>13</sup> Phil Mullins, *Historical and Textual Notes on H. Richard Niebuhr and Michael Polanyi*, p. 23, <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/orgs/polanyi/TAD%20WEB%20ARCHIVE/TAD24-1/TAD24-1-pg20-31-pdf.pdf>.