

Responsibility to Protect or Protection from Responsibility? The Darfur Rebels' Appropriation of the Global Campaign to 'Save Darfur'

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The doctrine of the 'Responsibility to Protect', R2P in short, is an attempt to define the conditions under which the use of force for humanitarian purposes is permissible. However, the R2P goes beyond that and defines a *norm* in the sense that it makes prescriptive behavioral claims on states. Governments have a responsibility to protect their citizens from physical harm, and if they are unwilling or unable to do so, the onus of protection falls onto the international community.

In 2003, the government of Sudan sponsored a brutal counter-insurgency campaign to suppress a rebellion in its western periphery, Darfur. The following year a global campaign to "save Darfur" emerged, and Darfur became a test case for the emerging R2P norm. Consequently, short of a non-consensual military intervention, the entire array of instruments in the "R2P toolbox" was brought to bear in Darfur: diplomacy, sanctions, peacekeeping, and referral to the International Criminal Court etc. A growing body of literature deals with the international response to the Darfur conflict and the role of the R2P norm in it. Less explored are the ramifications of R2P in the context of the Sudanese state.

This paper thus examines the role of the Darfur rebels in appropriating the global discourse on R2P in order to legitimize their struggle against the Sudanese state. It also looks at how the R2P norm has provided a vocabulary for ordinary Darfurians and civil society groups to articulate their grievances against the state. Thus, the paper aims to develop an argument about the (potentially) problematic effects of the R2P norm in the context of Darfur and beyond. Thus, it can inflate the rebels' expectations of what they can realistically achieve; crowd out local strategies of resistance and conflict resolution; and exacerbate the polarization of different groups in conflict societies.