

Book Review: The Responsibility to Protect in Darfur

Book review of Lanz, David. *The Responsibility to Protect in Darfur: From Forgotten Conflict to Global Cause and Back*. Global Politics and the Responsibility to Protect. Series edited by Alex J. Bellamy, Sara E. Davies and Mónica Serrano. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020.

The Responsibility to Protect in Darfur provides a comprehensive analysis of how R2P shaped the national and international response to the conflict in Darfur. Lanz seeks to understand how R2P is translated into practice and to explain inconsistencies in the implementation of R2P. He succeeds on both counts and the book is a unique deep-dive into how R2P was implemented and how R2P shaped the national and international response across the single case study of Darfur. The starting point for the book is that the core of R2P is what he terms the 'Saving Strangers Norm', drawing on Nick Wheeler's seminal book from 2000. The book charts the rise and fall of the salience of this norm to the conflict in Darfur. Empirically, the key finding is that the frame of R2P gained widespread traction because the original framing of Darfur was conducive to the application of R2P from 2004 to 2009, however, after 2011 the narratives on Darfur became more complex and less coherent and the frame unravelled. Lanz concludes that the application of R2P is activated through meaning-making narratives, that international responses generally align with the dominant frame, and that local actors are central to R2P implementation.

This book will be of interest to anyone seeking to understand the effects of R2P, especially those interested in the implementation dimension, and has an uncommon and welcome focus on local actors in Darfur. A particular strength is chapter four on 'appropriating R2P', which charts the impact of R2P on a range of local actors in Darfur. Lanz shows how opposition groups in Darfur shared a common interest in using the frame of R2P to internationalise the conflict. This was done via connections with international journalists and via a local radio station (with international support to hide from the government) which ran live broadcasts of attacks on villages. On the negative side, Lanz demonstrates that R2P raised expectations for rebel groups in Darfur, by encouraging them to take maximalist positions, incentivising them to prolong peace talks (due to per diems and nice hotels), and led to fragmentation of rebel groups who hoped to be included in peace talks. The simplified narrative of situation as an ethnic conflict also exacerbated tensions between groups in Darfur. As an interviewee reported "the genocide narrative brought polarization of Darfuri society" whereby the differences between tribes were magnified more than they had been prior to the conflict (p. 123). However, despite deterring peace, Lanz also shows how the international attention on Darfur encouraged rebel groups to minimise the use of violence due to the ICC investigation. The government were also found to have made some, minimal, concessions due to international pressure. In analysing the local implications of R2P Lanz identifies a key challenge in peacekeeping the key instrument for the implementation of R2P. He argues "it creates expectations that a peacekeeping mission cannot fulfil, regardless of its staff's determination or how well it is equipped. UNAMID [the United Nations/African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur] fell into this trap." (p.118). This local focus is not often apparent in literature on the conflict in Darfur, which makes this book stand out, and is reflective of the extensive – 110 – research interviews Lanz conducted both inside and outside of Sudan. The book is accessible to both students and researchers and the conclusion chapter

offers a particularly useful summary of current debates on R2P for students developing coursework dissertation projects. Diplomats and practitioners working on R2P or related humanitarian themes will also find this book insightful.

As well as the focus on the local engagements with R2P the book also carves a path that is unique compared to both literature on Darfur, which often focuses on the UN Security Council or peacekeeping, and literature on R2P, which often focuses more on theoretical debates or illustrative case studies without the level of depth found in this book. In terms of research method, I would have liked a more detailed description of how discourse analysis and process tracing were conducted and how the research interviews were used. The project opens up many areas for further research, particularly whether the activation and deactivation of R2P seen in Darfur would resonate with other cases. As with all cases of conflict there were many unique elements of the Darfur conflict in relation to R2P, especially that the meaning of R2P had not yet solidified during the early stages of the Darfur conflict, and that the conflict had an unusually high salience in (some) Western nations. Future book-length analyses on the implementation of R2P in other cases could bring interesting insight on whether the patterns seen in this book are unique or representative of the application of R2P. This fascinating book offers an important evaluation of the implementation of R2P and raises many difficult questions for both advocates and sceptics alike.

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