

R2P BEYOND THE WEST: SOVEREIGNTY, RESPONSIBILITY AND THE DECLINE OF MASS ATROCITIES IN EAST ASIA

DOI: 10.20542/2307-1494-2018-1-104-114

Abstract For much of the 20th century, East Asia had been one of the world's regions most affected by mass killings of unarmed civilians. However, in late 20th – early 21st century, this region saw a significant decline in mass atrocities. The article explains this decline through the changing nature of the relationship between state and society in the region, and the gradual shift towards the adoption of notions of responsible sovereignty, consistent with the international Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle. In East Asia, the R2P-related norms, instead of being uncritically adopted or fully rejected, have gone through the process of localization. Global norms concerning the responsibility of the state to protect its population from mass atrocities have not been simply imported by the region's consolidated states, but have been reinterpreted, negotiated and revised in the process to ensure that they are consistent with existing regional principles such as non-interference. As a result, the R2P norm localization in East Asia produced a mutually reinforcing accommodation between traditional sovereignty/non-interference and responsible sovereignty. The main relevant lesson from East Asian experience is that, to make atrocity prevention a reality everywhere, Responsibility to Protect as a principle must be embedded or localized within existing cultural, normative and institutional frameworks and made consistent with them. Ultimately, R2P will succeed only if it is made meaningful to different cultures and peoples beyond the West.

Keywords Responsibility to Protect (R2P), East Asia, mass killings, genocide, crimes against humanity, decline in atrocities, responsible sovereignty, state legitimacy, norm localization

Название статьи «Ответственность по защите» за пределами Запада: суверенитет, ответственность и сокращение массовых зверств в Восточной Азии

Аннотация На протяжении большей части XX в. Восточная Азия была одним из регионов мира, где были наиболее распространены массовые убийства и зверства против гражданского населения. Однако в конце XX – начале XXI в. в регионе наблюдался значительный спад кампаний массового насилия. Предложенное в статье объяснение этого спада кроется в изменении характера отношений между государством и обществом в странах региона и в их постепенном переходе к переосмыслению понятия суверенитета, прежде всего, как ответственности, что соответствует базовому принципу международной концепции «ответственности по защите». В Восточной Азии нормативное содержание «ответственности по защите» было не безоглядно воспринято и не полностью отвергнуто, а, скорее, подверглось процессу локализации. Глобальные нормы, касающиеся ответственности государства по защите своего населения от массовых зверств, были не просто импортированы консолидирующимися государствами региона. Эти нормы активно обсуждались и были переосмыслены и пересмотрены таким

Alex J. Bellamy is Director of the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Queensland, Australia. Алекс Дж. Беллами – директор Азиатско-Тихоокеанский центра по «ответственности по защите» и профессор в области исследований мира и конфликтов Университета Квинсленда, Австралия.

образом, чтобы они не противоречили, а были совместимы с такими региональными принципами, как невмешательство во внутренние дела друг друга. В результате локализации нормы «ответственности по защите» большинству стран Восточной Азии удалось найти такой компромисс между более традиционным пониманием суверенитета и принципом невмешательства – и концепцией «ответственного суверенитета», в рамках которого оба этих начала усиливают друг друга. Главный урок, который можно извлечь из восточно-азиатского опыта в этой сфере, состоит в том, что для того, чтобы предотвращение массового насилия против гражданского населения стало повсеместной реальностью, принцип «ответственности по защите» должен быть интегрирован и локализован в рамках того или иного регионального культурного, нормативного и институционального контекста и совместим с ним. В конечном счете, реализация международной концепции «ответственности по защите» будет успешной только при том условии, что она приобретет значение и смысл для различных культур и народов за пределами западного мира.

Ключевые слова ответственность по защите, Восточная Азия, массовые зверства, геноцид, преступления против человечности, сокращение массовых убийств гражданского населения, суверенитет как ответственность, легитимность государства, локализация международной нормы

I. Introduction

From the killing fields of Cambodia to the massacres that accompanied China's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, East Asia's recent past abounds with examples of genocide and mass atrocities committed against unarmed civilians. A quarter of Cambodia's entire population died during three and a half years of Khmer Rouge rule (1975–1979), a similar proportion of East Timor's population perished under Indonesian occupation (1975–1999), North Korea lost a quarter of its population to the Korean War (1950–1953), and the victims of Chairman Mao's brutal misrule in China are now counted not in the millions but in the tens of millions. For much of the twentieth century, East Asians were at greater risk of death by genocide or mass atrocities than any peoples anywhere else in the world. Civilians were intentionally killed in vast numbers in the region's many Cold War proxy conflicts. They were killed to consolidate new states by demonstrating the government's brute power and coercing opponents. They were killed by opponents to these states. They were killed to physically eradicate domestic political opposition. They were killed to impose new ideologies. And, they were killed to establish – and dismantle – empires. The sheer scale of the bloodletting in East Asia has come to light only quite recently as more complete evidence of the mass violence used to enforce Mao's revolutionary programs (the anti-landowner program, suppression of Tibet, Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution), anti-communist killings in South Korea and Indonesia, and the systematic crimes against humanity perpetrated by the regime in North Korea has come to light to accompany what we already knew about mass atrocities in Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, the Korean War, and the Philippines.

The problem of genocide and mass killing in East Asia stretches back well beyond the Cold War. The Second World War in the Pacific gave rise to multiple genocides and numerous campaigns of mass killing. It exacted an immense toll on human life, as did the Japanese imperialism in Korea and Manchuria that preceded it. After wreaking havoc across the region, Japan itself was almost completely devastated by war. More than 60 cities, including half of Tokyo, were leveled by strategic bombing and some half a million civilians killed.¹ Overall, Japan lost more than three million soldiers and civilians between the invasion of Manchuria (1931) and the end of the war (1945). That figure, though, is dwarfed by the

losses sustained in China. Over the same time period, between 15 and 20 million Chinese died as a result of war. This includes between seven and eight million civilians killed by military actions and atrocities, and between five and ten million who died as a result of war-induced famine.² These include some 300000 civilians raped and murdered during the infamous Nanjing massacre of December 1937.³ Burma too experienced heavy fighting and losses as General Slim's British 14th Army battled Japanese invaders intent on reaching India.⁴ As the two powers, and their armies, tussled for supremacy, Burma descended into civil war. In addition to the 400000 military casualties, between 500000 and one million civilians were killed there, a large number at the hands of their neighbours.⁵ The Japanese orchestrated a campaign of terror against the ethnic Chinese in Malaya and Singapore, massacring between 70000 and 100000 and a further million people died in the battle for the Philippines, a significant number of them as a result of Japanese massacres committed once their defeat had become inevitable.⁶ All told, at least 30 million East Asians perished during the Second World War. But unlike in Europe, the killing did not stop in 1945.⁷

Mass atrocities were common features of the region's colonial wars well before the Second World War. Atrocities were widely committed during the U.S. war in the Philippines (1899–1902) and the Dutch occupation of Indonesia (1816–1942). Atrocities on a ferocious scale were also common in internecine conflicts. China, in particular, experienced recurrent bouts of mass violence as the ailing Qing dynasty struggled to hold on to power in the face of endemic corruption, inefficiency and challengers to their rule. None, though, surpassed the scale of bloodshed achieved by the Taiping rebellion – a civil war ranked amongst the bloodiest conflicts humanity has ever seen. In 1850, millenarians of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement responded to the state's efforts to suppress them by launching a massive rebellion in the country's south east. The ensuing war, fought with extreme brutality on both sides, lasted 14 years and consumed between 20 and 30 million lives, the vast majority of them civilians.⁸

Yet, over the past few decades East Asia's economic and political rise has quietly transformed the region into a zone of relative peace and stability; a region where genocide and mass atrocities – once so commonplace – have become relatively rare exceptions to the norm. But whilst the region's spectacular economic rise, responsible for lifting one billion people out of poverty has been well observed (if not always fully appreciated) by outsiders, less well understood is the region's turn away from mass violence. In 2008, Evelyn Goh wrote that “[o]rder—in the sense of stability, lack of major armed conflict, and relative predictability of interstate relationships—prevails in Southeast and East Asia. There has been no major destabilizing military contest between the great powers, and there has been significant cooperation against common threats such as nuclear proliferation and international terrorism”.⁹ Despite the challenges posed by the nuclearization of North Korea, extremist terrorism, and civil wars, a decade on Goh's basic point remains valid.

There were fewer cases of genocide and mass atrocities in East Asia in 2015 than at any other point in the region's recorded history. Protracted international conflicts in Indochina and the Korean peninsula have either been resolved or have given way to uneasy peace or low-level conflict not characterized by the mass killing of civilians; authoritarian regimes that once turned their guns on their own people have either been replaced by democratic governments (as in Indonesia and The Philippines) or have adopted a 'market-state' model of authoritarianism that prizes stability and permits individuals a wider degree of freedom; internal conflicts in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia and (to a lesser extent) Laos have experienced peace processes which – although of varying levels of outright success – contributed to dramatic declines in violence. The region's governments have publicly committed themselves at the United Nations to the Responsibility to Protect principle and to protecting their own populations from genocide and mass atrocities. They have made multiple pledges within their own region to promote the wellbeing of their citizens.¹⁰ Although

multiple territorial disputes, civil wars and ethno-religious disputes remain, East Asia has significantly reduced the incidence of genocide and mass atrocities.

Once wracked with recurrent episodes of genocide and mass killing, the scale of which often exceeded that seen anywhere else in the world, at the time of writing East Asia experienced only two (and possibly three) major ongoing cases of mass killing – that of atrocities committed by the North Korean government against its own people, by the military of Myanmar against that country's Rohingya Muslim minority and, more contested, those committed by security forces and their allies as part of the Philippines government's war on drugs. Of these, the North Korean case is well known. Myanmar – a country plagued by civil war since its birth – had embarked on the path of political reform and peacebuilding, which reduced violence across the country and delivered an elected government headed by long-time political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi. Yet acute challenges remain. In particular, the new civilian government has proven unable to control the military, which responded to attacks on border posts in late 2017 with a wave of crimes against humanity, which may – the UN's Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar argues – constitute genocide. The government of the Philippines led by President Rodrigo Duterte has vocally encouraged the extrajudicial killing of drug dealers, a policy that has accounted for the lives of some 6000 people, though the precise character of these killings remains hotly debated. While these reversals would be insufficient to reverse the positive trajectory of overall change in East Asia over the past few decades, they do point to the fact that progress is never permanent and will need to be carefully nurtured if it is to be sustained. That is why it is important to understand how the decline was achieved in the first place.

II. Towards sovereignty as responsibility

An important part of the story of the decline of mass atrocities in East Asia is the changing nature of the relationship between state and society in the region, and the gradual shift towards the adoption of notions of responsible sovereignty, consistent with the international Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle. Kishore Mahbubani ascribes the change to the emergence of a new 'social contract' between states and their citizens. Of course, the idea of the social contract has long roots in Western liberal political thinking, but there are strong echoes of the Confucian ideal in Mahbubani's account.¹¹ In short, states in East Asia are being made increasingly accountable to their own populations, whether through overt processes of democratization (as in Indonesia and The Philippines) or in other, non-Western ways (as in China). The effect, as Mahbubani explains, is that governments understand that they can remain in office only with the consent of the people. To obtain that consent they must achieve legitimacy by striving for the common good. Thus, whilst China, for example, is formally an authoritarian state governed by the Communist Party, in reality the Party has to earn its legitimacy daily. Unsurprisingly, the Party's top officials repeatedly claim to be serving the people.¹² Lower down the ranks, officials are often removed from office or even imprisoned for corruption and incompetence. At the macro-level, meanwhile, the regime achieves legitimacy by delivering economic growth and improved living standards but is painfully aware that a diminution of either would, conversely, erode its legitimacy. It is important to stress that this is an uneven process and that, although there has been a transition towards it, the nature and depth of the social contract in East Asia remains hotly contested. Thailand illustrates this point quite well. On the one hand, ongoing political strife in Thailand is at least in part a contest over the nature of the social contract between the government and its citizens. On the other hand, however, both sides of the dispute – and the Thai army itself – recognizes that the primary role of government is to protect the population.

With only a few exceptions (notably Indonesia and the Philippines) the modernization of the state in East Asia, and the improvement of human rights was not achieved primarily through the activism of civil society, or through the diffusion of international human rights

norms. Rather, these were state-led processes driven by impulses to rationalize, modernize and hence make the state and society more efficient and effective. These impulses sprang from changes in the global context.

By the 1980s, the improvement of global communications had increased the degree, depth and speed with which mass atrocities were reported. Although significant uncertainty often remained about the details, the fact of mass killing was now widely reported. For East Asia generally and China in particular, this change was most evident in the reporting of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and the wider political repercussions of that, which spread well beyond anything seen before in the region. The concomitant reduction of Cold War tensions also impacted on the level of priority many states gave to human rights considerations relative to strategic interests. As Cold War hostilities receded so too did the various strategic reasons for supporting regimes that perpetrated mass killing, shifting the balance between political interests and humanitarian considerations in favor of the latter for the first time in decades. This was not just a Western phenomenon. As East Asia's economies rapidly grew, a larger and better educated middle class emerged, demanding a greater say in political affairs and more humane policies from their government. And, as the principal source of government bureaucrats and the engine room of future economic growth, governing elites were obliged to pay attention to the middle class demands. Some of those that did not – such as dictators F. Marcos (President of the Philippines, 1965–1986) and M. Suharto (President of Indonesia, 1967–1998) – were ultimately removed from power. A rising middle class, increased information flow and reduced Cold War strategic concerns thus combined to fundamentally shift the balance of costs and payoffs associated with perpetrating atrocities.

In 1991, in response to the storm of international and regional protest following the Tiananmen massacre, China issued a White Paper defending a conception of human rights that prioritized economic and group rights over political rights – though it acknowledged the latter. The following year, Premier Li Peng told the UN that “China values human rights and stands ready to engage in discussion and cooperation...on the question of human rights.”¹³ Chinese engagement with international human rights grew steadily in the early 1990s.¹⁴ China also became a more active member of, and contributor to, the UN. Significantly, though, both of these patterns – increasing engagement with human rights and the UN system – were evident across the region.

Gradually, the widening acceptance of human rights related norms in East Asia – though not necessarily Western notions of human rights – combined with pre-existing Confucian ideas about the role of the state, allowed regional consensus to gradually emerge around the notion that sovereignty entails responsibilities as well as rights. Amongst these responsibilities is the protection of citizens from atrocities, including those perpetrated by the security forces themselves. This notion was crystallized in the international principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), endorsed by all the world's governments in 2005.¹⁵ R2P holds that all states have a responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and from their incitement. States should assist one another to fulfill this primary responsibility, but in situations where the state is “manifestly failing” to protect its population from these crimes, the international community should use peaceful means to protect the population and, should that be judged likely to fail, should take timely and decisive action through the UN Security Council. But how have these norms become embedded in a region whose politics are underpinned by a traditional understanding of sovereignty and deep commitment to non-interference in the domestic affairs of states? There are at least three possible ways to answer this question.

First, we might suggest that East Asia region has actually not yet made its mind up about R2P and is ‘mimicking’ support in the meantime. “Mimicking” a norm involves verbalizing support for it without changing behaviour.¹⁶ States may engage in mimicry in advance of making a judgment as to whether to accept the norm or not and it may be a

stalling device to buy time whilst ascertaining the material and legitimacy costs and benefits likely to accrue from compliance and non-compliance. Mimicking acceptance keeps a state's options open for the future. East Asian states will certainly have learned from the Beijing experience the potential political economic costs that come with perpetrating atrocities and may have therefore chosen to "mimick" compliance to keep trading partners in the West happy without actually internalizing the norm. Although there is considerable appeal to this line of argument, inasmuch as it helps explain the region's rhetorical support for R2P, it cannot explain behavioural change, especially the much-reduced incidence of mass atrocities, the greater restraint exhibited by states, and the increased willingness to criticise mass atrocities committed by others. All this implies that the acknowledgement of sovereign responsibility is something more than mere mimicry.

A second possible argument suggests that East Asia has jettisoned its traditional view of sovereignty in favor of R2P. This would seem equally unlikely given the continued rhetorical and legal commitment to non-interference and the endurance of practices associated with it. Indeed, if one accepts my argument that state consolidation was crucial to the decline of mass atrocities in East Asia and that non-interference facilitated this process, then it would make no sense to view non-interference and responsible sovereignty in zero-sum terms. In East Asia at least, they have evolved in a mutually reinforcing way.

That brings me to the third, and more compelling, argument which is that processes of norm localization have produced a mutually reinforcing accommodation between traditional sovereignty/non-interference and responsible sovereignty/R2P. This accommodation involves the formal retention of both sets of principles but the subtle realignment of each in order to make them compatible and coherent. It is this third explanation, I argue, that best explains the emergence of responsible sovereignty in East Asia: global norms concerning the responsibility of the state to protect its population from mass atrocities have been adopted by the East Asian region's consolidated states but in the process have been interpreted to ensure that they are consistent with existing regional principles such as non-interference. Through this process, not only has 'responsible sovereignty' been amended to fit regional imperatives, but traditional understandings of sovereignty have begun a process of recalibration to establish shared standards of appropriate behavior and permit international engagement in response to mass atrocity crimes, in some circumstances. Thus, whilst the region remains largely hostile to doctrinal revisions to non-interference, subtle changes are evident in practice. Indeed, The Philippines has explicitly called for the reconciliation of R2P with the principle of non-interference.¹⁷

That we are seeing the localization of R2P-related norms rather than their wholesale adoption – or rejection – is made evident by the region's contributions to UN debates on the subject. In the UN General Assembly and Security Council, most East Asian governments have explicitly endorsed the fundamentals of responsible sovereignty and R2P.¹⁸ At the 2015 UN General Assembly dialogue, China described R2P as a "prudential norm" and suggested that "states should establish relevant policies and mechanisms" for implementing it. China also noted that it was appropriate for the international community to adopt measures to fulfill R2P when needed, including the use of force "as a last resort".¹⁹ Indonesia, meanwhile, told the UN that it "fully subscribes to the finest objectives and purposes of the concept of R2P". The Philippines noted simply that "we subscribe to our shared responsibility" in relation to R2P. Malaysia observed its support for the "noble purposes" of R2P and recognized "notable successes" in the implementation of R2P. Singapore, meanwhile observed:

"The R2P principle states the obvious. The principle that each state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and that the international community should be prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner to help to protect populations against such crimes, should be unobjectionable".

East Asian governments have engaged in dialogue about implementing the principle, though this remains at a nascent stage led primarily by informal or non-state actors.²⁰ For example, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific issued a report that explored how regional organizations might take the lead in implementing R2P in East Asia.²¹ In 2013–2014, former ASEAN Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan convened a panel to advise the UN about the implementation of R2P in Southeast Asia. The panel set out a series of steps designed to advance R2P into practice, and since then Surin has toured the region advocating the recommendations to governments and civil society.²² Governments have started to actively consider the formal steps they need to take to implement R2P: in 2015, Japan and South Korea appointed senior officials as “R2P focal points”, succeeded the following year by Timor-Leste and Cambodia. Indeed, Cambodia’s Prime Minister, Hun Sen, gave a speech in which he reaffirmed his support for the principle and committed Cambodia to leading regional efforts to promote it:

*“I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Cambodia’s commitment to ‘the Responsibility to protect Principle’, which was adopted by member states of the United Nations in 2005. While the UN Charter basically affirms the sovereignty of Member States as a key principle in the promotion of international peace and security, it is also important to acknowledge that the exercise of sovereign rights of states carries with it certain obligations or responsibilities. In this regard, the adoption of ‘the Responsibility to Protect Principle’ should be viewed as deepening the meaning of sovereignty in that it underscores the importance of states taking seriously their primary responsibility to protect their people against genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing”.*²³

Naturally, East Asian states are more inclined to support the preventive and non-coercive aspects of R2P than they are those elements that contemplate non-consensual interference. Moreover, they have frequently expressed important concerns about the potential for R2P to legitimize interference and non-consensual measures beyond that which is provided for by the UN Charter. But this only confirms the view that R2P is undergoing localization. The process through which norms of responsible sovereignty are becoming embedded in East Asia is not one in which local actors simply import global norms. Instead it is a process of negotiation and revision where a new norm is made consistent with established norms in a manner that alters both the new and the more established.²⁴

Because of this, we should not assume that East Asian states will necessarily act like, sound like, or replicate experiences, norms or institutions developed in other parts of the world. Though the end result may be the same – states assuming responsibility for protecting their populations from mass atrocities, including by not committing such atrocities themselves – the precise modalities of how this will be achieved and the supporting rhetoric will remain distinctly East Asian. This reminds us that regions and states will filter and reconstitute apparently universal ideas or impulses in ways that reflect and accommodate local conditions. It is in this context that the work of Amitav Acharya is especially significant as his theory of localization has provided a framework with which to explain how externally generated norms are received and meditated within specific local contexts. For Acharya, the key variables that determine the impact of norms are the legitimacy and authority of “key norm-takers”, the strength of existing local norms, the credibility and prestige of local actors, indigenous cultural traditions, and the extent to which external norms can be “grafted and pruned”.²⁵ Meaningful normative change ultimately depends on the “successful fusion of foreign ideas with local ones”, according to Acharya, in a process of “constitutive localization” in which local actors determine the extent of norm diffusion and adoption in a process that is “evolutionary rather than revolutionary”.²⁶

Many East Asian governments recognize that there is potential tension between traditional conceptions of sovereignty and protection responsibilities.²⁷ However, in the face of domestic pressure from the newly assertive middle class, external expectations generated through the UN, trade considerations, regional challenges (particularly those associated by

Myanmar), most governments in the region have allowed the principle of non-interference to evolve in a way that reflects a degree of receptivity to principles associated with R2P and responsible sovereignty. Thus, many East Asian states are moving away from conservative interpretations of sovereignty that permits the state to treat its citizens however it sees fit, towards accepting a localized variant of sovereignty as responsibility. Singapore, for example, has even gone so far as to argue that “narrow notions of sovereignty no longer hold today”.²⁸

The emergence of responsible sovereigns that recognize a duty to protect their populations from mass atrocities played a significant role in reducing the incidence and lethality of such crimes in East Asia. This was very much a two-stage process. The first stage involved the rise and consolidation of modern states out of the ashes of the Second World War. Quite often, this very process was incredibly bloody, as different groups competed for control of the state, its boundaries and ideology. Supported by gradually entrenched principles of non-interference, strong states began to emerge. Capable of enforcing the law across their whole territory, consolidated states helped reduce the incidence of communal violence, civil war and international disputes. However, violence – including extreme types of violence such as mass atrocities – remained a key part of the state’s arsenal for maintaining control. To maintain order, East Asian states often resorted to extreme violence against their own populations. This began to change in the 1980s as societal and international expectations shifted – evidenced by the sharp response to the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. Since then, East Asian states have begun to adopt the principles of responsible sovereignty – the idea that states ought to protect their populations even from themselves. This is seen in both the rhetorical commitment they have made to R2P and, more importantly, in changed practices since 1989. The use of force against civilian populations, once a relative commonplace, has become quite rare. This was not because civilian unrest ended. Indeed, popular activism has brought down multiple governments in the region – but because expectations about the legitimate role of the state changed.

III. Learning from East Asia

East Asia will continue to confront critical challenges to sustain its progress in reducing mass atrocities. Since 2016, the situation has become somewhat less encouraging due to the escalation of conflict in Myanmar and atrocities committed by the military, increasing tensions on the Korean peninsula and extra-judicial killings in the Philippines. Any one of these crises has the potential to unravel the progress made since 1979. Yet the forces that propelled the decline of mass atrocities in East Asia, including state consolidation and the rise of responsible sovereignty, appear quite resilient. Indeed, they have created a degree of path-dependency. For example, with only a handful of exceptions, the region’s states are capable of maintaining themselves in the face of violent extremists and other non-state armed groups and are greatly aided in that by regional norms prohibiting the granting of support to such groups by other states. The only scenarios where violence seems more likely than not are in Myanmar – a country that has experienced a year of peace since before the Second World War – and North Korea.

The East Asian experience illuminates three important lessons for the future development of R2P and other humanitarian agendas. First, a popular conceit in the West holds that progress can be made only by the globalization of Western values and political styles. But the East Asian experience suggests that the road to a less violent world is not necessarily paved with Western values and styles. State consolidation was as significant in East Asia as it was in Europe, but its nature and the gradual adoption of responsible sovereignty was grounded in distinctively East Asian characteristics. It was this rootedness that tied states to their societies in a manner that made cultural sense and that was widely seen as legitimate. By contrast, while democratization – so crucial to the West – played a

role, it was a marginal one. Democratization assisted transitions in South Korea and Indonesia, but played a more ambivalent role in the Philippines and Cambodia. Meanwhile, a form of 'guided democracy' unfamiliar to the West but common in East Asia (having been employed in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand) played a crucial role in facilitating Myanmar's turn away from atrocities. As for China and Vietnam, democratization played no role whatsoever. Likewise, economics mattered, but it was both the fact of greater development and the distinctively East Asian form it took, in the shape of the developmental trading state, that impacted so much on patterns of violence. Multilateralism and power politics played important roles too, but again with distinctive characteristics. The former more focused on embedding norms of coexistence and habits of consultation and cooperation than instrumental institutional architectures, the latter once a source of great violence then harnessed in more flexible and multidirectional ways to support greater peacefulness.

These forces did not function autonomously, and this is the second important lesson to draw. Practices were driven by the conscious will of East Asia's leaders. Leadership and the choices made by individuals were crucial. Not all leaders, of course, took decisions that benefitted peace. Mao led China through disastrous wars and catastrophic mass killing. Prioritizing ideology and struggle over all else, his government sowed instability abroad and chaos and destruction at home. Pol Pot in Cambodia, Kim Il-Sung in South Korea, and even Indonesia's Sukarno chose to place ideological preferences and revolutionary zeal ahead of practical judgment with often devastating effects. But almost everywhere leaders emerged who were prepared to prioritize state consolidation and economic development above all else, stepping back from revolutionary ideology and ethno-nationalism to instead focus on institution-building and economic reform at home and the sustenance of international conditions conducive to both. Some of these leaders, such as Deng Xiaoping in China, Roh Tae-Woo in South Korea, and – more recently – Thein Sein in Myanmar had themselves previously served regimes responsible for atrocities. Yet in their own ways, they led important reforms that opened their countries to greater prosperity and reduced violence. Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, Malaysia's Mahathir Mohammed, and Indonesia's underrated and often overlooked President B.J.Habibie played similarly crucial leadership roles. Like Deng in China, Habibie brought an end to a period of autocratic rule by violence, especially in East Timor, and ushered in not just greater peacefulness, but also more rapid economic development. Unlike Deng, Habibie also helped entrench democracy in the world's largest Muslim majority country. It was the amalgam of all of these policy choices, and the fact that leaders often worked together, quietly, learned from one another and, indeed, competed with each other for prestige – that drove the decline of mass atrocities in East Asia. Ultimately, the social structures driving decline were significant only inasmuch as they influenced the decisions of political leaders and their followers.

The third lesson is that if mass atrocities can be reduced in East Asia, they can be reduced everywhere. The decline of mass atrocities in East Asia began in the least propitious of conditions, amidst war, deeply divisive ideological conflict, state weakness and fragmentation, countless territorial disputes, and generalized poverty and destitution. Even as late as the 1960s, social development in East Asia lagged behind much of sub-Saharan Africa and well behind the Middle East. Yet, over the course of a few decades prosperity has grown and mass atrocities all but eliminated. This was achieved through determined political action which blended Western ideas about the modern state and market economies with distinctly East Asian traditions and practices. What mattered perhaps above all, however, was that the welfare of the people became tightly bound – almost everywhere – to the legitimacy of the state. It was through this binding of social responsibility and political legitimacy that mass atrocities were transformed from a tool of government and war regularly used into a normative abomination and a rarity.

If R2P is to deliver on its ambition to make atrocity prevention a lived reality everywhere, its advocates must heed the lessons of East Asia and ensure that the principle

is embedded or localized within existing cultural, normative and institutional frameworks and made consistent with them. Ultimately, R2P will succeed only if it is made meaningful to different cultures and peoples beyond the West.

ENDNOTES

¹ Frank R.B. *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*. – N.Y.: Random House, 1999. P. 77.

² Ho Ping-ti. *Studies on the Population of China: 1368–1953*. – Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959. P. 252; Rummel R.J. *China's Bloody Century*. – N.Y.: Transaction, 1991.

³ Chang I. *The Rape of Nanking*. – N.Y.: Basic Books, 1997.

⁴ A note on terminology. The term “Burma” is used here to describe the country when it was under British rule. “Myanmar” refers to its post-independence period.

⁵ The high end estimate comes from: McLynn F. *The Burma Campaign: Disaster into Triumph, 1942–1945*. – New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. P. 1 The lower end estimate comes from: Clodfelter M. *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and other Figures 1500–2000*. 2nd ed. – N.Y.: Macfarland and Co., 2001. P. 556.

⁶ Biswas R. *Future Asia: The New Gold Rush in the East*. – L.: Palgrave, 2011. P. 7.

⁷ Bayly C., Harper T. *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire*. – Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010.

⁸ Platt S.R. *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*. – N.Y.: Knopf, 2012; Burleigh M. *Small Wars, Far Away Places: The Genesis of the Modern World: 1945–1965*. – L.: Pan Macmillan, 2014. P. 18.

⁹ Goh E. Great powers in Southeast Asia // *International Security*. V. 32. № 3. 2008. P. 155.

¹⁰ In Article 1 (7) of the ASEAN Charter, for example, member states pledge to “promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

¹¹ Mahbuhani K. *The Great Convergence: Asia, the West and the Logic of One World*. – N.Y.: Public Affairs, 2013. P. 40.

¹² *Ibid.* P. 41.

¹³ Kent A. *Between Freedom and Subsistence: China and Human Rights*. – Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1993. P. 222.

¹⁴ Zhang Y. *China in International Society since 1949*. – L.: Macmillan, 1998. P. 181.

¹⁵ Bellamy A.J., Davies S.E. The Responsibility to Protect in the Asia-Pacific // *Security Dialogue*. V. 40. № 6. 2009. P. 547–574.

¹⁶ Johnston A.I. *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980–2000*. – Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

¹⁷ Romulo A.G. Philippine Statement on “South-South Cooperation: Towards Achieving the Development Agenda of the South”. 16 June 2005.

¹⁸ Bellamy A.J., Davies S.E. *Op. cit.*

¹⁹ A complete set of statements is provided by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. URL: <http://www.globalr2p.org>.

-
- ²⁰ Cabellero-Anthony M. The Responsibility to Protect in Southeast Asia: opening up spaces for advancing human security // *Pacific Review*. V. 25. № 1. 2012. P. 113–134.
- ²¹ Implementing the Responsibility to Protect. Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific. Memorandum № 18, September 2011.
- ²² Mainstreaming the Responsibility to Protect in Southeast Asia: Pathway Towards a Caring ASEAN Community. Report of the High-Level Advisory Panel on the Responsibility to Protect in Southeast Asia presented at the United Nations, New York, 9 September 2014.
URL: <https://r2pasiapacific.org/filething/get/636/mainstreaming-r2p-hlap-report-sep-2014.pdf>.
- ²³ Cambodia Takes the Leading Role in the Prevention of Genocide in ASEAN. Address by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, at the International Conference on “The Responsibility to Protect at 10: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities in Asia Pacific”, 26 February 2015. URL: <https://r2pasiapacific.org/filething/get/948/Samdech%20Hun%20Sen%20Key%20Note%20Address%20R2P.pdf>.
- ²⁴ This is similar to the idea of norm diffusion as a two-way feedback loop. See Prantl J., Nakano R. Global norm diffusion in East Asia: how China and Japan implement the Responsibility to Protect // *International Relations*. V. 25. № 2. 2011. P. 204–223; Acharya A. The R2P and norm diffusion: towards a framework of norm circulation // *Global Responsibility to Protect*. V. 5. № 4. 2013. P. 466-479.
- ²⁵ Acharya A. How ideas spread: whose norms matter? Norm localization and institutional change in Asian regionalism // *International Organization*. V. 58. № 2. 2004. P. 241; idem. *Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism*. – Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- ²⁶ Acharya A. *Whose Ideas Matter?* Op. cit. P. 5, 146.
- ²⁷ Morada N.M. R2P Roadmap in Southeast Asia: Challenges and Prospects. Unidad de investigación sobre seguridad y cooperación (UNISCI) Discussion Papers № 11. – Madrid: UNISCI, 2006. P. 61; Bellamy A.J., Drummond C. The Responsibility to Protect in Southeast Asia: between non-interference and sovereignty as responsibility // *The Pacific Review*. V. 24. № 2. 2011. P. 179–200.
- ²⁸ Statement by H.E. Professor S.Jayakumar, Deputy Prime Minister, Co-ordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Law of the Republic of Singapore at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. A/60/PV.8. – N.Y.: United Nations, 16 September 2005.