

Neocons, “Responsibility to Protect”, and Hypocrisy

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Sometimes I’m challenged over [my linking](#) belligerent neoconservatives with “liberal interventionists” who justify U.S. military invasions under the “humanitarian” banner of “responsibility to protect” – or R2P – meaning to intervene in war-torn countries to stop the killing of civilians, like the 1994 slaughter in Rwanda.

And, most people would agree that there are extraordinary situations in which the timely arrival of an external military force might prevent genocide or other atrocities, which was one of the intended functions of the United Nations. But my overall impression of R2Pers is that many are careerist hypocrites who voice selective outrage that provides cover for the U.S. and its allies to do pretty much whatever they wish.

Though one can’t generalize about an entire group – since some R2Pers act much more consistently than others – many of the most prominent ones operate opportunistically, depending how the dominant narrative is going and where the power interests lie.

So, while many R2Pers were eager to seek war against the Syrian government when it cracked down on both peaceful and violent opponents in 2011 – and especially after a mysterious Sarin gas attack in 2013 – many of the star R2Pers went silent when Israel bombarded Gaza in 2008-09 and again in 2014.



President Barack Obama talks with Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, following a Cabinet meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Sept. 12, 2013. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

The reason is obvious: There was no powerful lobby defending the Syrian government but there was one protecting the Israeli government. Additionally, the mainstream U.S. media is hostile to the Syrian government but almost universally supports the Israeli government. In other words, many R2Pers practice a double standard depending on who's doing the killing of civilians.

In 2011, the neocons and the R2Pers teamed up for a war against Libya, which was sold to the United Nations Security Council as simply a limited intervention to protect civilians in the east whom Muammar Gaddafi had labeled "terrorists." However, once the U.S.-orchestrated military operation got going, it quickly turned into a "regime change" war, killing Gaddafi and unleashing bloody chaos across Libya and neighboring African countries. It turns out that Gaddafi was right about many of his enemies being Islamic terrorists.

The Ukraine Case

We saw this neocon-R2P "chaos promotion" again in Ukraine where neoconservative officials and "liberal interventionist" activists rallied to the cause of the Maidan protesters when they challenged the elected government of President Viktor Yanukovych in late 2013 and early 2014.

On Feb. 20, 2014, when unidentified snipers killed both police and protesters, the neocons and R2Pers along with the Western media blamed Yanukovych - though he insisted that he had ordered the police NOT to use deadly force - and later studies suggested the snipers were likely working for the anti-Yanukovych side and had fired from locations controlled by the Right Sektor, extremists associated with the Maidan's neo-Nazi "self-defense" commandant Andriy Parubiy.

If indeed the sniper attack was a false-flag provocation, it worked, laying the bloody groundwork for the violent overthrow of Yanukovych two days later. Since then, the U.S.-backed regime in Kiev has dragged its feet on the sniper investigation, but independent field reports, including [one from the BBC](#), indicated that the snipers likely were associated with the protesters, not the Yanukovych government. [Another worthwhile documentary on this mystery is "[Maidan Massacre](#)."]]

But the West favored a Ukraine narrative that made the Maidan coup-makers the good guys and Yanukovych's supporters the bad guys. This was the view not only of neocons, like Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, but prominent R2Pers like New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof. In April 2014, he returned to his family's ancestral home in Karapchiv in western Ukraine to interview some of its residents and [presented their views](#) as the true voice of the people.

Kristof depicted his father's old home town as an idyllic place where everyone loves the music of Taylor Swift and dreams of their place in a prosperous Europe - if only President Barack Obama would send them weapons to kill Russians (or go "bear-hunting" as Kristof wrote in [one column](#)).

Pretty soon that desired outcome had become a reality. On May 2, 2014, pro-regime neo-Nazis massacred scores of ethnic Russians by the burning down of the Trade Union Building in Odessa. Amid the horror - and reports of graffiti hailing the Galician SS, one of western Ukraine's contributions to the Nazi war effort - there was little protest from the R2P community or from the West in general. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Ukraine's Dr.](#)"]]

[Strangelove Reality.](#)”]

Similarly, when Kiev’s coup regime announced its “anti-terrorist operation” to destroy the resistance in eastern Ukraine – and again dispatched neo-Nazi militias to spearhead the killing – the thousands of deaths, mostly among ethnic Russians, were blamed on “Russian aggression” and Russian President Vladimir Putin. The R2Pers showed very little outrage even when the Kiev forces began shelling cities and leveling towns. [See Consortiumnews.com’s “[Seeing No Neo-Nazi Militias in Ukraine.](#)”]

Muted Outrage

A couple of human rights groups did take note of some outrages. Amnesty International [reported](#) abuses committed by Kiev’s far-right Aidar militia against civilians:

“Members of the Aidar territorial defence battalion, operating in the north Luhansk region, have been involved in widespread abuses, including abductions, unlawful detention, ill-treatment, theft, extortion, and possible executions. ... Some of the abuses committed by members of the Aidar battalion amount to war crimes, for which both the perpetrators and, possibly, the commanders would bear responsibility under national and international law.”

Human Rights Watch [said](#) “Ukrainian government forces used cluster munitions in populated areas in Donetsk city” despite the fact that “the use of cluster munitions in populated areas violates the laws of war due to the indiscriminate nature of the weapon and may amount to war crimes.”

However, the language in these reports was relatively restrained, possibly because both groups receive large donations from billionaire George Soros, who has sided with the Kiev authorities and is supporting the crushing of the eastern Ukrainian resistance. The human rights complaints also drew scant notice in the mainstream U.S. news media, which has also taken sides against the ethnic Russians and in favor of the Kiev regime.

So, although more than 5,000 Ukrainians have been killed – the vast majority ethnic Russians in the east – there has been virtual silence among the R2Pers about the responsibility to protect the ethnic Russians. Indeed, when the Russian government has supplied these people with weapons to defend themselves, many “liberal interventionists” have joined with the neocons in condemning Moscow and Putin, fuming about a “Russian invasion.”

So, it’s apparently okay for the U.S.-backed government in Kiev to engage in the slaughter of an ethnic population in eastern Ukraine – even employing neo-Nazis to do the dirtiest work – with many R2Pers cheering what looks a lot like ethnic cleansing.

Bombing Yemen

A similar situation is now playing out in Yemen where a long-running civil war saw Houthi rebels capturing the capital Sanaa and other major cities. President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia seeking protection and encouraging the Saudi royal family to reinstall him.

The Saudis, citing alleged Iranian support for the Houthis, began a U.S.-backed bombing campaign that has apparently killed hundreds of civilians, prompting Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to denounce the airstrikes as “a crime” and “a genocide.”

Though the Saudis are undeniably intervening in another nation’s civil war, the Obama administration supports this intervention and doesn’t seem too troubled by the large-scale civilian deaths being inflicted. Instead of restraining the Saudis, the United States is rushing military resupplies and providing logistical and intelligence support.

Rather than protest this Saudi “invasion,” Secretary of State John Kerry chastised the Iranians for supposedly helping the Houthis. In one of his most clueless and disingenuous remarks – and there is plenty of competition – Kerry told the PBS NewsHour on Wednesday that Washington was “not going to stand by while the region is destabilized.”

Kerry, of course, was one of the U.S. senators in 2002 to authorize President George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq, a conflict that not only killed hundreds of thousands of people but gave rise to the hyper-violent “Al-Qaeda in Iraq” which has since morphed into the “Islamic State,” which has spread its particularly savage brand of jihad across the Middle East and into Africa.

Another major breeder of Mideast destabilization has been the Saudi royal family, which spurred Iraq’s Saddam Hussein to invade Iran in 1980, reviving the ancient Sunni-Shiite rivalries which have escalated to the present day. Elements of the Saudi royal family also supported Saudi Osama bin Laden as he founded and built Al-Qaeda to engage in terrorism against the West. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“The Secret Saudi Ties to Terrorism.”](#)]

For Kerry to present himself and the Saudis as the protectors of Middle East stability would be laughable if there weren’t so many dead and maimed innocents across the region. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“What’s the Matter with John Kerry?”](#)]

Kerry also reprised his infamous fact-free-rush-to-judgment style that he used in pushing the United States nearly into a war with Syria over his dubious charge that President Bashar al-Assad’s government was responsible for an Aug. 21, 2013 Sarin attack outside Damascus – and in blaming Russia for the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine on July 17, 2014. In both cases – still unresolved – subsequent information suggested a different conclusion. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Kerry’s Latest Reckless Rush to Judgment.”](#)]

Regarding the Saudi bombing of Yemen, Kerry justified the attacks by blaming Iran:

“There are obviously supplies that have been coming from Iran. ... There are a number of flights, every single week that have been flying in. We trace those flights, and we know this. We are well aware of the support that Iran has been giving to Yemen.”

Beyond the hypocrisy of Kerry’s protest – given U.S. interference in dozens of civil wars – there is the contrary analysis by many Yemen watchers that – while Iran may have given the Houthis some money and possibly weapons – Tehran exercises very little control over the Houthis who are Zaydi Shia, an offshoot of Shiite Islam considered relatively close to Sunni Islam.

The Houthis also are not anti-American — and they are anti-Al-Qaeda. They made overtures

to the Obama administration, expressing a desire to press ahead with the war against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. But the Saudi intervention, with U.S. support, has damaged the Houthis' ability to continue that fight and, indeed, has allowed Al-Qaeda to capture more territory and free scores of its imprisoned militants.

Yet, while this tangle of contradictions and hypocrisies may be expected from the U.S. State Department, one might think that the "principled" R2Pers would hold themselves to a higher standard and denounce the Saudi-led and U.S.-backed slaughter of innocents. But, again, the cries of humanitarian protests have been muffled.

High-Profile Hypocrite

Possibly the most high-profile R2P hypocrite is U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, who earned wide acclaim for developing R2P theories and scolding U.S. officials for not stopping the Rwanda genocide in 1994.

Power even got in trouble in 2002 when she [responded](#) to a hypothetical question about the possible need to dispatch U.S. troops to prevent Israel from committing genocide against the Palestinians. In her rambling and convoluted answer, she suggested that a military solution might have to be imposed on Israel:

"It may mean, more crucially, sacrificing, or investing I think more than sacrificing, literally billions of dollars, not in servicing Israel's military but actually investing in the new state of Palestine; in investing billions of dollars it would probably take also to support I think what will have to be a mammoth a protection force — not of the old Srebrenica kind or of the Rwanda kind, but a meaningful military presence.

"Because it seems to me at this stage - and this is true of actual genocides as well and not just major human rights abuses which we're seeing there - that is that you have to go in as if you're serious, you have to put something on the line.

"And unfortunately — imposition of a solution on unwilling parties is dreadful, I mean it's a terrible thing to do, it's fundamentally undemocratic — but sadly... you know, we don't just have a democracy here either, we have a liberal democracy, there are certain sets of principles that guide our policy, or they are meant to anyway, and there it's essential that some set of principles becomes the benchmark, rather than a deference to people who are fundamentally, politically destined to destroy the lives of their own people."

Power also did some of the political calculation involved, saying:

"What we need is a willingness to actually put something on the line in the service of helping the situation. And putting something on the line might mean alienating a domestic constituency of tremendous political and financial import"

- an obvious reference to Jewish-American supporters of Israel.

However, when it became clear that her answer had upset that powerful constituency and thus threatened her future employment in government, she scurried away from it, disavowing her comments to an Israeli journalist.

Then, in a closed 2011 meeting with 40 Jewish leaders, Power reportedly [broke down in tears](#) showing what Rabbi Shmuley Boteach described as “her unabashed display of emotional attachment to the security of the Jewish people.” Boteach is a self-professed supporter of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In other words, when her career was in danger, she pitched the Palestinian people and their human rights over the side. She also has been a staunch defender of the Kiev regime’s brutal “anti-terrorist operation” against the ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine, showing little regard for their lives and safety.

Clearly, Samantha Power and many other R2Pers fashion their responsibility to protect around protecting their own political and financial interests.

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