Australian East Timor solidarity activists and sympathizers massively turn to the streets of Melbourne demanding a UN intervention in East Timor, September 1999. Used by permission of photographer John Englart (Takver).

Annual ministerial meeting on the responsibility to protect during the opening of the UN General Assembly session, co-hosted by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), September 2011. Photograph: GCR2P. Used by permission of the GCR2P Director.
“DON’T LET US BE BYSTANDERS!”
Anti-Genocide Activists and the Sacralization of Humanity

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. F.A. van der Duyn Schouten,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
op donderdag 1 oktober 2015 om 15.45 uur
in het auditorium van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

door
Annette Jansen
geboren te Velp
promotor: prof.dr. H. C. G. Schulte Nordholt
copromotoren: dr. F. Colombijn
prof.dr. G. ter Haar
In our human minds
ferocities gather and enlarge
that we attempt to call inhuman
-Donald Hall

To my mother
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We had to pick a new country for me to work on. I had just returned to the headquarters of Oxfam Novib in The Hague after a six month mission to tsunami-affected Aceh. My colleague, also an advocacy officer, already ‘did’ the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Arms Trade Treaty. He suggested taking up Afghanistan.

It was March 2006, and the Dutch parliament had consented to a Dutch troop contribution to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to Afghanistan. The Dutch involvement in the ISAF-mission followed that of various other European nations. Many occasions would arise to lobby for the protection of Afghan civilians and for a reconstruction policy that would prioritize the needs of vulnerable Afghan people. Oxfam Novib had supported local Afghan civil society organizations since 1982, so we had the position and background to provide some meaningful input.

From that time on I was deeply involved in the humanitarian lobby to prevent what we called ‘the blurring of lines’ - the mixing of roles and responsibilities between the military and humanitarians. The ‘blurring of lines’ - so we were convinced - would hamper the impartiality of humanitarian assistance and would thus ultimately affect the Afghan people in need of that assistance. I recall travelling to the NATO headquarters in Brussels with other Dutch advocacy officers in an attempt to convince the NATO press officer to abstain from framing the military ISAF mission as a humanitarian mission. I remember my outburst during the formal meeting of the Dutch Afghanistan Platform, in response to a military officer who said that NGOs should not make such a fuss because ‘we are all there for the same thing’. “We are not!” I responded to his reddening face: "Our primary goal is to protect Afghan civilians, to support reconstruction in line with their needs and wishes. Your primary goal is the fulfilment of a military mission and for that you are seeking to win the hearts and minds of Afghan people. To you, the Afghan civilians are instrumental to a counter-insurgency strategy!”

By then Oxfam Novib had taken a more principled stance in the debate on humanitarian military interventions, by opposing the ISAF mission and seeking to safeguard humanitarian principles. Other Dutch NGOs however, had opted for a more pragmatic approach. In their view, the humanitarian scene had changed irrevocably: the involvement of the military in the domain previously dominated by humanitarians could no longer be prevented. Moreover, more humanitarian and human rights activists began to call for UN military interventions to protect civilians and safeguard human rights.

These developments worried me. How could it be that ‘we’ human rights activists and humanitarians, who so clearly came from a background of non-violence, ended up advocating the use of violence? How could we be so sure - given the range of reports on the failings of UN peace keeping missions - that the use of force would actually bring our goal nearer? That it would not further exacerbate violence and increase human suffering? Why did a movement that was so well-known for its tradition of self-criticism and aversion to power refrain from tackling this dilemma in a much more fundamental way? Why this urgency and insistence to increase the means for mass atrocity interventions without any fundamental discussion on
the premises and without any substantial data to go on?
Due to my background in the science of religions perhaps, I sensed a strong ideological and existential undercurrent in the call for (military) mass atrocity preventions that I wished to uncover. As I wrote at the time in an angry contribution posted on a blog of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC):

there is also this aspect of human rights having evolved into one of the most popular worldviews of our times. A worldview that offers a quite particular narrative as to how the 'modern civilized' world should perceive, judge and deal with violence, suffering and cruelty. It is larded with missionary language and zeal, it calls on people to join the struggle for human rights, to secure the 'never again', and does not shy away from using political, moral and even military violence to achieve that end.1

So here I was, the lone human rights believer suffering a crisis of faith. I decided to formulate my own research agenda to come to terms with what I felt were key questions of identity and direction. That agenda should help the human rights and humanitarian community to confront its ambiguous relation to violence. It should do so by analyzing the ideological conceptions and assumptions of violence and human suffering that informed the call for humanitarian military interventions - or mass atrocity interventions as they were named by Responsibility to Protect-advocates. Conceptions and assumptions that, I sensed, could better be grasped, examined and explained with the aid of concepts from social anthropology and science of religions - such as 'the sacred'.

My personal quest eventually resulted in this dissertation. I hope that it managed to transcend the prejudiced position of the distressed humanitarian advocacy officer that I was at the time. I hope that I acquired the scientific skills to produce something that moves beyond the outcry 'I don't like what you did to my religion!', as scholar in international relations Michael Barnett so rightly qualified one of my earlier writings.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

We urge you to send a clear message that, collectively, the international community, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council will not be bystanders to these mass atrocities. The credibility of the United Nations - and many innocent lives - are at stake.

- UN Watch, Urgent appeal to stop atrocities in Libya, 2011

I. Themes of inquiry

I sat in the canteen of a New York university. Opposite me was a woman whom I had known ever since I joined the advocacy team of Oxfam Novib, the Dutch branch of Oxfam International. When I was only just starting to lobby politicians and governmental representatives this woman was a great example to me. I recall her detailed knowledge of conflict areas, her outstanding talent for political and policy analysis, but above all the zeal and determination she put in following through advocacy campaigns until some meaningful change had been achieved. Here she was again, seven years later, still working at full speed while her belly clearly indicated that she was due to give birth within a week. This time she had joined the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect to advocate implementation of ‘the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’ (United Nations 2005: 30). This newly ‘emerging norm’ - called R2P by insiders - seeks to increase the ability of the UN to end mass atrocities. When R2P is invoked the international community represented by the UN can impose various sanctions on the state committing the violation, including, as a last resort, the use of military force.

Marvelling at what seemed to me an endless flow of energy and dedication, I asked her how she managed to remain so committed. What motivated her to dedicate so much of her time to ending the suffering of distant others? With visible disinterest, she began to list a number of social-cultural factors - mentioning her Christian upbringing and ‘some British colonial guilt’. Then, after a pause, her tone of voice changed. She remembered being in a meeting with a group of R2P proponents amongst whom Gareth Evans, co-chair of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) that had developed the R2P doctrine. ‘At some point during this meeting,’ she recalled, ‘Gareth said, “whatever we screwed up in the past, let’s not screw this up, for then we destroy all that’s left of the international community”. And he is right, you know,’ she exclaimed, ‘for if we cannot stop or prevent mass atrocities, then what’s it all for?’

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3 These are commonly understood to be the four crimes of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity as defined in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

4 Field notes, November 2009.
This dissertation studies the worldviews and beliefs that motivate activists to advocate mass atrocity interventions. It unravels the ideological conceptions and assumptions through which anti-genocide activists view the world and humanity and make moral judgments on human suffering and violence. It does so by studying two groups of anti-genocide activists - the East Timor solidarity activists who supported East Timorese self-determination and called for interventions to end what they perceived as a genocide in East Timor (1975-1999), and the Responsibility to Protect-advocates who promote the implementation of the newly emerging norm of ‘the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity’ (2001-now).5

The study builds on the view that the urge to respond to horrific scenes of ethnic cleansing cannot be explained solely as an act of altruism or merely by the need to protect international stability. Mass atrocity interventions are also a response to an image of human cruelty that is so appalling to those who cherish a worldview of human rights and humanitarian values that they feel they must resist it, if need be by violent means. The communal killings in Rwanda, Srebrenica and Darfur are experienced as a direct attack on core beliefs of what it means to be human - beliefs and values that have become so central to the meaning of life of many activists that the mere thought of giving up their struggle evokes questions of an almost existential nature. As the R2P-advocate exclaimed above, ‘if we cannot end or prevent these atrocities, then what’s it all for?’

This existential nature of the call for mass atrocity interventions constitutes the first theme of enquiry in this research. I want to better understand the strong emotions and powerful symbolic discourse that drive and accompany anti-genocide activists in their call for mass atrocity interventions. I believe that insights from social anthropology and anthropology of religions can be helpful here. As Michael Ignatieff once wrote, ‘human rights has become the major article of faith of a secular culture that fears it believes in nothing else’ (Ignatieff 1999: 12). A secular worldview that, so I add, offers a quite particular narrative on how the ‘international community’ should perceive, judge and deal with violence, suffering and cruelty.

I regard anti-genocide activists as a sub-group in the broader humanitarian and human rights community, one that has particular affinity with human rights activism - as will be explained later. By making a comparison with faith, beliefs and worldviews I do not mean to assert that human rights and humanitarianism are ‘religions in disguise’. However, I do believe that conceptions of the sacred function in both religious and secular worldviews. Consequently, I postulate the proposition that although humanitarianism and human rights are secular worldviews, notions of the sacred inform that worldview and resonate in the call for mass atrocity interventions.

By positing the notion of the ‘sacred’, I do not imply that informants necessarily or consciously think and talk of their work as a sacred mission or calling. In fact during interviews, informants scarcely used the word ‘sacred’ spontaneously. Yet when I asked them

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5 United Nations 2005: paragraph 138
what was ultimately at stake in mass atrocities and why they felt this urgency to respond, they did talk about their mission in ideological and existential terms. They spoke about ‘the preservation of humanity’: they tended to formulate their responses to my queries as moral imperatives: ‘we must respond’ (for the sake of humanity), ‘we cannot idly stand by’ (or we lose all that is left of the international community).

I believe that notions of the sacred as developed by Durkheim (1982, 1915'), Douglas (1970, 1966'), Agamben (1998) and Asad (2003; 2008) will help to grasp, examine and explain this ideological and existential undercurrent that I observe. Put differently, I use ‘the sacred’ as an etic notion to explain the way in which my informants describe and express their worldviews in emic terms. Emic descriptions concentrate on the actor’s perspective and refer to how informants themselves give meaning to their words, behaviours, relationships and work. Etic descriptions and notions concentrate on the observers’ perspective and refer to how social anthropologists for example, explain and contextualize the meaning-making of informants (Harris 1976; Platvoet 1996). For that is what social anthropologists do: they try to identify and explain patterns of meaning-making in particular cultures and times in terms that enable exchange and verification between scholars in humanities and social sciences.

Consequently, I will trace imaginations, representations and narratives of the ‘sacred’ that, so I hold, resonate in today’s call for mass atrocity intervention. Thus, as will be further elaborated in the theoretical section, I build on the view that conceptions of the sacred are not exclusive to religions but also function in secular worldviews (Asad 2003; Casanova 2012; Durkheim 1982, 1915').

The second theme of enquiry in this dissertation concerns a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence that I contend can be observed in the world of humanitarianism and human rights.

The landscape of humanitarianism and human rights has changed distinctively over recent decades. The 1990s saw a sudden increase of international military interventions sanctioned by the UN, NATO and at times by unilateral (US) authorities in order to bring an end to communal killings, ethnic cleansing or other ‘mass atrocities’. In the overflow of political and human rights discourses these interventions soon became labelled ‘humanitarian’ interventions, projecting the picture of a stout army of human rights warriors willing to sacrifice their lives in order to alleviate the suffering of distant others. Even though members of the human rights and humanitarian movement protested against the use of this label because they feared such association with the military might damage their image of neutrality and impartiality, they did not massively oppose or question the legitimacy of the use of armed force per se (Slim 2001: 6). Certainly, the question whether and when to advocate the use of force did evoke a heated and ‘messy’ debate amongst members of the human rights movement, who conducted it with ‘a heavy dose of moralism’ (De Waal 2003: 481): but the outcome of these debates in terms of strategies and policy papers concentrated on the conditions for international humanitarian interventions, rather than on the question whether it was legitimate and sensible to advocate armed interventions at all (Slim 2001).
Among governmental policy makers, mass atrocity prevention gained popularity as they were groping for answers to deal with what were called ‘new wars’ - new forms of organized violence between non-state armed groups that, according to Kaldor, arose as the consequence of the ‘implosion of nation-states’ (Kaldor 1999; 2000). Likewise, mass atrocity prevention captured the wider public and civil society interest in response to the increased number of mass atrocities in the mid to late 1990s in Rwanda, Srebrenica, East Timor and Darfur, and the wide international media exposure thereof. A new collective of advocates emerged, consisting of a mix of humanitarian, human rights and conflict prevention organizations that joined hands to lobby for the UN adoption of the ‘responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’ (United Nations 2005: paragraph 138). When the UN General Assembly endorsed the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit, many activists celebrated this as a hallmark in the history of human rights.

The above historical developments contributed to a shift in moral sensibilities that scholars in humanitarianism and human rights, myself included, observe. Samuel Moyn points to the sudden rise of anti-genocide consciousness in the late 1990s (Moyn 2010), Stephen Hopgood (2013) proclaimed the ‘endtimes of human rights’, and Didier Fassin talked about ‘how moral sentiments have recently reconfigured politics’ and about ‘the reconfiguration of what can be called the politics of precarious lives over the past few decades’ (Fassin 2012: 5). Based on these insights and my own tentative observations, I postulate as the second proposition of this research that the call for mass atrocity interventions (also) reflects a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence from an emphasis on safeguarding the life and rights of individuals to a concern with sustaining the life of the group, of the whole of humankind through the preservation of ‘humanity’. I believe that two developments have contributed in an important way to this shift in emphasis.

One development, which will be elaborated in the theoretical framework, is the merger or mission creep of humanitarianism and human rights that evolved in the 1990s and that most profoundly manifested itself in the formulation of the ‘right to life’. By framing the humanitarian ‘project to save lives of distant strangers’ (Barnett 2014: 23) as a right, it became increasingly susceptible to politicization. This contributed to what Foucault termed biopolitics - an (international) political system that concentrates on the maintenance and controlling of bodies and populations, rather than on the preservation of human rights.

The second development that contributed to the shift in moral sensibilities relates to the growing concern for saving collectives of human lives - something that became most visible in the increased interest in mass atrocity prevention. Although the responsibility to protect can be said to be grounded in a tradition of human rights, where it differs from human rights is in its emphasis on protecting the life of the collective rather than that of the individual. Other than humanitarians for whom every single life is sacred and than human rights activists who

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believe in the ‘the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family’, anti-genocide activists are willing to accept the loss of some individual lives if thereby the life of the group - of ‘a people’, ‘population’ or ‘international community’ - can be preserved.

I would like to clarify that when speaking of a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence, I by no means want to suggest that the increased concern with the preservation of the life of the group replaces the concern for the rights and life of individuals. Both the humanitarian principle that every life is sacred and the human rights precept of inalienable rights remain important moral anchors in the contemporary world, and will continue to inspire many organizations and movements in the future. Nevertheless, I sense that the new norms for mass atrocity intervention that emerge next to the already existing plethora of human rights and humanitarian principles might influence and perhaps even alter moral judgments on human suffering and violence in the international governmental and non-governmental arena. That is why I embarked on this research project, to get a better sense of what those changes in moral sensibilities might encompass.

What this dissertation is not about
This dissertation does not discuss the effectiveness of mass atrocity interventions from a political science or conflict studies perspective (‘does it work’, ‘the lessons learnt from the intervention in Libya’), nor does it seek to provide a moral or philosophical treatise on how to respond to mass atrocities (‘are interventions ethically and morally just’, ‘under what conditions’). Instead, it stands in the tradition of social anthropology and science of religions. It aims to describe the worldviews and beliefs of anti-genocide activists as regarded, expressed and experienced by the activists themselves. It attempts to further understand and explain these worldviews and beliefs with the aid of theories and concepts developed in anthropology, philosophy and science of religions.

The views and beliefs of the anti-genocide activists are the topic of research. What intrigues me and the worldviews, and beliefs I seek to unravel, are those of the people who are in no way directly affected or threatened by mass atrocities, yet who somehow feel an urge to act in response to the suffering of distant strangers. This phenomenon is well captured by Judith Butler:

And yet, it seems to me that something different is happening when one part of the globe rises in moral outrage against actions and events that happen in another part of the globe, a form of moral outrage that does not depend upon a shared language or a common life grounded in physical proximity. […] These are times when, in spite of ourselves and quite apart from any intentional act, we are nevertheless solicited by images of distant suffering in ways that compel our concern and move us to act, that is, to voice our objection and register our resistance to such violence through concrete political means. (Butler 2011b: 2)
Focusing on the activists who respond to distant suffering means that I will not describe or analyze the views and experiences of the victims and survivors of mass atrocities. Whilst the views and beliefs of East Timor solidarity activists are discussed and analyzed at length, for example those of the East Timorese people are not, or only insofar these are mentioned or otherwise referred to by the solidarity activists.

Butler’s reference to images brings me to a last item on my list of ‘what this dissertation is not about’. Through the world-wide distribution of images of distant suffering, the global media play a crucial role in the building of empathic relations between people who do not live ‘in physical proximity’ to each other. They enhance the ‘imagined empathy’ with suffering strangers that according to Lynn Hunt (2007) forms the emotional foundation of human rights (see chapter three). This dissertation however, will not provide a detailed analysis of the role of the media in fostering public support for mass atrocity interventions. Not only do I believe that such a substantial and important topic can only be justifiably examined in a separate research project, but the focus of my research is on understanding the worldviews and beliefs of anti-genocide activists and consequently, the role of the media will be discussed only insofar this helps to illuminate these. In chapter three for example, I study the visual representation of the people that anti-genocide activists seek to protect to identify the ideological conceptions that fuel their empathy with distant others. In chapter four, I seek to develop a better understanding of the horror evoked by mass atrocities, discussing scenes of such atrocities that anti-genocide activists recall having seen in documentaries and films. Examples of how such activists use the media to gain public support for their cause will be raised in chapter two and chapter five, but these will not be subjected to a detailed analysis of media and communications strategies.

II. Case studies

*The international solidarity movement for East Timor*

The focus of this dissertation is on understanding the moral sensibilities that foster the notion of the responsibility to protect. Because I want to understand the emergence of these moral sensibilities in a historical context, I also studied the East Timor solidarity movement as what could be called a precursor of anti-genocide movements.

The international solidarity movement for East Timor has been selected as an early example of a movement that eventually called for a UN military intervention to halt the mass atrocities in East Timor. East Timor solidarity activists never presented themselves as an anti-genocide movement. They primarily advocated East Timorese self-determination and called themselves solidarity or political activists. Nevertheless they were strongly motivated by the conviction that genocide was occurring in East Timor and that attempts were made by the Indonesian regime to erase an ethnically and culturally distinct people through aggressive assimilation policies. The solidarity actions sprang from a strong desire to help preserve the life of a distinct people and culture, and to stop the state violence and atrocities inflicted upon
those people by the Indonesian authorities.

The first East Timor solidarity groups were already established in the mid to late 1970s in response to what activists regarded as a brutal and illegal military invasion. The Indonesian troops invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975, barely ten days after the East Timorese political party Fretilin had declared independence (see further chapter two). As the United States and Australia tacitly supported this Indonesian intervention, fearing that the island might otherwise fall into the hands of communists, the area remained occupied by Indonesia until it gained independence through a referendum in 1999.

Although Indonesian authorities effectively managed to close the territory to international investigators and journalists after the invasion, gradually reports seeped through suggesting that major atrocities were committed in East Timor. The Santa Cruz massacre of November 1991 was a turning point in this respect. During the Santa Cruz massacre Indonesian troops opened fire on a memorial procession that had turned into a pro-independence demonstration, killing an alleged number of 271 people. Thanks to the smuggling of footage showing this random killing of civilians by Indonesian troops, the Santa Cruz massacre got wide international media coverage and sparked the transnational solidarity movement for East Timor. The International Federation for East Timor (IFET) was established in 1991 and had 36 member organizations in 19 countries across the globe.

In 1999 citizens around the world again marched in protest when Indonesian military and militia launched a scorched earth campaign in retaliation to an overwhelming Timorese vote for independence. This time, the East Timor solidarity movement that was initially motivated by strong anti-military sentiments, decided to call for an international military intervention. After intensive international negotiations the International Forces East Timor (INTERFET) landed in Dili on September 20, 1999 to restore peace and security.

The East Timor solidarity movement might not seem to be the most obvious choice when thinking of anti-genocide movements. As said, an important reason for selecting the East Timor solidarity activists was that, despite of the fact that they did not call themselves anti-genocide activists, they were primarily driven by an urge to preserve the life and rights of a collective (the East Timorese people), and to end the systematic violence inflicted upon those people, which according to many amounted to genocide. However there are more reasons.

I want to understand what motivates R2P-advocates to call for mass atrocity interventions and one way to do so is by examining cases of such interventions that they find inspirational and successful. When talking of ‘anti-genocide activists’ many insiders in the humanitarian and human rights community will think of the Save Darfur Coalition. The Save Darfur Coalition was established in the United States in 2004 and campaigned for a (military) intervention to halt what they perceived as genocide in Darfur. The Coalition became a resounding success with thousands of students, church-goers and celebrities like George Clooney joining. Within the established humanitarian and human rights community however, the movement was heavily criticized and at times even ridiculed. They were called unprofessional, reproached for overly simplifying the conflict and for doing more harm
than good to the people in Darfur, as their massive and provocative campaign might have contributed to the decision of the President of Sudan to evict international humanitarian organizations from Darfur (De Waal 2006, 2007; Hamilton 2011; Mamdami 2010).

A fair number of R2P-proponents to whom I spoke in the initial phase of my research, shared this criticism. When I asked them to mention examples of success however, many came up with the UN intervention in East Timor. They would nuance their statement, adding that the reconstruction following the independence of East Timor was flawed in many ways. Yet many felt that the international military intervention led by Australian forces in September 1999 had actually managed to halt mass atrocities in East Timor. In this they find a prominent figure in the United Nations on their side, someone who actually gave the start signal for the development of the responsibility to protect.

When in September 1999 former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called upon UN member states to find solutions to prevent genocides and ethnic cleansings in the future, he explicitly referred to East Timor. "The [United Nations Security] Council's prompt and effective action in authorizing a multinational force for East Timor reflects precisely the unity of purpose that I have called for today", Annan said in his speech (United Nations 1999). Thus it could be said that the UN intervention in East Timor and the development of the responsibility to protect are somehow historically connected - the one inspired the other as an example of what mass atrocity interventions could look like in the future.

Although East Timor solidarity activists initially advocated East Timorese self-determination, concentrating their lobby on the UN Special Committee on Decolonization, they gradually realized that a narrative on human rights violations was more successful in gaining wide popular and political support. The Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) that later conducted extensive investigations into the human rights violations committed under Indonesian occupation in East Timor concluded that both the Santa Cruz massacre and the post-referendum violence should be categorized as crimes against humanity. It is these shifts in moral discourse - from the rhetoric of self-determination to human rights and crimes against humanity - that make the East Timor movement such an interesting case study. Investigating these shifts within one and the same movement helps to bring to light the onset of a newly emerging norm and moral sensibility that eventually became formalized in the responsibility to protect.

The Responsibility to Protect-coalition

The Responsibility to Protect-coalition has been selected as a contemporary example of anti-genocide activists, one that succeeded in establishing mass atrocity prevention as a new norm within the UN-system and that therefore can be regarded as a full-grown anti-genocide movement.

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8 Formally known as the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, or the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly.

9 Portuguese for 'East Timor'.
The East Timor case represents one of the earlier popular ‘ad hoc’ calls for a mass atrocity intervention, one that followed the trauma of Rwanda in 1994 - where the UN failed to respond altogether - and the (politically) disputed NATO intervention in Kosovo in April 1999 (see further chapter two). Many ad hoc calls for mass atrocity interventions have since followed, but were more often than not frustrated by vetoes in the UN Security Council. It was this frustration and the trauma over Rwanda that led to Kofi Annan’s appeal ‘to build new international consensus on how to respond to massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law’ (ICISS 2001: 81). Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien responded to Kofi Annan’s call by establishing the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in September 2000. The ICISS was chaired by former Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans,10 who had by then become the President of the International Crisis Group, an international non-governmental organization for early conflict warning.

When the Commission published *The Responsibility to Protect* in 2001 the report received but little notice as 9/11 took up all international political and media attention. In 2004 however, established international non-governmental organizations like Oxfam International (OI), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and International Crisis Group (ICG) started a lobby campaign that sought to get the new norm enshrined in the UN - and with effect. In September 2005, the United Nations World Summit endorsed the ‘responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’ (United Nations 2005: 30). Although the full doctrine of the responsibility to mentions various peaceful means ‘to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’, the ‘novelty’ of the norm lay in the suggestion that the UN can temporarily suspend the sovereignty of the state and intervene by sending troops to halt mass atrocities. The thought behind this is that sovereignty comes with a ‘responsibility to protect’ and if a state is unwilling or unable to protect its civilians, this responsibility falls on the international community.

However, R2P was far from widely accepted upon its endorsement in 2005. It became the topic of heated debates within the UN and global civil society. Many member states and non-governmental organizations feared that R2P gave legitimation to powerful states to launch military campaigns for their own interests. In response to this backlash, a group of governmental and non-governmental R2P-proponents then joined hands to establish centres that would promote R2P among UN member states and global civil society. Thus the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) and the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) were established in 2008, 2009 and 2008 respectively. The R2P-Centres and Coalition employ policy advisors, academics and advocacy and media officers who seek to further the implementation of R2P world-wide through research, lobby and capacity building. The GCR2P and the ICRtoP were established by non-governmental organizations that already advocated the responsibility to protect prior to its UN endorsement in 2005 - notably, by

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10 As Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1988-1996, Gareth Evans was also an important actor in the international diplomacy surrounding the East Timor-case. See chapter two, ‘The Responsibility to Protect-coalition: a history.’
Oxfam International, Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group. The APR2P was a joint initiative of former Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Gareth Evans and the University of Queensland. The GCR2P, ICRtoP and the APR2P have been the focus of my research on R2P-advocates.

**Situating both movements**

It is far from easy to place both groups of activists - the East Timor solidarity activists and the R2P-advocates - within the larger humanitarian and human rights community. Firstly, because the mission and approach of organizations that call themselves either ‘humanitarian’ or ‘human rights’ have lately become quite similar. This development that I already referred to as the merger or mission creep of humanitarianism and human rights will be discussed further in chapter two. For now it suffices to determine that both groups of activists under study are at least clearly not development workers whose primary focus is on poverty reduction and social-economic development. Instead, the questions both groups are confronting are those of suffering, life and death - the humanitarian spectrum - and questions of the rights of marginalized individuals or groups versus powerful states - the human rights spectrum. Consequently, I regard the East Timor solidarity activists and the R2P-advocates as members of, or a sub-group within, the larger humanitarian and human rights community.

Upon looking more closely however, anti-genocide activists can be said to be more akin to human rights activists than to humanitarians. In *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics*, Redfield and Bornstein describe the difference between humanitarianism and human rights as follows:

> [...] the language of rights is fundamentally legalistic and philosophical: justice defines well-being. At its core, human rights advocacy seeks to confront general wrongs usually identified through specific violations. [...] Humanitarianism, by contrast yet again, emphasizes the physical (and increasingly psychological) condition of suffering people above all else. (Redfield and Bornstein 2010: 5,6)

Although anti-genocide activists do aim to save lives of course, they frame their mission as an issue of justice and international law. Some individual lives may be sacrificed and some suffering is acceptable if this serves a just cause, be it the preservation of a people or a population. In that sense, mass atrocity intervention clearly stands in the just war tradition that considers the use of (military) force acceptable as long as the suffering is proportionate and the cause is just.\(^{11}\) Like human rights, the just war tradition is ‘fundamentally legalistic

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\(^{11}\) The just war tradition was first established by Grotius in his masterpiece *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis* ('On the Law of War and Peace') (1625), and recently revived by Michael Walzer with his book *Just and unjust wars: a moral argument with historical illustrations* (2000). Grotius developed a set of principles for just war that still form the foundation of the international law of war today. According to these principles, international military interventions are justified as long as they are launched for a just cause, sanctioned by a proper authority, conducted with the right intention, have a reasonable chance of success and as long as the means used - or the collateral damage caused by the use of force - is proportional to the end.
and philosophical’ (Redfield and Bornstein 2010: 5). It constitutes the ethical foundation of international law and deals with questions of a political-philosophical nature, such as when is it right or wrong to go to war. Moreover, East Timor activists and R2P-advocates ‘seek to confront wrongs’ through identifying ‘specific violations’ (Redfield and Bornstein 2010: 5, 6), be it the violation of the right to self-determination or the identification of a mass atrocity crime. That is why they concentrate their work on political lobby and media and speak in a language of rights and justice. It is this nature and orientation of the anti-genocide activists that qualify them as the descendants of human rights activism, rather than humanitarianism.

Furthermore, the East Timor solidarity movement and R2P-coalition should be qualified as transnational advocacy networks or movements (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002; Keck and Sikkink 1998). These are ‘sets of actors linked across borders’ who perform ‘transnational advocacy […] to create, strengthen, implement, and monitor international norms’ (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002: 7; 4). Transnational advocacy seeks to ‘influence international politics’ through the ‘use of information, persuasion, and moral pressure to contribute to change in international institutions and governments’ (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002: 11). Transnational advocacy networks have become an important subject of transnational studies, a relatively new field in social and political sciences.12 As transnational studies focus mostly on describing and analyzing the ‘how’ of transnational advocacy - ‘how they [transnational advocacy networks] go about doing this, when they are successful, and what the problems and complications are’ (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002: 4) - whereas my research focuses on the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of this desire for change - why do anti-genocide activists seek change and of what should this change consist - I do not build significantly on the literature emerging from this field of study. One research angle that is relevant to mine however, is that of the role of transnational movements in the (re)creation of meanings, how they ‘fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves’ through ‘framing’ (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002: 12). In a similar way, I will build on Asad (2003) Foucault (1977) and Butler (2006; 2010), each of whom emphasize the importance of discourse analysis for the understanding of concepts as ‘human’, ‘sacred’, and ‘truth’ - concepts that are key for understanding the way in which anti-genocide activists view the world and humanity, and make moral judgments on human suffering and violence.

What remains is the question of naming. The term ‘anti-genocide activists’ that I use to refer to both groups is imperfect but it is the best and most practical compromise I could find. R2P-advocates do not focus exclusively on preventing genocide but aim to halt all four mass atrocities. However, terms like ‘anti-mass atrocity activists’ or ‘mass atrocity intervention activists’ are both uncommon and just very long and impractical. Using ‘anti-genocide activists’ to refer to East Timor solidarity activists is (highly) unsatisfactory from

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12 Transnational studies were initially established in the early 1990s by anthropologists Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc (1992) in an attempt to find a new approach to study migration. Soon however, it also came to encompass the study of transnational social movements. Thus, in the Introduction to the Transnational Studies Reader, Levitt and Khagram (2007: 1) write that ‘social movements mobilize constituencies around the globe on issues such as human rights, gender justice, and family values campaigns’.
an emic perspective: East Timor activists never called themselves such. Yet, as they also framed their campaign as a protest against genocide, I hope they can understand the logic. For similar reasons of practicality, I will use the term ‘both movements’ when referring to the international solidarity movement for East Timor and the Responsibility to Protect-coalition simultaneously, and use the term ‘both groups of activists’ when referring to East Timor solidarity activists and Responsibility to Protect-advocates at the same time.

To refer exclusively to either the East Timor solidarity activists or Responsibility to Protect-advocates, I selected terms that resemble those used by the activists themselves, that is: ‘Responsibility to Protect-advocates’ (shortened as ‘R2P-advocates’), respectively ‘East Timor solidarity activists’ (shortened as ‘solidarity activists’). The term ‘movement’ is chosen to refer to the collective of East Timor solidarity activists because they refer to themselves as the members of a movement. What is more, this term correctly identifies the collective of East Timor solidarity activists as a transnational social movement, that is, as ‘sets of actors with common purposes and solidarities linked across country boundaries that have the capacity to generate coordinated and sustained social mobilization in more than one country to publicly influence social change and that ‘mobilize their (transnational) constituencies for collective action, often through the use of protest or disruptive action’ (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002: 8).

The collective of R2P-advocates will be referred to as a ‘coalition’. Again, this latter term is chosen because the term is used by some R2P-advocates themselves (the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect), and as this better reflects the relatively smaller number of individuals and organizations that make up the R2P-collective. Moreover, as R2P-advocates coordinate diplomatic and public actions with governmental policy makers and UN diplomats, they approach the definition of a transnational advocacy coalition as formulated by Khagram, Riker and Sikkink (2002: 7), that is, as ‘sets of actors linked across boundaries’ that seek to achieve normative change through the coordination of shared strategies and tactics. In addition, as both non-governmental and governmental representatives make up the R2P-coalition, they also qualify as a so-called ‘mixed actor coalition’ (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002: 9, quoting Shaw 2000). A more detailed characterization of both groups of activists follows in chapter two.

III. Theoretical framework

The sacred in the secular

The first proposition that I examine in my empirical chapters, notably that notions of the ‘sacred’ inform the human rights and humanitarian worldview and resonate in the call for mass atrocity interventions, is embedded in a theoretical framework that I call ‘the sacred in the secular’.
Over the last decade an academic debate about the role and meaning of religion in the modern secular resurfaced with publications by, amongst others, Gauchet (1999), Asad (2003), Taylor (2007), Casanova (2006; 2012) and Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen (2011). These works generally dismiss the earlier theory on secularization as ‘a straightforward narrative of progress from the religious to the secular’ (Asad 2003: 1) and instead study ‘breaks’ and continuities ‘between Christian and secular life’ (Asad 2003: 25; cf. Taylor 2007 and Gauchet 1999). They further contend that the positioning of ‘secularism’ against ‘religion’ is the product of a normative discourse, and that there exist as many different manifestations of secularism in the world as there are religions (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen 2011). Within this larger academic debate, my research could be positioned as an exploration of the place and function of ‘the sacred in the secular’.

In *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (2003), anthropologist Talal Asad states that ‘over time a variety of concepts, practices, and sensibilities have come together to form “the secular”’ (Asad 2003: 16). He thus emphasizes the historical and discursive process in which the concept of the secular was formed: ‘prior to the political doctrine of “secularism”, but parallel to the conceptualization of the concept of “religion” which continually shapes notions of the “secular” and vice versa’ (Asad 2003: 16). In this historical and discursive process, the ‘secular’ is especially informed by the premises of modernity, democracy and human rights (Sabet 2005).

According to Asad, the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ are not necessarily each other’s binary opposites in a temporal or spatial sense:

The secular, I argue, is neither continuous with the religious that supposedly preceded it (that is, it is not the latest phase of sacred origin) nor a simple break from it (that is, it is not the opposite, an essence that excludes the sacred). (Asad 2003: 25).

Asad further argues that ‘the “religious” and the “secular” are not essentially fixed categories’ and that ‘the sacred and the secular depend on each other’ (Asad 2003: 25). More recently, scholar in sociology of religions José Casanova postulated a view that resembles that of Asad, arguing that:

the modern “secular” is by no means synonymous with the “profane” nor is the “religious” synonymous with the modern “sacred”. […] modern secularization […] entails a certain sacralization of the secular spheres of politics (sacred nation, sacred citizenship, sacred constitution), science (temples of knowledge), and economics (through commodity fetishism). (Casanova 2012: 460)

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13 My juxtaposition of Talal Asad and José Casanova does not mean that both scholars are in full agreement on the conceptualization of secularization and the secular. See for example Asad (2003: 180-183) and Casanova (2006: 12-30).
Neither Talal Asad nor José Casanova talks explicitly about a ‘sacred in the secular’. Yet their propositions do open the way to conceiving of such a notion. Asad states in the quotation above that ‘the secular […] is not […] an essence that excludes the sacred’ (Asad 2003: 25). Casanova writes about secularization as something entailing ‘a certain sacralization of the secular’ (Casanova 2012: 460).

Following Asad (2003), I regard humanitarianism and human rights as formations of the secular and consequently, I regard the call for mass atrocity interventions that partly emerged as a new norm in humanitarianism and human rights as a formation of the secular too. Building on Asad (2003) and Casanova (2012), I would like to examine whether there exists a notion of a ‘sacred in the secular’ that informs the call for mass atrocity interventions, and if so, of what it consists.

The ‘sacred’: a working definition

To trace conceptions of the sacred that may inform or resonate in the call for mass atrocity interventions, I developed a working definition that builds on the works of Émile Durkheim (1897; 1982, 1915) and Mary Douglas (1970, 1966). In his article *De la definition des phénomènes religieuses* (1897) and his later book *Les forms élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1915) in which he elaborates and refines the propositions of the article, Durkheim states that it is not god who forms the centre of religion, but the sacred. The sacred can attach to a variety of places, objects and persons that then become ‘things set apart and forbidden’ (Durkheim 1982, 1915: 47), that is, they become surrounded by prohibitions and obligations. Thus, Durkheim proposes the following well-known definition of religion as:

*a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.* (Durkheim 1982, 1915: 47)

To Durkheim, religion is a social fact: it functions to sustain and hold together a unified community. In his definition, the term ‘moral community’ refers to the profane organization of the religious community that he calls ‘the Church’. It is in relation to and because of the collectively imagined *sacred* however, that the community comes into being, that it emerges as ‘a unified system of beliefs and practices’ maintained through prohibitions and obligations. To ensure that community members comply, these prohibitions and obligations need to be sanctified by a higher authority than that of society, one that is postulated in the transcendent. As Eric Sharpe, explaining Durkheim, writes ‘[religious] obligations [incumbent on every single member of the group] have no other sanction than that provided by the need to perpetuate the life of the group; but they are given a further absolute sanction by being referred to supernatural agencies, which are in effect products of the collective imagination’ (Sharpe 1984: 84). In other words, religion emerges because of the collective projection of the sacred brought about by the community members themselves. The sacred on which
community members depend and in which they believe, is in fact no other than society itself (Platvoet 1996: 71).

‘God, for Durkheim, is society mystified and apotheosized,’ Roy Rappaport (1999: 378) writes. When the community comes together to perform a ritual, the collectively imagined sacred can also arouse collective feelings of excitement and exaltation amongst community members. Durkheim calls this experience of a transcendent force or power effervescence (Durkheim 1982, 1915: 218). Such experiences, Rappaport writes, are characterized by ‘the blurring of distinction between self and other’; the self becomes unified with or extended ‘to the congregation or even to the world as a whole’ (Rappaport 1999: 380). I will use Durkheim’s conception of religion especially to further explain and unravel the notion of the sacred community of ‘humanity’ that informs the call for mass atrocity interventions.

Mary Douglas’ conception of the sacred seems particularly helpful to further examine the inviolability and integrity of the human body, a notion that is central to the human rights worldview and that may be conceived as another manifestation of the sacred in the call for mass atrocity interventions. In *Purity and Danger* (1970, 1966) Douglas suggests that taboos, ‘ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating, and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience’ (Douglas 1970, 1966: 4). Taboos are established by the community as a way to cope with the ambiguities and anomalies of life (Douglas 1970, 1966: 5). Douglas postulates the body as ‘a symbol of society’ (Douglas 1970, 1966: 115). The body represents ‘social structure […] in small’ and hence becomes the object of various taboos and rituals of purification that serve to protect it against pollution (Douglas 1970, 1966: 115). Violations of bodily integrity ‘express danger to community boundaries’ (Douglas 1970, 1966: 122). This understanding helps to trace the sacred as something concentrating on the integrity and wholeness of the human body.

Building on the above, I propose the following working definition of the ‘sacred’: in both secular and religious worldviews, the sacred refers to a transcendent quality of existence that, according to its adherents, should be protected and purified with might and main. As a quality of existence, the sacred can ‘attach’ itself to various manifestations of (social) existence, be it spatial or temporal. The quality emerges - things become ‘sacred’ - when an object, person, place, or time is sanctioned by a higher authority that is postulated in the transcendent, be it a divinity or a transcendent ‘humanity’ (see chapter three). The sanctioning serves to enforce prohibitions and obligations on every single member of the community as a way to sustain the life of the group. This opens the way to conceptualizing the community in Durkheimian terms as held together by, or even coinciding with, a collectively imagined sacred. In human rights and humanitarianism, that ‘community’ comprises the global community of ‘humanity’. In Douglasian terms, the sacredness of humanity is symbolized by the human body. The violated body is regarded as a desecrated body, and a desecrated body represents a desecrated society.

In the coming chapters I will explore what imaginations, representations and narratives of the sacred surround the call for mass atrocity interventions, and I will examine what they say about the worldviews and beliefs of the ‘callers’, that is, of the anti-genocide activists whom I studied. I will do so by posing the following main operational questions: what constitutes
the ‘sacred’ in the worldview of anti-genocide activists? (chapter three); what constitutes the gravest violation or threat to that ‘sacred’ in the worldview of anti-genocide activists, and why? (chapter four); how do anti-genocide activists produce and reproduce the ‘sacred’? (chapter five), and; who can be identified as the guardian of the sacred in the worldview of anti-genocide activists? (chapter six).

‘The politicization of life’
The second proposition that I examine in my empirical chapters - notably that the call for mass atrocity interventions reflects a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence from an emphasis on safeguarding the life and rights of individuals to a concern with sustaining the life of the group - is embedded in a theoretical framework that, following Agamben (1998), I call ‘the politicization of life’.

As said at the beginning of this chapter, what distinguishes the call for mass atrocity interventions from other humanitarian and human rights missions launched to relieve the suffering of distant others is its focus on preserving the life of the collective, of the group. Prioritizing the life of the group over that of individuals is a common and widely accepted practice in utilitarian reasoning. Utilitarian reasoning informs the just war doctrine mentioned earlier and international humanitarian law - a set of rules laid down in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977 that seek to limit the effects of armed conflict on civilians. As scholar in international law David Kennedy (2005: 251) points out, humanitarianism never sought to outlaw war but instead seeks to ‘reduce the violence and incidence of warfare’ (Kennedy 2005: 312). Proportionality and necessity are key criteria to judge the legitimacy of the use of force. In the words of Kennedy, ‘limiting civilian death has become a pragmatic commitment - no unnecessary damage, not one civilian more than necessary’ (Kennedy 2006: 90).

Although international humanitarian law is widely accepted in the non-governmental humanitarian and human rights community and in fact forms the frame of much of their advocacy, what is new or different about the call for mass atrocity interventions is the change of ownership of this utilitarian calculus. It was usually states that declared wars, arguing that the preservation of the whole - the state, nation, Fatherland - justifies the loss of some civilian lives. Non-governmental humanitarian and human rights activists would then object arguing that every single life counts and deserves protection. With the emergence of mass atrocity prevention however, non-governmental organizations began to call for international military interventions applying a similar utilitarian reasoning - the loss of some civilian lives was regarded as unfortunate but acceptable if this could prevent greater harm.

In addition to this utilitarian reasoning, there is another less obvious development that might have contributed to a greater susceptibility to prioritizing the life of the group, one that springs from a changing conception of what it means to be human, of what qualifies as human life.

In Homo sacer: sovereign power and bare life (1998), Giorgio Agamben, building on the Ancient Greek notions of zoe (natural life) and bios (political life), distinguishes between bare
life, referring to life as mere biological existence, and qualified life, referring to the life of the citizen, endowed with civil-political rights. Following Foucault, Agamben argues that in the modern era ‘[bare] life […] comes to be what is at stake in politics’ (Agamben 1998: 119). Politics is increasingly about the managing and controlling of (living) human bodies:

It is not the free man and his statutes and prerogatives, nor even simply homo, but rather corpus that is the new subject of politics. (Agamben 1998: 124).

Agamben’s thoughts on the politicization of life resemble that of other scholars in humanitarianism and human rights who note that the previous emphasis in international politics on the safeguarding of human rights - that is, on the protection of political life - seems to shift towards an emphasis on the mere saving of biological lives (Cf. Fassin 2012; Hopgood 2013; Redfield 2013; Ticktin 2006). Most scholars build on Foucault’s notion of biopolitics - described by Agamben as ‘the growing inclusion of man’s natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power’ (Agamben 1998: 119) - and governmentality, described by Butler as ‘a mode of power concerned with the maintenance and control of bodies and persons’ (Butler 2006: 52).

Although Agamben concentrates on the role of states in humanitarian governance, a parallel increased emphasis on merely saving lives can be perceived in the non-governmental community. The human rights worldview defines the human as endowed with inalienable rights, that is, as political life. Humanitarianism instead tends to define life by its bodily vulnerability, that is, as bare life. These two different conceptions of life became intertwined in the formulation of ‘the right to life’ that came about as part of the rights-based approach.14

In 1997, Kofi Annan promoted this new policy with the aim of mainstreaming human rights in all UN policies and programmes. Paradoxically, the implementation of the rights-based approach introduced the humanitarian conception of life to a broader constituency in the human rights and development community. Many organizations that had previously focused on development and human rights began to establish humanitarian programmes and developed advocacy campaigns that concentrated on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Moreover, this merger between humanitarianism and human rights introduced an element of relativity into the thus far rather principled and absolute reasoning in human rights advocacy. If life becomes a right that needs to be defended, it easily trumps all other human rights. For what sense does it make to defend someone’s civil-political rights if that someone is dead? This reasoning was reflected in the credo ‘the humanitarian imperative comes first’ of the so-called humanitarian code of conduct.15 The credo implies that any other deliberations, including political, should be set aside if thereby lives could be saved.

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The Code was also signed by development oriented NGOs that did not provide exclusively humanitarian assistance. Following Agamben, anthropologist Miriam Ticktin suggests that such humanitarian reasoning might produce ‘a limited version of what it means to be human’ (Ticktin 2006: 34). I will especially use Agamben to examine how both groups of activists define human life and what authority they regard as the legitimate guardian of that life (see chapter six).

**Sacralization: a working definition**

To study the shift in moral sensibilities that I contend can be observed - one that can alternatively be phrased as a shift of the sacred to a different entity (from the life of the individual human being to the life of group) - I also need a working definition that can grasp the process in which the sacred is (re)produced. I tentatively call this process ‘sacralization’.

As may be clear from my working definition of the sacred, I regard the sacred as a dynamic and not a static notion: its meaning can alter and its locus can shift. Consequently, sacralization can tentatively be described as the process by which the sacred is produced, allocated, sanctified, acknowledged and sustained. As Van de Port suggests, studying processes of sacralization involves describing and analyzing ‘the techniques and resources that people have at their disposal to believe, in the sense of taking things to be true’ (Van de Port 2004: 10). An important technique to (pro)claim truth in the human rights and humanitarian community is that of transnational advocacy (see chapter five).

For a sacralization process to be successful, at least four ‘techniques and resources’ are needed. First, in order to be recognized as such, the sacred needs to be sanctioned by a higher authority, one that is postulated in the transcendent (Durkheim 1982, 1915). Second, as much as the sacred needs confirmation from a higher transcendent authority, it needs what Van de Port, following Lindholm, calls ‘authentic grounding’:

> the human desire for the experience of the divine spark does not vanish simply because that experience becomes difficult to achieve. Instead, it is more likely that the quest for a felt authentic grounding becomes increasingly pressing as certainty is eroded and the boundaries of the real lose their taken-for-granted validity (Lindholm 2002: 336, quoted in Van de Port 2004: 10).

Authentic grounding provides the sense and certainty that people need in order to believe. It is both experiential and factual. Authentic grounding is something that is felt to be true following ‘experiences that are as undeniable as they are unspeakable’ (Van de Port 2004: 14). Van de Port uses the example of war traumas - of experiences of horror, fear, loss and powerlessness - that can be evoked by the brutal destruction and violence of war. Such violent and painful encounters can induce a sense of a ‘horrific yet incontestable truth’ because ‘there is no arguing’ with pain (Van de Port 2004: 14, 17; cf. Asad 2003: 67-99; Asad 2011). Accordingly, the sight of ‘butchered bodies’ can greatly enhance the sense of authentic grounding because of the ‘unquestionability of the body’s materiality’ (Van de Port 2004: 17).
Van de Port’s consideration of emotional responses to violence and destruction recalls what Lynn Hunt (2007) argues about the centrality of emotions in the belief in human rights. ‘Human rights are difficult to pin down because their definition, indeed their very existence, depends on emotions, as much as on reason’ Hunt (2007: 26) writes:

The claim of self-evidence relies ultimately on an emotional appeal; it is convincing if it strikes a chord in each person. [...] Moreover, we are most certain that a human right is at issue when we feel horrified by its violation. (Hunt 2007: 26)

Hunt draws attention to the crucial aspect of the embodiment of the belief in human rights. We imagine that we can feel the pain of the victim, and this immediately and urgently begs our response.

A third ‘resource’ that is crucial for the (re)production of the sacred is that which Durkheim called effervescence - the electric energy causing exaltation and ecstasy amongst adherents who reunite in a communal ritual. As explained, experiences of effervescence can evoke sensations of transcending the boundaries between self and other, and of transcending the everyday.

The fourth and final ‘technique’ needed to produce and reproduce the sacred is ritual. Rituals are crucial to continually assert and affirm the sacredness of a person, object, place or doctrine. As Asad writes referring to Douglas (1970, 19661), ‘when boundaries are breached - when form is endangered - they must be restored: rituals of avoidance, punishment and purification are ways of doing just that’ (Asad 2008: 76). Rituals serve not only to sacralize a person or object but also to redeem violations of the sacred. Ritual involves a speech act, the invocation of a higher authority, a representative on earth who can speak on behalf of that higher authority, the establishment of authentic grounding (with or without the use of material evidence) and it can trigger experiences of effervescence. As such, ritual can be said to comprise the whole of ‘techniques and resources’ needed to enhance sacralization (Van de Port 2004: 10).

As a whole, the process of sacralization is most intensively studied in chapter five (‘Advocating moral truths’). Separate components, or ‘techniques and resources’ (Van de Port 2004) that enable the sacralization process are studied in the other chapters. Chapter three, especially the section on ‘empathic and compassionate relations’, examines how anti-genocide activists transcend the boundaries between ‘self’ and ‘other’ - how they experience a sense of effervescence, as it were - when seeking to emotionally and morally connect to people suffering from mass atrocities. Chapter four discusses the ‘authentic grounding’ of the call for mass atrocity interventions, analyzing sensations of horror that anti-genocide activists experience when viewing scenes of mass killings. It also looks into what rituals anti-genocide activists have at their disposal to effectively deal with violations of the sacred. Finally chapter six deals with the question which higher authority has the legitimacy to sanction certain lives as sacred in the view of anti-genocide activists.
IV. Methodology

10:00 am. I arrive at [the office]. Pouring rain. Building is classic, stylish. Located on middle of 5th Avenue. Brown wooden doors. Reception in middle. Library entrance to left. Have to report and show my passport. And sign in on a list. Then take elevator up to 5th floor. Large halls, square around building. All looks neat, nothing like the shabby buildings you might find at the University of Amsterdam. A board with some ads. and announcements stuck on it - for housing, lecture. The [research institute] is next to the Political Science Department. Photo of [institute’s founder] on entrance door. Many more pictures of him on the walls in the office. Office consists of two larger rooms, with a couple of smaller rooms at the side. Bigger rooms organized as open space office - cubical farms. All well organized, not a mess at all. Not like my room at Oxfam Novib. Atmosphere of efficiency, studiousness, silence.

Field notes New York, Monday 25 January, 2010

I visited many more places since that first day of field research in January 2010, and not all emanated an atmosphere of ‘efficiency, studiousness, [and] silence’. There was the backyard of a respondent in a village in Indonesia, where a chicken interrupted our interview, clucking loudly while laying an egg on a nearby chair. There were the familiar, somewhat chaotic, scenes at the local NGOs that I visited in Dili, East Timor - the low ceilings, dusty collections of books, the buzzing sound of the fan. I remember the grand buffets offered at an R2P conference in Sweden, the gold coated taps in the bathroom of another conference venue in Canada, the book-packed room of the ETAN office in Brooklyn, the large photograph of Timorese celebrating the orange revolution in the house of a Dutch East Timor activist, the surprising cold of an archive in Melbourne, situated in a beautiful cloister. I remember airports - airports and waiting rooms, and airports and waiting rooms, and airports and waiting rooms.

The challenges of multi-sited ethnography

Doing multi-sited ethnography is challenging in many respects. First, there is the issue of the selection of research locations. How do you do justice to a movement such as the international solidarity movement for East Timor that at its heyday had members in at least 19 countries all over the world? How do you ensure good representation of the global nature of the R2P-Centres that have main offices in the United States and Australia, but also have coalition partners in Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia?

Logistics and issues of time and money force the researcher to select a limited number of countries. When studying international or global movements the tendency is to ensure representation from the global North and South. However correct this selection might be, it also speaks to the normative idea of the ‘global’ as something that should equally and fairly represent citizens from the various parts of the world. It is a selection criterion that carries traces of colonial guilt, and is partly informed by a fear of being reproached of western superiority. In a different setting, Kennedy touches on this sentiment very well when describing the establishment of the International Platform of Jurists for East Timor (IPJET):
And so we recreated here in the Platform our own model UN, complete with compulsory geographic distribution - for shouldn't the seats on the Platform's Council be distributed among the continents? (Kennedy 2005: 103)

According to Beck (2011: 17) social scientists should get rid of the ‘methodological nationalism’ that ‘equates modern society with society organized in territorially limited nation-states’, as this no longer constitutes the best frame to study social realities. The same methodological problem might be encountered if we continue to study global or international movements as a collective of (fairly distributed) nationalities. Instead, Beck argues, we should study the process of ‘cosmopolitisation’, a process that ‘unfolds unwanted, unseen - powerful and confrontational beneath the surface or behind the façade of persisting national spaces, jurisdictions and labels’ (Beck 2011: 4). As Beck explained in a seminar, it is a process that creates new relations between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

I must frankly admit that the assumptions behind my selection criteria were not yet so articulate in my first research design. With hindsight however, I detect my special interest in selecting countries that allowed me to study (meaningful) relations between ‘us’ and ‘them’ - very much in line with Beck’s approach. Thus, for the East-Timor case study I selected activists in Australia and the United States because of the powerful and influential relations between their governments and the Suharto regime in Indonesia - a relation that many activists described as one of ‘complicity’ for until the very end, the US and Australian governments supported the Indonesian occupation of East Timor and all that came with that (see chapter two). The Netherlands and Portugal were selected because of their former colonial relation to respectively Indonesia and East Timor, a relation that might or might not contribute to a sense of kinship or paternalism among Dutch and Portuguese activists vis-à-vis the East Timorese people. Activists in Indonesia and East Timor were selected because this allowed me to study the interaction and cooperation between local and international activists. Moreover, I also wanted to bring in some cross-cultural perspectives on moral sensibilities to human violence and suffering.

In the Responsibility to Protect-coalition the ‘us’ and ‘them’ were less spread geographically but projected in a mini model of the international community that holds residence around the UN head quarters in New York. This allowed me to conduct ‘multi-sited research’ within the relatively comfortable distances of the city. Here I could observe R2P-advocates preparing yet another meeting with a UN representative from say, Brazil, Tunesia or Cambodia. I could participate in a seminar or a book launch. I could take the subway to meet international civil society organizations that supported the responsibility to protect, and as such represented global civil society in small. Other venues for the global encounter of R2P-advocates that I visited were in Amsterdam, Paris, Sweden and Canada, where I attended

16 I participated in a ‘Masterclass Ulrick Beck’ organized by the Centre for Humanities of Utrecht University, 20 January 2012.
17 The nature of (empathic) relations between anti-genocide activists and the people they seek to protect is discussed at length in chapter three, ‘Empathic and compassionate relations’.
conferences bringing together R2P-advocates from various parts of the world.

Serendipity, or vice versa, bad luck were other determining factors in the selection process. I would occasionally bump into interesting figures who did not entirely meet the selection criteria, but who nonetheless had been important figures in the East Timor solidarity movement. Typically these would be people of whom every other respondent would say, ‘Oh, you also need to speak to this and this person,’ and whose close relation to the East Timorese plight was demonstrated by the fact that they still live in East Timor today. Here I encountered a case in which the ‘us’ and ‘them’ had virtually become non-existent, as activists had identified so closely with the East Timor cause that they chose to become residents of this new country after it gained independence (see chapter three).

As usual, there were set-backs too. Initially I wanted to bring in ‘the global’ in the R2P-case through the various civil society organizations that were members of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), including organizations from countries like the DRC, Costa Rica, the Philippines and Liberia. However, the coordinator could not volunteer the members of the coalition to participate in my research, nor could she share their contact details with me without their consent. In a very kind and supportive gesture, she then distributed an email amongst these members, in which she asked them to contact me instead. I got two replies - one from an NGO representative in New York whom I interviewed, another from a Southeast Asian representative who stopped replying after my second email. When this failed, I was thrilled to be allowed to work as an intern at the very Centre that calls itself ‘the leading authority on the Responsibility to Protect’, namely the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) in New York. When later I could spend some time at its counterpart in Australia, the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) in Brisbane, I had the opportunity to also observe the work of an R2P Centre that was more regional in its orientation and actively worked in Southeast Asia.

Concretely, spread over the period of January 2010 to November 2012, I conducted five months of field research in New York, five months in the Asia-Pacific region and one month in Europe (the Netherlands and Portugal). For the Responsibility to Protect-case, research was conducted in the USA, Canada, Sweden and Australia. For the East-Timor case, research was conducted in the USA, Indonesia, Australia, East Timor, Portugal and the Netherlands. I conducted participant observation, archive research and held in-depth interviews with a total of 71 anti-genocide activists. Three key figures in the movements were interviewed two to three times. A detailed description of all data collection and analysis activities is enclosed in the Appendix.

Finally, I need to address the most commonly heard criticism of multi-sited fieldwork. Next to the logistical challenges that have to be overcome, multi-sited fieldwork problematizes the ‘traditional’ concept of ethnographic fieldwork, according to which the ethnographer lives with one and the same community for an extended period of time. George E. Marcus (1995) was the first to propose multi-sited research for ‘the study of social phenomena that cannot be accounted for by focusing on a single site’ (Falzon 2009: 1). As such, he prepared the ground for anthropologists studying transnational movements and organizations.
The commonly heard objection to multi-sited fieldwork is that the anthropologist does not spend enough time with the same community to reach what are called thick descriptions needed for ethnographies (Tomlinson 2011). There are two factors that, so I hope, compensate for this possible deficiency. First, as the anti-genocide activists belong to a transnational network or movement, the community that I study is multi-sited by nature. The anti-genocide activists themselves are continually on the road, travelling to conferences or strategy meetings in the USA, Portugal, Sweden, Indonesia and so forth to lobby intergovernmental organizations (UN), to strategize with other solidarity groups, to organize workshops etcetera. Thus my life as an ethnographer of anti-genocide movements - sitting in aeroplanes, travelling from field to capital, talking to activists, victims and diplomats in various parts of the world, working at R2P Centres, and participating in conferences - was in many respects similar to the everyday life and reality of the activists that I studied. Secondly, over the past thirteen years, I have worked as a humanitarian advocacy advisor for various international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). As such, I am a member of the same humanitarian and human rights community as the R2P-advocates and East Timor activists. Although I only started to observe ‘my’ community anthropologically over the last five years, being a member of the humanitarian and human rights community for such a long time significantly increased my means to comprehend and grasp the beliefs and practices of R2P-advocates and East Timor activists.

Ethics

‘Humanitarianism is an uncomfortably intimate topic for anthropology’, Redfield and Bornstein (2010: 20) write. For me, being both an anthropologist and a humanitarian policy advisor, the sense of ‘uncomfortable intimacy’ came with some additional challenges.

Being an insider made access relatively easy. Not only could I be introduced to the organizations and individuals through former colleagues. I actually offered my services as humanitarian policy advisor to two organizations, in exchange for a peek inside their kitchen. In response, both took me on for an unpaid internship. When I offered my services, I did so following the guidelines for ethical research and informed consent. During my first fieldwork period however, I found that being too open and transparent about my research did not always help to establish relations of trust with my colleagues. On the contrary, when they grasped the full meaning of my being there, they became quite wary of my presence and - although I cannot prove this - it is possible that they decided to keep me out of meetings to which they might initially have invited me.

Another challenge during that first fieldwork period was to conduct my assignment and participate as an intern without responding as I would have in my role as a humanitarian policy adviser. I had explicitly asked the supervisor of my internship, to give me an assignment that would keep me from influencing internal decision-making processes in the organization. This meant that somehow I had to suppress my reflex to give professional feed-back during discussions and meetings. More importantly it meant that I now had to observe the comings and goings at the office with the anthropologists’ eye. Words, phrases and practices that were
Introduction

so familiar to me, now had to be observed and described as utterly ‘other’ and strange (Ybema and Kamsteeg 2009).

I soon learned to discipline myself and abide by the methodologically agnostic approach that I was taught in the empirical science of religions. The (empirical) science of religions is not meant to give all-encompassing explanations of religions and worldviews nor to judge their value or truth, but aims to derive ‘partial or intermediate explanations’ that clarify why a given worldview or religion has the particular shape and function in society in the time and place it is studied in (Platvoet 1996: 33-51). Practicing this methodological agnosticism meant that I learned to suspend my own judgment - both personal and professional. In the end I mastered this so well that at some point, I could not even answer a friend who said, ‘so come on, what is your own opinion on R2P? You must have one’. Although I became easier in using my hybrid background as a humanitarian practitioner-cum-researcher to gather data,18 I managed to hold onto my methodological agnosticism till the very end.

Early on in my research my supervisor warned me that I would always, in some sense, find myself breaching the trust of my respondents. Even the anthropologist who is not at the same time a member of the community that she is studying at some point will feel like a traitor. It is this sensation that Redfield and Bornstein (2010) also refer to when calling humanitarianism an uncomfortably intimate topic for anthropology. For it is very difficult to critically observe and describe people who are so genuine in their wish to do good and so incredibly dedicated. In fact, looking back, I feel it was much easier to criticize humanitarian and human rights activists when I was their colleague, still working as an advocacy officer for Oxfam Novib. Because being sharp and self-critical is part of the organizational culture of humanitarian and rights activists. As an academic however, to me being critical soon started to feel like being cynical. Like the grumpy old men in the Muppet Show who comment critically on every move made on stage while sitting comfortably in the balcony.

I feel uncomfortable when specific and concrete human acts are reduced to abstractions. I feel there should always be attention to the exception, the nuances, the differences, for context and reality. Talal Asad taught me to zoom out to the bigger picture, to analyze the everyday through an induction process that uncovers the larger laws that govern it. I deeply value that approach, for I believe indeed, that only through asking again and again, ‘what do we see here?’, ‘what is the state?’, ‘what is suffering?’, ‘what is violence?’, we learn about that peculiar species called human kind. I hope I managed in the end to strike that balance. To provide a critical mirror, a source for self-reflection to my colleagues in the humanitarian and human rights community, yet one that does not fall short of respecting and appreciating what they do.

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18 See Appendix, ‘data collection and analysis’.
V. Book purport and composition

“Don’t let us be bystanders!”

Time and again, the term ‘bystander’ showed up in my research. It first appeared in an altered version in my field notes on February 18, 2010. After an interview that I had had with an R2P-advocate in New York, I wrote:

What R2P can do according to X, is helping to prioritize or design a sense of urgency: [a sense] that the UN cannot allow [mass atrocities to occur]. Or as Y says, ‘at least don’t let us be bystanders’.

(....)

Reflections

- Theme, article: how did we change from being happy bystanders of torture [in eighteenth century Europe], to a ‘at least not let us be bystanders’??

The phrase ‘don’t let us be bystanders’ caught my attention partly because of the ‘us’ as the indirect object of this imperative. The ‘us’ spoke to something I already wondered about: to what extent was the call to halt mass atrocities also a call to save ‘us’ - the ‘we’ - as well as the distant others suffering from mass atrocities? Is it more than is the case in, say calls for the relief of victims of the Southeast Asian tsunami, or in calls for the protection of Palestinian civilians from the Israeli attack on Gaza? I set this idea aside for a while, fearing that it might be a ‘conclusion’ too easily drawn. A conclusion that did not sufficiently cover the genuine concern of activists for the plight of those suffering from mass atrocities: but then during the interviews that I conducted in the autumn of 2011 respondents started to speak of it again.

They spoke of the horror over the genocide in Rwanda and about the profound shame and anger evoked by the sense that the international community had not done enough to prevent it. They implicitly categorized Rwanda as a trauma that was in some ways different from the strong demoralization following the Holocaust. For did not the world now have all these instruments and tools in place that it had not had during the Holocaust? Did we not have the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Genocide Convention, the UN Charter and the UN peace keeping troops - all of which were supposed to lead human civilization away from the horrors of the Holocaust and onto a path of moral progress? Did not the world, despite all these promises, tools and knowledge again and even more knowingly stand by and watched while an estimated five hundred thousand women, men and children were slaughtered within a hundred days? Where human rights had heralded an era of renewed hope, especially after the fall of the Berlin wall, the moral deception was even greater when ‘humanity abandoned humanity’ again in Rwanda. Consequently, Rwanda increased the

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20 Taken from the title of an interview with retired Lt. General Roméo Dallaire on Rwanda, ‘How can humanity abandon humanity?’. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/by-topic/romeo-dallaire-how-
burden of being a bystander. As Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State during the Rwanda genocide, confessed in the documentary 'Ghosts of Rwanda,' 'I wish that I had pushed for a large humanitarian intervention. People would have thought I was crazy, it would never have happened, but I would have felt better about my own role in this.' With Rwanda, the figure of the bystander became a disgrace to the international community. As one R2P-advocate explained:

I think the thing I would put emphasis on is the humiliation of being a helpless bystander. It's humiliating to be powerless, it's humiliating to be there and watch things happen that you cannot stop. So of course, intervention is about us. I mean, intervention is of course about rescuing people who are helpless and need your help. But it is equally about your own shame and humiliation and anger at being powerless. And I don't think that there's any doubt that it is shameful to sit and watch bad things happen and feel that your governments have the power to stop it and they're not doing it.

Former member of the ICISS, 22 November 2011

The increased taboo on being a bystander helps to partly explain the urgency of the call for action, for those who act are not bystanders, but the mixture of ferocity and despair resounding in 'at least, don't let us be bystanders!' has an existential overtone as well. It strongly denounces a world and humanity that allow these mass atrocities to occur. As such, the slogan testifies to what Peter Redfield calls an 'ethic of refusal':

“ethic of refusal” - a position that advances no universal or utopian solution but consistently rejects the apparent futility of the way the world is. (Redfield 2006: 7; Redfield 2013: 101)

My last doubt about identifying this imperative as the catch-phrase for this dissertation was that it might speak more to the R2P-advocates than to the East Timor activists: but then a long time East Timor activist who was also a key member of the movement, told me how the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) came up with the title for its report. The report that put together in hundreds of pages a full account of the numerous human rights violations and mass atrocities committed during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor:

I remember me and the commissioners going to talk to Xanana Gusmao and say, you know, 'what are we gonna call this thing?' We had all the Latin American models and stuff like that. We had a couple of ideas, and we came up with this thing, you know, which is basically sort of 'enough is enough.' [...] Then we said, why don’t we just

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21 Redfield derived this term from a speech that was given at the awarding of the Nobel Prize to the nongovernmental organization Médicins Sans Frontières (MSF - Doctors Without Borders) in 1999.
call it “Enough!” and put an exclamation mark up to the end of it. To sort of say not enough in the sense of I’ve had it [as] no more, leave me alone. It’s as an order. It’s like an instruction. The exclamation mark is like a police man’s hand going up if you’re speeding to say: ‘stop right where you are it’s an order’.

Paul, Australian East Timor solidarity activist, 21 November 2012

With the Portuguese Chega! the East Timorese and the solidarity activists developed their own version of the ‘never again’. Chega! conveys a meaning that in essence is similar to ‘don’t let us be bystanders!’. In the illustration that Paul provides to explain the meaning of chega, the police acts as the bystander who refuses to stand by idly and intervenes to halt the atrocities.

‘Don't let us be bystanders!’ captures the core of the mission endeavoured by the East Timor solidarity activists and the Responsibility to Protect advocates whom I met and engaged with over the past four years. It captures the zeal, ferocity and dedication with which they’ve embarked on this mission. It places them immediately and squarely in a moral-political position, in opposition to states that knowingly stand by, in solidarity with people affected by mass atrocities, and in defence of ‘humanity’. In the following chapters the ideological conceptions and assumptions on human violence and suffering that inspire this collective of activists and advocates will be examined in detail.

Outline
Chapter two describes the historical backdrop of the evolving interest in mass atrocity intervention. It identifies the major trends and changes that altered the nature and orientation of humanitarian and human rights activism from roughly 1975 (Indonesian occupation of East Timor and emergence of solidarity activism) to 2011 (UN sanctioned ‘R2P’ intervention in Libya), focusing on the histories of the two movements that are the case studies of this research. In addition, chapter two provides a profile of the people and organizations that make up both movements, describing commonalities in background and motivation of both groups of activists and the strategies they employ to influence international politics.

Chapter three studies the specifics of the concern for the preservation of collective life amongst anti-genocide activists. It asks: who do the East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates seek to protect, who(m) are their objects of compassion and empathy? The chapter uncovers the main characteristics and assumptions behind notions of ‘people’ and ‘populations’ that both groups of activists seek to protect. Secondly, the chapter examines the nature of the compassionate relation between the anti-genocide activists and their objects of compassion.

Chapter four seeks to trace the ideological assumptions that make anti-genocide activists respond with horror to what they regard as the most brutal violations of that ‘human’. When is ‘the human’ or ‘humanity’ felt to be violated or under threat in the eyes of anti-genocide activists? The analysis is based on reflections shared by activists on mass atrocities that they considered to be most shocking, that is the atrocities committed in East Timor, Rwanda and during the Holocaust. Next to these more inarticulate sensibilities to mass atrocities, the
chapter also discusses the more articulated views of anti-genocide activists on mass violence and the human condition.

Chapter five studies how both groups of anti-genocide activists produce present and sanction evidence to gain public and political support for their moral truth claim. It asks: how do East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates convince society of what they hold to be true? What evidence and proof do they produce to support their truth claim? How do they present that evidence, what style of persuasion do they use to maximize the likelihood of their truth being accepted by the target group? How do they sanction this evidence and related truth claims? The questions are explored by way of two case studies that describe an activity performed by East Timor activists and R2P-advocates respectively, to advocate a particular truth claim.

Chapter six studies the views of both groups of anti-genocide activists on the principle of sovereignty, and on the related duties of the sovereign state or ruler. In what situations does the state or ruler fail in his performance of duties and what should be the course of action to halt or change that according to the activists? Again, two cases are presented to address this question. The first discusses the responsibility of the Portuguese government for the plight of East Timorese under Indonesian occupation. The second concerns the international military intervention in Libya (2011) that was sanctioned by the UN under explicit reference to the responsibility to protect.

The Conclusion seeks to combine all findings from the separate chapters to establish if, and to what extent, they support the main propositions of this research.
Chapter Two
A History of Two Movements

On this occasion, I shall like to address the prospects for human security and intervention in the next century. In light of the dramatic events of the past year, I trust that you will understand this decision.

-Kofi Annan, Address to the General Assembly, 1999

The events of 1999 had been dramatic indeed. On March 24, without the consent of the UN Security Council, NATO started a bombing campaign against the Serbian troops of Milosevic in order to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. On September 20, 1999 - the very day that Kofi Annan spoke the words cited above to the General Assembly - UN-sanctioned multinational forces landed in East Timor to halt the ongoing killings and destruction committed by pro-Indonesian militia.

It was not just the events of 1999 that prompted Kofi Annan to dedicate his annual address to 'the prospects for human security and intervention in the next century' (United Nations 1999). The entire decade of the 1990s had seen a gradual but historic change in thinking about the legitimacy of international military interventions in the face of mass atrocities: ‘a new norm of UN-authorized humanitarian intervention developed in the 1990s’, according to Wheeler (2000: 8). In 1978 the intervention of Vietnam that helped to stop the genocide in Cambodia was still harshly condemned by the international community because it ‘set a dangerous precedent’ (Wheeler 2000: 109). In 1991 the US-led intervention in northern Iraq that was presented as a rescue of the Kurdish people suffering from repression by the Iraqi regime, met with strikingly little international criticism (Wheeler 2000: 289). In 1999 NATO’s bombing campaign against (former) Yugoslavia was covertly praised as ‘illegal but legitimate’ since it was without the consent of the Security Council, but waged on just humanitarian grounds. As Barnett writes:

Many world leaders offered the decision to bomb Kosovo as evidence of cosmopolitanism and a growing sense of international community. [...] world leaders were making a direct connection between the possibility of global solidarity and the need to defend the lives of the weakest members of the community. (Barnett 2011: 187)

A similar normative change occurred in the non-governmental humanitarian and human rights community. Genocide or mass atrocity prevention had never before been a key issue on the agenda of the major international human rights and humanitarian organizations. Although the UN General Assembly endorsed the ‘Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide’ one day before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in December 1948, international human rights organizations adopted the latter as their primary missionary document, paying but scant attention to the Genocide

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Convention. However, ‘by the 1990s,’ scholar of law and history Samuel Moyn writes, ‘a monumental change had occurred’ (Moyn 2010: 119):

Holocaust memory was peripheral to the explosion of human rights in the crucial era of the 1970s. […] Yet somehow - since revelations of the Cambodian genocide, and certainly by the mid-1990s resurgence of “ethnic cleansing” on the European continent - genocide prevention is now among the first items on the human rights agenda. (Moyn 2010: 220)

In 1995, twenty-five non-governmental organizations gathered in New York to establish the NGO Coalition for an International Criminal Court (CICC). The CICC started a campaign to advocate the establishment of an international court that would prosecute state leaders deemed responsible for acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. By the time negotiations on the Statute for an International Criminal Court were concluded in 1998 the CICC had grown to a coalition of eight hundred non-governmental organizations, of which some two hundred and thirty were accredited to the Diplomatic Conference that endorsed the Statute in Rome.

Thus, from the mid-1990s onwards norms of ‘universalist responsibility’ (Moyn 2010: 219) of ‘a new solidarism in the society of states’ (Wheeler 2000: 285), and of ‘global solidarity’ (Barnett 2011: 187) started to emerge. Of course, this normative change was not the story of a single decade. It occurred as part of the evolvement of a global human rights worldview that started to grow in the 1970s and gradually seeped into the missions of humanitarianism and international cooperation. Although starting at a slow pace, this human rights takeover gained impetus in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War when Marxism lost its attraction as an ideology and there were no more walls or regimes to stop the spread of human rights to regions formerly controlled by the Soviet Union. This eventually resulted in new norms for mass atrocity intervention as laid down in the responsibility to protect in 2005.

This chapter describes the historical backdrop against which the growing interest in mass atrocity intervention and the related shift in moral sentiments evolved. It identifies the major trends and changes that altered the nature and orientation of humanitarian and human rights activism from roughly 1975 to 2011, focusing on the histories of the two movements that are the case studies of this research. Some of those trends have already been touched upon above and another summary follows in the conclusion of this chapter. There is one major trend however, that I want to bring to the fore here at the beginning of this (lengthy) chapter. It is a historical development that shaped the change in moral sentiments in humanitarianism

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23 The ‘crime of aggression’ was the fourth international crime established by the Rome Statute, and concerns military invasion into another state ‘which, by its character, gravity and scale, constitutes a manifest violation of the Charter of the United Nations’. See Article 8 bis of the Rome Statute, available on: http://untreaty.un.org/cod/icc/statute/99_corr/cstatute.htm, retrieved May 19, 2013.

24 Consequently, the Statute for the ICC was named the Rome Statute. Also see: ‘Who we are and what we do: our history’ on the website of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court, available on: http://www.iccnow.org/?mod=cicchistory, retrieved May 19, 2013, and; Tallgren 1999.
and human rights that I study in this dissertation in an important way. In the 1970s human rights activism emerged as a (political) protest against totalitarian regimes in the Soviet block and military dictatorships in the Americas, and concentrated on political prisoners and the struggle for political freedom. Although unquestionably there was a lot of anger and zeal fuelling this activism, the struggle was also characterized by a strong hope for and belief in social-political change. East Timor activists were inspired by the decolonization and liberation struggles in the 60s and 70s. Their hope of change increased when the Soviet bloc fell and a series of revolutions swept through Eastern Europe, returning voice and agency to the people. The freeing of Nelson Mandela was another hallmark in the history of human rights, confirming the belief of activists that people can change oppressive political regimes. The late eighties and early nineties were years of euphoria for political and human rights activists and all who believed in human rights and social change. However only a little further into the 1990s the peoples’ liberation struggles suddenly turned into bloody ethnic conflicts and into mutual slaughter between peoples. Perhaps it was still relatively easy for Western human rights activists to put aside the genocide in Rwanda as something ‘other’, placed in an entirely different social-cultural setting. When the same mass killings, mass rapes and ethnic cleansings occurred on Europe’s doorstep however, a most severe and perhaps final blow was dealt to the belief in peoples’ revolutions and human rights, a blow to the conviction that people could change the world for the better and that ‘we’ were moving towards an ever more democratic global society where human rights would flourish.

The histories of the East Timor solidarity movement and the Responsibility to Protect-coalition will describe this development in more detail and with greater nuances. They will be presented in chronological order, according to the same structure. The first sections of each of the histories provide a brief impression of the ‘global moods’ that set the scene for humanitarianism and human rights in the respective periods. These introductory accounts are based on my own analysis and that of scholars of the history of humanitarianism and human rights. The next sections will then relate the origin and development of the two movements as seen and explained by the activists and advocates themselves, cross-checked and completed with archive research and the study of newspaper clippings. As both East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates are skilled political analysts, their accounts should not be discounted as merely subjective: rather, they should be regarded as ‘inside-histories’ that at times provide unknown details and insights into the inner functioning and fabrication of both movements. This is especially the case with the R2P-coalition the history of which, to my knowledge, has not yet been described in detail in other publications. The following sections describe the commonalities in background, motivation and worldview of the individual people who make up the respective movement or coalition. The fourth and

25 In addition to the electronic online news service Apakabar that from 1990 onwards collected all international news on East Timor, announcements of solidarity actions, and press statements of various individual East Timor solidarity organisations and the equally impressive online archive of the North American solidarity organisation ETAN (East Timor and Indonesia Action Network), I conducted research in the CHART archive in Melbourne that collects all brochures, meeting reports etcetera of Australian-based solidarity organisations.
final sections identify the major organizational characteristics of both ‘movements’ and the instruments and strategies they used to influence international politics.

As explained in the Introduction, I regard the East Timor solidarity movement and particularly the R2P-coalition as the ‘products’ of a merging of humanitarianism and human rights that became most visible in the (re)formulation of the humanitarian creed to save lives into a ‘right to life’. Although this merger has made the categorization of both missions as either ‘human rights’ or ‘humanitarian’ increasingly difficult, the nature and working style of both - focusing on lobby and media and speaking in a language of rights and justice (Redfield and Bornstein 2010) - qualify them as the descendants of human rights, rather than of humanitarianism. In this chapter therefore, I concentrate on explaining both movements within the evolving history of human rights.

I. The ‘global mood’ of the 1970s

The emergence of international human rights activism

Norms of ‘universalist responsibility’ for mass atrocities were first and most famously laid down as a doctrine in the post-war international treaties - in the United Nations Charter (UN Charter), in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in the Genocide Convention. Crucially, they were conceived within a framework of universal rights that were later codified in international law. Of course, the 18th century had witnessed the emergence of similar social contracts between citizens and the state in the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens (1789). However, the essential difference between the post-war international conventions and the earlier national frameworks of rights was in their conception of a universal jurisdiction that went beyond national borders. The innovation lay in the conception of a supra-national body, of an ‘international community’ that convened in the United Nations and that monitored the adherence of individual states to a universal moral pact. In this newly emerging global consciousness the state was no longer perceived exclusively as a guardian of citizens rights, but also as ‘a potential source of evil’ (Teitel 1997: 303). International human rights, as goes the narrative of origins, were born from the traumatic experience of the Holocaust, from the realization that states can commit mass atrocities against their own people.

When international human rights inspired the emergence of a popular movement in the 1970s it was very much in line with this conception of the state as a potential source of evil. International human rights activism first manifested itself through a series of protests against oppressive totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships. In Latin America a series of military coups in the late 1960s and early 1970s resulted in serious human rights violations (Cleary 1997). In response, local human rights organizations sprang up and managed to establish international support groups through Catholic and Protestant church networks (Cleary 1997: 1-5). In Eastern Europe, international human rights activism was inspired by intellectual dissidents like Vaclav Hável and Andrei Sakharov who rose against the totalitarian regimes of Czechoslovakia and
the Soviet Union (Moyn 2010; De Waal 2003). In both cases the advance of human rights in the 1970s was greatly influenced by the Cold War discourse. The ‘anti-totalitarian reflex’ (Moyn 2010: 220) of human rights activism in Eastern Europe increasingly framed the disparity between the communist and capitalist block ‘in political terms: as repression, or totalitarianism, versus liberty, or human rights’ (Neier 2012: 13). Human rights activists focusing on Latin America were outraged by Western governments who supported the repressive military dictatorships as part of a Cold War policy that sought to halt the rise of Communism. Similar feelings of anger about the faulty Cold War politics fuelled international human rights activism in solidarity with Asian people who suffered abuses at the hands of US backed regimes in the Philippines and Indonesia, or because of the US intervention in Vietnam.

In the unmasking of Western complicity in human rights violations abroad, human rights activism found a life-long ally in ‘investigative journalism’, a new branch of the news industry that emerged around the same time and that exposed US-involvement in various military coups (Neier 2012: 5). Starting in the 1970s, the media became a prime stimulus for the growth of the international human rights movement. In 1972 the iconic photo of the Vietnamese ‘napalm girl’ became a symbol of a war that had gone horribly wrong because of the US Cold War intervention. Its public exposure by the international press fuelled world-wide protests against the ‘imperialist’ US foreign policies. Another gross human rights violation caught on film was the violent crackdown of the Soweto uprising in 1976. The Afrikaner police fired at thousands of young people rallying against a Decree that prohibited the use of local languages in school. This time, the photo of a student carrying the dead body of a twelve-year old boy, was widely distributed by the world press and spurred the growth of the international anti-Apartheid movement. Activists thus learnt to appreciate the seminal importance of the production and dissemination of iconic images of suffering as a way to gain world-wide public and political attention for their cause. The first international solidarity activism for East Timor took off in the midst of these developments.

II. The international solidarity movement for East Timor: a history

The Indonesian occupation of East Timor

On December 7, 1975 Indonesian troops invaded East Timor.26 East Timor is the eastern half of the south-east Asian island of Timor, and was effectively under Portuguese colonial rule since the 16th century. The 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal that overthrew the authoritarian Ceatano regime eventually led to the withdrawal of Portugal from East Timor. There followed a brief period of relative political freedom in which local political parties in East Timor came out into the open. After a short civil war that broke out between two of them - the UDT (Uniao Democratica Timorense or the Timorese Democratic Union) and Fretilin (Frente Revolucionaria

26 For a detailed (historical) account on the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, the establishment of Fretilin and the international diplomatic developments in response, see among others Fernandes 2011a; Braithwaite, Charlesworth and Soares 2012, and; Robinson 2009.
de Timor Leste Independente or Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) - Fretilin, which emerged victorious, unilaterally announced the independence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor on November 28, 1975. Ten days later Indonesia, that wanted to annex East Timor as its twenty-seventh province, invaded the territory after having received covert support from US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (Robinson 2009: 17).

Overwhelmed by the Indonesian military power, Fretilin withdrew its remaining troops to the mountains and sent its leaders, among whom the Minister for Political Affairs Mari Alkatiri and Minister of Foreign Affairs José Ramos-Horta, into exile. Although the United Nations officially denounced the Indonesian invasion as a breach of international law, there was little they could do to stop it. The United States supported the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, believing that it countered the spread of the ‘communist’ ideology of Fretilin in south-east Asia. Consequently, any attempts of serious UN interventions were obstructed by the US (Pureza 2004: 214). In response to the Indonesian occupation, Fretilin established a resistance movement that fought for independence on three fronts. The first of these was in the mountains of East Timor where Falintil, the armed wing of Fretilin resisted the Indonesian occupation with guerrilla tactics; the second was in New York, where the exiled José Ramos-Horta became the permanent representative of Fretilin at the United Nations (UN) and pursued a diplomatic solution to the conflict. The third was in the various university cities in Indonesia, where from 1989 onwards the National Resistance of East Timorese Students (RENETIL) tried to influence the Indonesian public discourse through demonstrations and the forging of alliances with Indonesian pro-democracy activists. Although Indonesia had managed to practically seal off East Timor from the outside world and news about the invasion was very limited, eventually reports came out through East Timorese refugees and the occasional undercover journalist. They spoke of the bombing of East Timorese people.

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27 In July 1975, Portugal adopted a law ‘(Law 7/75) that established a decolonization programme’ for East Timor. Following Indonesia’s invasion of the territory in December 1975, the UN issued repetitive Resolutions from 1975 to 1982, affirming that ‘Portugal would remain as an administrative power until a legitimate act of self-determination had taken place’. (Pureza 2004: 196; 199).

28 Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste, or the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor.

29 RENETIL was established on 20 June 1988 in Bali by nine East Timorese students, and soon established ‘clandestine cells in Bandung, Semarang, Solo, Jakarta, Malang and Denpassar’ (Fernandes 2011a: 82). RENETIL organized pro-independence actions and demonstrations in Indonesia, played an important role as messenger of the armed Timorese resistance in Indonesia and abroad, and established a network of collaboration with Indonesian pro-democracy activists and the international solidarity movement for East Timor.

30 The clandestine youth movement consisted of a network of organizations that also operated inside the territories of East Timor, such as OJETIL, OPJLATIL, FECLETIL, FITUN, Student Solidarity Council, Sagrada Familia and others (Leach 2012: 37). However, as the majority of my interviews with East Timorese activists were with members of RENETIL, I here mention this organization explicitly. See: Leach, Michael (2012: 37), ‘Fitun: a preliminary history of a clandestine movement’ posted on tlstudies.org, and; Fernandes 2011a: 125-245.

31 On 13 October 1975, five journalists working for Australian television were killed in Balibo, East Timor, presumably by Indonesian Special Forces. Although the case was never fully resolved, it effectively scared foreign journalists from openly entering East Timor.
who had sought refuge in the mountains, about the famine spreading in the camps where East Timorese people had been placed by Indonesian authorities, and about the increasing human rights violations against alleged Fretilin supporters, including stories of torture, forced disappearance and summary executions (CAVR 2005). At the time, churches and human rights organizations estimated that close to two hundred thousand East Timorese had died as a consequence of the bombing, involuntary relocation and widespread famine between 1975 and 1984 (Robinson 2009: 40, note 1). As the total population of East Timor before the invasion was around 650,000, this would mean that close to a third of the total population had died. Later investigations conducted by the Commission of Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Timor-Leste (CAVR) estimated this number to be closer to a hundred thousand (CAVR 2005: part 6, page 9). However, as this data became available only after East Timor gained independence, the solidarity activists had no knowledge of that during the 25 years of their solidarity campaign.

Establishing the movement: the first wave of activism

Australian activists were among the first to protest against the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, following largely in the wake of the anti-Vietnam protests that brought thousands to the streets of Melbourne and Sydney. ‘Suddenly we had a military development right on our doorstep in the aftermath of the Vietnam War,’ Paul an Australian East Timor-activist recalls, ‘and student groups immediately related to it’.32 A group of activists who already knew each other from their involvement in the Young Christian Students Movement (YCS) established the Timor Information Service (TIS), which published its first newsletter in 1975.33 Initially, the newsletter was established to provide information on East Timor to people in Australia, but due to good connections with the Timorese resistance the TIS very quickly got an international outreach. As Cliff, an Australian activist who was involved in East Timor from 1974 onwards, recalled:

We were getting information that others could not get. When Fretilin went to the hills they had a radio set and they were beaming messages to a radio set in Darwin.34 All those messages were addressed to X who was in Melbourne of course, working across the road from where I was working at the Action for World Development’s office. So that information was coming out.

Cliff, 30 October 2012

The goal of these solidarity activists was independence for the East Timorese people, ‘right from day one,’ Cliff affirms. Australian activists thus worked closely with members of the

32 Interview with Paul, Australian solidarity activist, 21 November 2012.
33 Interview with Cliff, Australian solidarity activist, 30 October 2012
34 The radio was provided and operated by the Communist Party in Australia, see Braithwaite et al. 2012: 76. Eventually the Australian government tried to shut it down, and ‘they went bush in Darwin too’ with the radio set, Australian solidarity activist Cliff told (30 October 2012).
Timorese resistance who had sought exile in Australia. They provided them with office space and facilities to work and helped to smuggle information in and out of East Timor. Herein, the link with the Catholic Church, which became a major haven of resistance within East Timor, proved to be quite useful. Various Australian priests could travel more or less freely in and out of Indonesia without raising the suspicion of Indonesian security forces. As true ‘double agents’, they carried messages to and from East Timorese resistance members residing in and outside East Timor.

Within a short space of time various other East Timor solidarity organizations started to emerge in Australia. The case was very quickly seized on by the ‘old left’ branches of political movements in Australia - such as the Green Left and the Communist Party of Australia - ‘and they were fighting each other on who had the correct line for East Timor’, Australian activist Paul commented. The Australian trade unionists, who had already established relations with Fretilin prior to the Indonesian invasion, became another important faction in the Australian solidarity movement (Fernandes 2011b). In 1976, the Australian Committee for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) established an East Timor sub-committee. One of the prime and early contributions of ACFOA was the publication of the research report *Aid and East Timor* in the early 1980s. The report concluded that a famine of monumental proportions was occurring in East Timor due to the Indonesian occupation and sealing off of the area from international aid. As one of the first well-researched reports on the famine in East Timor it reached a wide audience within the diplomatic circles of the UN.

Australian activists also played a key role in supporting the stream of East Timorese refugees that started to come to Australia through Indonesia. They raised money and set up a programme called RAFT - referring to the image of people drowning. RAFT helped East Timorese refugees to resettle in Melbourne and arranged for the transfer of their relatives through Indonesia or Portugal, using part of the charity’s money to pay bribes to Indonesian border authorities. Thus, the East Timor community in Australia grew quickly in number and managed to organize themselves socially, culturally and politically.

The influx of Timorese refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Portugal also motivated Portuguese activists to take up the East Timor case. In 1979 Portuguese solidarity activists of the non-governmental organization CIDAC (Centro Informacao e Documentacao Amilar Cabral) arranged the first international conference on East Timor (Fernandes 2011a:77). As a follow-up to this, CIDAC established the *Comissao para os Direitos do

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35 Apart from Fretilin, the other main East Timorese political parties who resisted the Indonesian occupation were APODETI or the Timorese Popular Democratic Association, which advocated East Timorese autonomy within the Indonesian federation, and UDT (*Uniao Democratica Timorense*) or the Timorese Democratic Union, which advocated for an independent East Timor. APODETI and UDT leaders also went into exile and made efforts to settle the conflict through lobby and peace negotiations. However, the large majority of international solidarity activists for East Timor supported the work of Fretilin, being the largest Timorese resistance movement.

36 In a few paragraphs in chapter three, ‘For the love of…people’, I explain some more about the role of the Catholic Church in the independence struggle.

37 Interview with Australian solidarity activist Paul, 21 November 2012.

38 Interview, 21 November 2012.
Povo Maubere or the Commission for the Rights of the Maubere People (CDPM) in 1982, a solidarity organization that advocated the East Timorese right to self-determination. The conference also proved to be a stepping stone for the establishment of a European network of East Timor solidarity activists. In the 1980s, many European countries already had an East Timor committee, Liem Soei Liong, a well-known Dutch-Indonesian activist, explained:

Committees had activities in their own countries, initially asking their respective governments to acknowledge the Democratic Republic of East Timor and ask for the release of Timorese political prisoners. When the Indonesian military became more brutal and human rights violations were increasing, small groups of Timorese fled the country with the assistance of human rights organizations and the Red Cross. We would then accompany them to testify before the Human Rights Commission in Geneva.39

Liem, 12 December 2012

As its former colonial administration, Portugal remained a centre for the coordination of international and European solidarity activism for East Timor. Over the years, the Oporto University in Lisbon would host many conferences, often presided by Professor de Magelhaes (Fernandes 2011a: 77) who became one of the fiercest advocates for East Timorese self-determination in Portugal.

Dutch activism remained relatively confined. This was partly due to the sensitive relations of the Dutch with the oppressor of East Timor - Indonesia, which had been a Dutch colony until 1945. Nevertheless, some activists in the Netherlands managed to play key roles in the larger international solidarity movement, precisely because of their networks in, and knowledge of Indonesia. As early as 1976 Liem Soei Liong a Chinese-Indonesian intellectual who had fled the communist crack-down of 1965 in Indonesia and was a member of the Dutch Komitee Indonesië,40 managed to arrange for a visit of Ramos Horta to Amsterdam. As the role of the Komitee Indonesië remained marginal however, Liem Soei Liong decided to move to the more influential TAPOL in London, a human rights organization that was largely credited for its continuous stream of reports on various human rights violations in Indonesia, including East Timor.

Similarly in the United States solidarity activism for East Timor was relatively limited before the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991. The intellectuals Noam Chomsky, Arnold Kohen and Benedict Anderson were the first to take on the case of East Timor, framing it as another victim of the ruthless Cold War policies pursued by the United States government. Fernandes (2011a: 57-59) describes how contacts between Chomsky and Karl Meyer, who was an editorial writer of the New York Times, resulted in the publication of a sharp editorial in 1979,

titled ‘An unjust war in East Timor’. The three intellectuals also put together money to fly East Timorese refugees from Portugal into the US to lobby Members of Congress in Washington (Fernandes 2011a: 59-61).

For Indonesian activists who had relatively little access to information about East Timor, foreign professors visiting their universities played an important role as informants. Upon his return from a visit to East Timor in 1989, Gerry van Klinken - an Australian-Dutch professor teaching at the Satya Wacana University in Salatiga, Indonesia - organized a slide show on East Timor at his house. ‘Gerry told that the situation was still tense: there were still many military posts, the people were still afraid,’ Sonny, an Indonesian activist who was a student of Van Klinken, recalls.41 In Yogyakarta, it was the Australian professor Herb Feith who introduced Indonesian student activists to East Timor. One of these, Budi, remembered how professor Feith one day asked them about East Timor:

He asked, ‘what do you know about East Timor?’ We were surprised by that question: we would always talk about democracy, about land issues. East Timor was never amongst those issues.

Budi, 30 July 2012

Indonesian involvement in the movement only really took off in the late 1980s when Indonesian pro-democracy activists were detained in the same prison as leaders of the East Timorese resistance. Here they found strategic arguments to combine the struggles of the Indonesian pro-democracy and East Timorese independence movements, as will be discussed in a following section.42

Thus in the 1970s and 1980s international East Timor solidarity activism first started to emerge. Small groups across the world embraced the East Timor issue at different times and within different national political settings. This first wave of international solidarity activism for East Timor managed to establish informal yet well-functioning international networks and substantially contributed to awareness-building of East Timor among politicians and UN diplomats. It was not until the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991 however, that East Timor became a topic of wide popular concern.

The Santa Cruz massacre: East Timor’s icon of suffering

On November 12, 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on a memorial procession that had gathered at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, the capital of East Timor. The procession was organized to commemorate the death of a young activist, Sebastiao Gomes, who had been killed in a clash between pro-independence youth and a pro-Indonesia group in the night of 27 October 1991 (Fernandes 2011a: 89).43 In the weeks before Gomes’ death Timorese pro-

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41 Interview with Indonesian solidarity activist Sonny, 14 August 2012.
42 Section ‘East Timor solidarity activists: social background and motivation’.
43 The leader of the pro-Indonesian group, Afonso Hendrique, was killed that same night by a ‘fatal blow to the head’ (Fernandes 2011a: 89).
independence supporters had been busy preparing for a major demonstration which they planned to stage during the visit of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation. When the visit was cancelled at last minute, due to a disagreement between Indonesia and Portugal about the members allowed in the delegation, they decided to hold the demonstration anyway. As such, they could make good use of the international journalists who had already arrived to cover the visit of the Portuguese, and still reach the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights on Torture, Pieter Kooijmans, who was visiting East Timor.

The pro-independence youth organized a march from the Motael church - the place where the body of Gomes had been found - to the Santa Cruz cemetery, displaying their banners. The procession that started with some fifteen hundred marchers steadily grew as more people and school children joined en route (Fernandes 2011a: 89). Somewhere half-way, ‘there was a scuffle’ in which two Indonesian army personnel and one marcher were injured by unknown persons (Fernandes 2011a: 89). Some time after the crowd arrived at the Santa Cruz cemetery Indonesian troops opened fire killing dozens of people, allegedly 271, and injuring many more.  

44 See: CAVR 2005: chapter 7.2 Unlawful Killings and Forced Disappearances, page 199 and further for a detailed report on the massacre. According to two eye witnesses, a second massacre occurred in the Wira Husada Hospital where people who were injured at the cemetery were taken and allegedly killed by Indonesian security forces - see same report page 203.
Figure 1. Pro-independence demonstrators run into Santa Cruz Cemetery to escape the bullets of Indonesian soldiers. Photo/camera still: Max Stahl

Figure 2. Wounded boy is cradled by fellow demonstrator under fire from Indonesian soldiers surrounding the Santa Cruz Cemetery during the massacre of 12 November 1991. Photo/camera still: Max Stahl.
Australian journalist Max Stahl, who was at the cemetery when the shooting started, managed to hide and film images of the army firing into the fleeing crowd. A Dutch journalist then smuggled the footage out of the country. Soon images of what became known as the Santa Cruz or Dili massacre were broadcasted around the world. They showed a young Timorese youth dressed in white, dying on a grave stone in the arms of his friend, the crowd fleeing, jumping over the cemetery walls in panic and being trampled underfoot, a woman hiding and praying the Rosary in Portuguese while seeking shelter behind a grave stone.

The Santa Cruz massacre became the iconic image of suffering that focused the world’s eyes on East Timor. To solidarity activists who were already engaged with the situation prior to the massacre, ‘Santa Cruz’ signified a breakthrough for public mobilization. The Santa Cruz massacre was their ‘Soweto’ as many activists admitted. ‘Just like Soweto in South Africa, Santa Cruz gave an enormous schwung, stirred up the world,’ solidarity activist Liem recalled. The death of Kamal Bamadhaj - a student activist from Australia of mixed Malay-New Zealand parentage killed in the massacre - the personal testimonies of the injured American journalists Allan Nairn and Amy Goodman and Australian humanitarian worker Bob Muntz, evoked further international outrage over the brutal acts of the Indonesian military. Around the world people gathered with candles or crosses made of paper-board to protest in front of Indonesian embassies. In Jakarta, for the first time Indonesian students from Salatiga, Bandung, Yogyakarta and Malang joined an open protest organized by the clandestine East Timorese student resistance. In countries where solidarity activism for East Timor had been relatively small, new organizations and activists groups, like the US-based East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN), and the Indonesian Joint Committee in Defence of East Timorese, quickly sprang up.

Reframing the struggle

By this time solidarity activists began more consistently to phrase their appeals in the language of human rights. Initially Fretilin and the East Timor solidarity activists stressed the right to self-determination in their advocacy. As they were closely watching the strategy of the anti-Apartheid movement and other independence struggles however, they learned that it would also be wise to expose the human rights violations in East Timor more explicitly. Moreover, after initial success the chances of obtaining independence through lobbying the UN Committee for Decolonization seemed to be decreasing. Self-determination was ‘out’, human rights was ‘in’, Dutch-Indonesian activist Liem explained:

In New York [at sessions of the UN Decolonization Committee], we initially managed to get about ten Resolutions on East Timor each year. […] But ten years later, around 1985 or 1986, the vote [of the Decolonization Committee] on East Timor’s right to self-determination barely got a majority. We thought: ‘If we continue along this path we will lose’. So at that point, in 1986, we got into a deadlock. Then, we started to focus more on the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, but we never let go of the demand for self-determination.

Liem, 12 December 2012
In the early days of East Timor activism, attempts had been made to frame the Indonesian occupation and the related atrocities committed by Indonesian military as an act of genocide.\footnote{For example, in 1979, TAPOL, a human rights organization in the United Kingdom, published a booklet written by Arnold Kohen and John Taylor, called ‘An Act of Genocide: Indonesia’s Invasion of East Timor’.} But as the international press rarely paid attention to East Timor in those days, the impact remained relatively small. When international media attention for East Timor rose as a consequence of the Santa Cruz massacre however, journalists massively fastened on the genocide discourse. ‘Massacres add up to genocide,’ read the title of an editorial on Tuesday 19 November 1991, in the Australian newspaper \textit{The Age}. ‘Genocide must stop,’ read the subtitle of another newspaper article in \textit{The Australian} of that same day, displaying a photo of a protesting solidarity activist surrounded by carton crosses in front of the Indonesian Embassy in Canberra. ‘The murder, the genocide that’s going on in East Timor cannot be allowed to continue,’ the secretary of the Australian Trades and Labour Council reportedly told the journalist.\footnote{I have studied these newspaper clippings in the CHART archive in Melbourne, Australia.} Thus, Santa Cruz put East Timor on the radar of practically every diplomat and human rights activist.

However, it was not just Santa Cruz that gave East Timor a primary place on the international agenda in the 1990s. The end of the Cold War ‘dramatically undermined’ the Indonesian argument that East Timor was a communist threat, Australian solidarity activist and East Timor expert Paul explained.\footnote{Interview with Paul, 21 November 2012.} Several months after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, ‘the biggest anti-communist of them all’ Pope John Paul II visited East Timor. The Pope’s arrival in Dili was on international television and broadcast all over the world. Although the Pope did not openly support the Timorese independence struggle, his visit sent a clear message to the international community ‘that the Catholic Church was not happy with all that was going on.’\footnote{Interview with Paul, 21 November 2012.} It clearly indicated that the Catholic Church did not see the East Timorese as communists.

Only a year later, in 1990, Mandela was released from prison. When he was subsequently elected president of South Africa in 1994, South Africa was suddenly removed as primary concern from the agenda of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, solidarity activist Liem recalls. ‘When the Apartheid regime fell, suddenly it was East Timor’s turn. We had not planned it that way, but it happened.’\footnote{Interview 13 December 2012, free translation from Dutch.}

Two other events in the 1990s helped to further discredit the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. In 1994, the first Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor was held in Manila, the Philippines. The conference brought together solidarity activists from eleven sub-regions of the greater Asia-Pacific and resulted in the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Coalition for East Timor (APCET).\footnote{According to a report published on the web, the involved (sub)regions were ‘South Asia, Southeast Asia, North Asia, East Asia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia-New Zealand-Papua New Guinea, the Pacific and Indochina.’ The objective of APCET was to ‘coordinate activities and initiatives of the various local and national groups involved in solidarity with East Timor located in the Asia-Pacific region.’ See: \url{http://www.ci.uc.pt/timor/apcet.htm}, accessed on April 22, 2013.} However, what happened during the conference was not so interesting, ‘it
was much more what happened before the conference, the stupidity of the Government of Indonesia!’ Érico, who was one of the conference organizers exclaimed.51

This ‘stupidity’ consisted of a series of tactical blunders that helped to put the world’s spotlight on an event that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. When Indonesia found out that the Philippines would ‘host’ a conference of international solidarity activists for East Timor a diplomatic row broke out between the two countries. To ease the situation the Philippine President, Ramos, took a series of measures that only increased the interest of the international media. First, he referred the matter of the conference to the Supreme Court, but when the Court ruled there was nothing illegal about the APCET conference, he decided to prohibit foreign conference participants from entering the country in a last, but clumsy, attempt to settle the dispute with Indonesia. Among those banned from the conference were well-known and respected international figures like ‘Ramos Horta, an East Timorese resistance leader, Mairead Maguire, a Northern Irish Nobel peace prize winner, and Danielle Mitterrand, wife of the French president’ according to an article in The Economist.52 When these international figures of high standing were banned from attending the conference altogether, the whole world press eagerly jumped on the issue, providing the solidarity activists with an international platform to plead their cause. Thus, a few years following the broad media coverage of the Santa Cruz massacre, Indonesia was again discredited in its position on East Timor in full view of the world.

Whereas the APCET conference further undermined the position of the Government of Indonesia, the second significant event of the 1990s endowed the Timorese resistance with high international status. Realizing the strategic importance of framing East Timor as a prime human rights concern, international solidarity activists started a sophisticated lobby to get Ramos Horta and Bishop Ximenes Belo on the list of Nobel Peace Prize nominees. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 to Fretilin representative Ramos Horta and to the East Timorese Bishop Ximenes Belo - under whose guidance the Catholic Church in East Timor had become a safe house for many independence supporters - turned the East Timorese independence struggle into a highly respected human rights cause. As Fernandes writes:

According to Horta’s long term advisor, Dr Juan Federer, the Nobel Peace Prize ‘was probably the turning point. The Santa Cruz massacre was a turning point, of course, but for the international work, for achieving respectability, the Nobel Prize was it.’ Prior to the Nobel Prize, he says, ‘nobody really wanted to see us.’ […] After the Nobel Peace Prize, ‘all of a sudden all sorts of invitations appeared. Everybody wanted to be associated with Horta.’ (Fernandes 2011a: 151)

Thus slowly, the barriers that stood in the way of East Timorese self-determination were brought down. When the Suharto regime fell in May 1998 activists knew it would only be a

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51 Interview with Dutch-Portuguese solidarity activist Érico, 27 March 2013.
matter of time before East Timor would gain independence, but no-one had expected it to come so soon. The leader of the East Timorese resistance Xanana Gusmao for example, had drafted a plan for peace negotiations that included a ten year transition plan. Consequently, most activists thought in terms of years instead of months. Then suddenly, on 27 January 1999, the Indonesian President, Habibie, announced that the East Timorese people were allowed a referendum on independence. Many publications afterwards sought to understand what compelled Habibie to take this action. While these all remain speculative, most concluded that he experienced East Timor as a ‘pebble in the shoe’ and that as a technocrat he misjudged the sensitivity of the issue within the Indonesian military.

The response among international East Timor activists and members of the Timorese student resistance was one of disbelief and euphoria. As they were convinced that a large majority of the East Timorese people favoured independence they felt as if they had practically already won. At the same time, they realized that now the moment had come to actually seize their victory. Thus, international activists and members of the East Timorese student resistance set to work with zeal and dedication as never before. Under the coordination of IFET (International Federation for East Timor) international activists joined in the organization of the largest international observation mission of the referendum in East Timor, ‘with 140 volunteer observers from two dozen countries living for weeks in every district of East Timor’.

Meanwhile, the security situation in East Timor rapidly deteriorated as pro-Indonesia militia started to intimidate East Timorese people into voting for integration with Indonesia and against independence. On April 6, 1999 at least sixty people who had sought shelter in the Catholic church of the Timorese town Liquica after the abduction of three independence supporters were killed by Indonesian military (Robinson 2003: 195). On 17 April 1999, the very day that the Irish Prime Minister was visiting Dili, another twelve people were killed by pro-Indonesia militia at the house of East Timorese independence leader Manuel Carrascalão (Robinson 2003: 201). Nonetheless, international diplomats involved in drafting the agreement that listed the details of the referendum acceded to the wish of Indonesia to remain responsible for the security prior to and during the ballot. East Timor solidarity activists were furious: ‘How can you ask the fox to guard the chickens?’ many asked in desperation. UN and other international diplomats involved stuck to their plan, however, fearing that Indonesia would withdraw its support for a referendum altogether if they were to enforce an armed UN presence in East Timor. Thus the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) that was assigned to organize and monitor the referendum did so without any international military presence.

53 Interview with Paul, 21 November 2012.
The ballot on 30 August 1999 took place in relative calm. Soon after Kofi Annan had announced that with a 98% voter turnout 78.5% of the East Timorese had voted for independence pro-Indonesia militia started a massive retaliation. East Timorese people became the target of random killings and destruction of property and many fled to the mountains. International journalists and non-governmental organizations were effectively intimidated into leaving the country by militia. When international and national authorities could no longer guarantee the security of the international activists who had joined the IFET observer mission, IFET decided to evacuate most of them on September 4. During the days preceding their evacuation, the IFET observers - many of whom had never experienced conflict situations before - were deeply shocked by the atrocities occurring ‘under their watch’. Having to leave all those East Timorese they had come to protect from the fury of the militia left many with deep emotional scars. In those intense days of shared shock the bond between international activists and the Timorese people became even stronger. As a Japanese solidarity activist wrote, many IFET observers were “Timorized” by the trauma they shared with the East Timorese people during those days, and many returned to help rebuild the new country later on.

Although the IFET observers and remaining journalists could not stop the militia violence, they ensured that the killings and destruction were widely covered by the world press. In response, citizens around the world again took to the streets to protest. This time the international solidarity movement for East Timor that was initially motivated by strong anti-military sentiments felt forced to call for international military intervention. After some torturous international negotiations the International Forces East Timor (INTERFET) landed in Dili on September 20, 1999, to restore peace and security. By that time pro-Indonesian militia had already killed at least 1,200 civilians (Robinson 2003: 1), burned down or ‘otherwise rendered uninhabitable’ ‘roughly 70% of all buildings in the territory’ (Robinson 2003: 44) and forcibly deported about 250,000 civilians into West Timor (Robinson 2003: 42).

III. East Timor solidarity activists: social background and motivation

Upbringing and education

The pluriformity of international East Timor activists compels one to be very careful in drawing too many conclusions about the background of the group as a whole. Some commonalities seem to surface however: a substantial number of activists were born in the late 1950s or 1960s into lower middle class to middle class families. In many cases parents were not politically engaged in any way. There were exceptions, such as the father who was a translator in Indonesia and received many foreigners at home, the mother who did charity work in the

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56 Interview with Megan, a North American solidarity activist who was an IFET observer during the referendum, 5 September 2012.
57 From: ‘Aiming at a world free from intimidation, fear and greed: Asia-Pacific civil societies’ solidarity with the East Timorese to realize their right to self-determination.’ Testimony by Sister Monica Nakamura, 17th March, 2004 given at a public hearing organized by the CAVR.
58 This particularly concerns Indonesian and Timorese activists.
Yogyakarta slums, the father who was actively involved in the Australian Labour Party or the great uncle who was the founder of an aid society for immigrants in the United States. In some cases it was the perceived conservativism or provincialism of parents that motivated children to flee their homes and explore the world.

Categorizing the religious affiliation and upbringing of activists results in an equally mixed picture: although roughly half of the respondents mentioned religion as part of their upbringing, a relatively small number cited religion as a direct source of inspiration for their activism. Many activists did not even mention religion when asked about their upbringing and sources of inspiration unless prompted to do so. Quite a number who had a Catholic or Islamic background no longer practiced their religion and presented and viewed themselves as secular.

What did unite this wide variety of people however, was that the large majority started their activist career as university students. Student associations provided a key platform for intellectual and political discussions and the planning of actions. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the USA, the Young Christian Students Movement (YCS) in Australia, the Dutch political cultural centre ACU, the Asian Student Association (ASA) that would often convene in the Philippines - these all were hubs and breeding grounds for activism. In Indonesia, where the official student associations were closely watched by Indonesian intelligence personnel, students established informal kelompok studi, study groups, outside the university compounds. Here, students and Indonesian intellectuals like George Aditjondro and Arief Budiman would meet to discuss various social and political issues, read social-philosophical work and plan actions.

**Ideological orientation**

The activists found inspiration in various political philosophical works and movements. Some of these were explicitly secular, such as Marxism and the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua. Others were inspired by liberation theology, such as the pedagogy of Paulo Freire or the ‘See, Judge, & Act’ method of the Belgium priest Joseph Cardijn.

In Indonesia, many activists were enchanted by Marxist ideals. ‘Of course Marxism had an impact on me,’ one Indonesian activist said, ‘that was the consequence of the left being forbidden by Suharto. So we felt that was something more interesting. It was a theory about the background, about the people’s struggle, that their consciousness had to be developed.’ This ideology provided a very good framework to explain the issues with which most Indonesian activists were involved before their engagement with East Timor - land issues and the struggle for labour rights. Students organized solidarity actions with farmers whose land was being confiscated for governmental projects or who were subjected to transmigration policies. Later on, Marxism also offered an explanation for the East Timor issue. ‘We thought that what happened in East Timor was part of the New Order who used a western imperialist agenda. The annexation of East Timor could not be seen separately from the imperialism of Suharto

59 Interview with Indonesian solidarity activist Budi, 30 July 2012.
At the time such thinking was very strong in Indonesia. Some Indonesian activists became quite radical Marxists, like the members of the Partai Rakyat Demokratik (PRD - Peoples Democratic Party) who suffered a serious crackdown in 1996 when the Indonesian government accused them of subversion and arrested a considerable number of their members. They felt encouraged by the International Communist Conference in 1920, in which Lenin called upon all communists to support the liberation struggle of colonized peoples. Revolution in colonized countries would help to speed up the broader historical task of communists to overthrow imperialism in the world. PRD members found confirmation in the fact that support from US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger for the Indonesian invasion of East Timor clearly resulted from the Cold War agenda (Wilson 2010: 21-24; 33).

Another socialist notion shared by many East Timor solidarity activists was the idea that if economic structures do not change, suffering would persist. 'We have to hold onto our worldview,' said Indonesian activist Budi. 'The economy should become more socialist. That is our social experiment.'

As well as changing the capitalist economic system, activists strongly believed in the importance of political education and awareness-building amongst the masses. Here they found inspiration in the critical theory of the Frankfurter Schule. In Indonesia, the book, *Dilema Usaha Manusia Rasonal, Kritik Masyarakat Modern oleh Max Horkheimer dalam Rangka Sekolah Frankfurt* (1983) by Indonesian scholar in philosophy Sindhunata, was widely read and discussed. It said that not only the economic structures governing the world sustained the oppression of the poor and marginalized, but that the cultural values and views internalized by oppressed peoples led them to accept and reinforce their status quo. Only through critical and structural analysis of social-political and cultural processes sustaining human deception would people eventually be liberated.

Closely related to this secular theory on human deception and liberation was the theory of Paulo Freire. His *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970) provided a method to break through the 'human deception' of the masses through the building of conscientização or 'critical consciousness'. Through political education people would change from passive objects of oppression into active 'historical subjects' that would start a cultural revolution by overthrowing old cultural power systems.

Freire, who called himself both a lover of Marx and Christ, inspired both secular and religious East Timor activists. Fretilin's ideology was known to build on Freire. Prior to the Indonesian occupation youth cadres were recruited by Fretilin to provide literacy training and political education to people in the villages. Outside Timor and Indonesia, Australian and Portuguese activists had a particular interest in Freire too. Portugal activists provided similar

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60 Interview with Indonesian solidarity activist Rafendi, 1 August 2012.
61 Interview with Indonesian solidarity activist Budi, 30 July 2012.
62 Free translation: 'The dilemma of the rational human endeavour: a critique of modern society by Max Horkheimer in the context of the Frankfurter Schule'.
political education to Portuguese peasants. For Australian activists who were active in the Young Christian Students Movement (YCW), Freire’s teaching closely matched the ‘see, judge & act’ method invented by the YCW founder and Belgium priest, Joseph Cardijn. Cardijn ‘believed that young people could, and must, be the ones who took action in their daily lives to bring about the Kingdom of God,’ according to an information leaflet of the Australian Young Christian Students Movement. As Cliff, an Australian activist, related:

We went through a pedagogy and educational programme which is very similar to Paolo Freire’s ‘action-reflection’ and it was called ‘see, judge, act’. So you had a regular weekly meeting and you looked at social issues […] One of the first political actions that I took was looking at how apprentices were being treated at work and so on. So you look at the situation, you make a judgment about whether that’s a good thing or not. In Catholic terms you use the Catholic bible or gospel to do that. The question that was behind that was -what would Jesus think of this? - you know. And then you decide about what you are gonna do. […] It’s education through action: see, judge, act.

Cliff, 30 October 2012

What united the worldviews of Marx, Horkheimer, Freire and Cardijn, despite of their differences, was the conviction that social change was possible through a people’s revolution. Change was the natural outcome of an historical process that exposed oppressive regimes and would liberate people through awareness building and revolution. In this perspective, the armed liberation and decolonization struggles as fought in Southern Africa, Central and Latin America and East Timor were regarded as good and justified armed struggles.

**Activism as a calling**

Activism was not a part-time or temporary occupation for East Timor solidarity activists: it was a **calling**, something they signed on to for life. It was about ‘living our principles, not just demonstrating for them but to live for them’, as one North American activist explained. Some Indonesian activists expressed and endorsed their ‘conversion’ to activism with an oath. In 1989 Indonesian student activists from the Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta paraphrased the Youth Pledge invented by Indonesian nationalists in 1928. The oath pledged to build ‘a land without oppression,’ ‘a people who love justice’ and ‘a language free from lies.’ A Dutch solidarity activist got a tattoo in memory of a labour struggle that she had supported. To her, activism was for life and her tattoo ensured that neither she nor her environment would ever forget that.

Notwithstanding their strong engagement, most activists did not ‘convert’ to activism **because** of the particular issue of East Timor. They had already made a commitment to become an activist and then happened to stumble upon East Timor. The coordinator of the US-based East Timor Action Network (ETAN) commented when talking about ETAN activists, ‘there’s

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not many I can think of for whom East Timor was their first activism. Some, but not many.’ ‘If I weren’t doing this, I would be doing something else,’ another US-activist said, ‘I defined myself as an activist for positive social change.’ ‘Every story of individual suffering affects me as a person and East Timor has a lot of them,’ an Australian activist explained, ‘but there are many other stories [of suffering]. I might have been concerned about the Basques or… But I happened to have a historical connection with the Timorese, and that’s my story.’

The ‘stumbling upon’ emerged as a theme with variations. Some American and Australian activists happened to hear about East Timor because they were involved in the nuclear free Asia-Pacific movement and heard of East Timor at a regional meeting. Others were exchange students, priests or travel guides in Indonesia and heard some stories about ‘TimTim’ (Timor Timur in Indonesian) from locals.

The Timorese political prisoners in Cipinang were an important eye opener for Indonesian activists. Before their active engagement with Timorese political prisoners, Indonesian pro-democracy activists had had some slight awareness that something was wrong in East Timor, but somehow they did not translate that into action. ‘At university, I already forgot about the TimTim issue, we were more involved with the problems in Indonesia,’ Faisal, an Indonesian activist said who had been aware there was war in East Timor. This changed when in the mid to late 1980s, Indonesian pro-democracy activists were held in the same prison as the Timorese political prisoners, among whom the captured leader of the armed resistance, Xanana Gusmao. The infamous Cipinang prison in Jakarta became a place of strategic importance to the Indonesian pro-democracy and Timorese independence struggle. The prison regime was not too strict and as prisoners were allowed to read, meet and organize soccer competitions, they had plenty of time to discuss strategies and build alliances. To Indonesian pro-democracy activists, the realization that both they and the Timorese were fighting against the Suharto regime and that collaboration could work as a ‘force multiplier’ convinced them to become East Timor activists. As Indonesian solidarity activist Agus recalled:

> When I met Xanana in prison, I became more strongly motivated to participate in the solidarity movement for East Timor. Xanana said to me: ‘The pro-democracy struggle in Indonesia and the pro-independence struggle in Timor Leste have different goals, but the same enemy.’ These are very powerful words in my view. […] So we then started to have more joint demonstrations.

Agus, 4 July 2012

The sense that latching onto the East Timor issue would be advantageous was shared by

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66 Interview with Jack, North American solidarity activist, 3 October 2011.
67 Interview with Megan, North American solidarity activist, 5 September 2012.
68 Interview with Matt, Australian solidarity activist, 26 November 2012.
69 Interview with Indonesian solidarity activist Faisal, 7 August 2012.
70 In Indonesia, this line perjuangan pro-demokrasi Indonesia dan pro-kemerdekaan Timor Leste mempunyai tujuan berbeda tetapi musuh yang sama, was regularly repeated by activists and virtually became a slogan for the East Timor solidarity movement.
solidarity activists from the United States. ‘It was not so much because of East Timor. It was because it was an opportunity to change US policy’, Greg, a North American activist who was protesting against the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific at the time, explained. US solidarity activists protested against the military support given by their government to the Suharto regime. Not only did Indonesian military receive regular training from US forces, the US was also its major arms supplier. The military ties between the US and Indonesia became especially embarrassing when at the Santa Cruz massacre, two US journalists, Amy Goodman and Allan Nairn, were threatened by Indonesian military using US weapons. Jack, a North American activist, recalled that Amy and Allan ‘talked over and over about the US rifles being pointed at their heads by Indonesian military’.71 In similar terms, an Australian activist raged over the Timor Gap; a treaty between the Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas and Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, in which they agreed to jointly exploit oil located in the occupied territories of the Timor Sea.

It was the Australian complicity that was the special factor, over the oil. That was just disgusting, to see Gareth Evans flying over [the Timor Sea in a jet plane, toasting over the Timor Gap] with Ali Alatas. That was just a nauseating image. I wrote a song about Gareth actually at some point: it so annoyed me. Yeah, that was appalling. And then Australia’s de jure recognition of the [Indonesian] occupation was still further than any other country had gone. So there was this rank, rank complicity of Australia in the 90s…Well, and the 80s and the 70s.

Geoffrey, 12 December 2012

The complicity in the atrocities in East Timor fuelled the activists’ anger against the ‘imperialist’ and ‘hypocritical’ Western policies that prioritized military and economic self-interest over the suffering of the East Timorese people. Overall, East Timor solidarity activists wanted to build a world that would live up to its promises of democracy, economic justice and human rights. Empathy with the suffering of oppressed people might have been the initial source of their motivation, but bringing relief to human suffering was not their primary goal. The East Timor activists were not humanitarians; they were social and political activists with revolutionary aspirations to change the world. Poverty and violent repression of poor and marginalized peoples were seen as a token that something was structurally wrong with the current political world system. In the view of activists, the brutal oppression of the East Timorese people by a military dictatorship backed by Western states was just another example of this.

71 Interview with North American solidarity activist Jack, 3 October 2011.
IV. Influencing power through networking and grass-roots mobilization

In many respects, the international solidarity movement for East Timor that arose in the late 1970s and flourished in the 1990s belongs to what Alex de Waal (2003) calls the second generation of human rights activists. It is a generation that emphasizes the importance of free speech and focuses on the publication of reports to 'blame and shame' those who have violated human rights, and spur governments to take action (De Waal 2003). It is a generation that developed loosely organized activist groups into increasingly professional networks, with activists that became experts in fundraising, advocacy or the media.

The international East Timor solidarity movement excelled in international networking and mass mobilization (cf. Braithwaite, Charlesworth and Soares 2012: 305ff). Again and again international representatives of the solidarity movement would travel to New York from various places around the world to speak at the recurrent East Timor hearings before the UN Special Committee on Decolonization. Sometimes there were so many international representatives that the hearing lasted for two or three days. Messages would be carefully checked and orchestrated by the Timorese resistance leaders, who either gave instructions from the guerrilla base in the East Timorese mountains, or - after the leader of the armed resistance Xanana Gusmao was imprisoned - from the Cipinang prison in Jakarta. José Ramos-Horta, the permanent representative of Fretilin at the United Nations, had a central role in coordinating the activities of the Timorese resistance and the international solidarity movement. He travelled incessantly, meeting and speaking in Australia, Portugal, Mozambique, Japan and various other countries to gather international support and exchange ideas with the various members of the Timorese resistance who had fled the country.

The international networking and mass mobilization was greatly enhanced by the outstanding use of internet by the East Timor solidarity movement. Making good use of globalization, they were among the first international social movements that used internet technology for 'revolutionary' purposes - something that would become a trademark of the global movements for economic justice and social change in the 21st century. As early as October 1990 John MacDougall, a former staff member of the US Embassy in Jakarta, launched the online news service *Apakabar* (meaning 'how are you?' or 'what's new?'). The online magazine featured critical news updates on the situation in Indonesia and East Timor that would never pass through the censorship of the Suharto regime. Contributions consisted of, among other things, translated newspaper articles from Portugal, press releases of various East Timor solidarity organizations around the world, criticisms of the Suharto regime by Indonesian intellectuals and contributions from resistance leader Xanana Gusmao. When, in the mid-1990s, technical improvements opened up *Apakabar* to the Indonesian public, the

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72 Upon the establishment of the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) in 1988, Ramos-Horta, following the example of Xanana Gusmao, resigned as a member of Fretilin but continued to represent the united Timorese resistance.

number of Indonesian readers and contributors increased dramatically, especially as most postings would be made anonymously to guarantee the security of Indonesian authors (Lim 2005: 101). Another main hub for international distributions of news on East Timor and calls for action was the website of the US-based solidarity organization ETAN (East Timor and Indonesia Action Network). ETAN became renowned for having an impressive number of international mailing-list subscribers and for holding one of the best internet archives on East Timor.

The international networking was also grounded in the myriad of grass-root organizations and larger non-governmental organizations that had constituents among church groups, labour organizations, student associations, peace groups and so forth. The wide-spread and well-functioning network of local solidarity groups became apparent when, in response to the militia violence in 1999, thousands of protesters could be mobilized at a moment’s notice. In the USA ETAN asked its supporters to telephone the White House to demand international intervention in East Timor. The massive response to this appeal caused the disconnection of several of the White House’s telephone lines. In Australia tens of thousands responded to calls from various East Timor solidarity groups to join in national demonstrations in Melbourne and Sydney on 11 September 1999.74 The massive turnout became the fulcrum that changed the position of the Australian government, which until then had been a strong ally of Indonesia and against any major international military intervention. Seeing the overwhelming number of protesters however, the Australian governing party changed its mind at the last minute. Fearing the results of the next national elections, it eventually decided to support the call for international military intervention in East Timor.

On a smaller scale, there were activists well schooled in the skill of staging small but photogenic street performances and surprise actions and these were eagerly covered by the media and thereby reached a much wider audience. In the Netherlands for example, Dutch activists and Timorese exiles occupied the head quarters of a Dutch governmental coalition party in The Hague to protest against the treatment of East Timorese activists who had leaped the fence of the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta.75 Their action was covered by all major Dutch press agencies, including the national television news. It even managed to disrupt a secret ministerial EU-meeting because the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was attending, needed to leave the meeting to be consulted on the matter. In Australia the East Timorese diaspora showed their artistic skills in street theatres and dance and music performances that narrated the fate of the East Timorese peoples again and again.

Overall, the style and method of advocacy used by international activists for East Timor is typical of transnational advocacy movements, movements that ‘mobilize their (transnational) constituencies […] often through the use of protest or collective action’ (Khagram, Riker, and

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75 This case will be described in detail in chapter five.
Sikkink 2002: 8). In this respect, the advocacy of East Timor activists differs from that of the Responsibility to Protect-coalition that will be discussed next.

V. The ‘global mood’ of the 1990s

The human rights rise to power

Following the first generation of international human rights activists in the 1970s, the next generation arose in the 1990s when human rights organizations established strong relations with governments and politicians, beginning in the United States. In 1977 President Jimmy Carter had already made human rights a central theme of his foreign policy (Keys 2014; Hopgood 2013). Under President Clinton, many human rights activists took seats in the administration (De Waal 2003). In a complementary fashion governments and politicians adopted human rights as a moral framework to legitimize (foreign) policy decisions. It was the time when ‘the human rights generation came to power’ (De Waal 2003: 480). With that power came the dilemmas over the ethics and the identity of the movement, one that, De Waal suggests, became most visible in the debate around humanitarian military interventions (De Waal 2003: 480-81). Barnett makes a similar observation:

Humanitarianism had always struggled to police the boundaries between itself and the world of politics and power, but beginning in the 1990s many aid agencies developed something akin to an open borders policy, operating with the assumption that they could humanize the world before the world politicized them. (Barnett 2011: 168)

In this second surge of human rights activism non-governmental organizations lost the monopoly of human rights principles. Though many non-governmental organizations tried to maintain their position as the bulwarks of human rights, they had to take into account that many politicians, academics and even military stepped into the arena to embrace human rights values as their own. Human rights had become mainstream. Especially its ‘militant’ form of defending basic human rights in the midst of war, or through international military interventions, seemed to spark the imagination of many. The ‘right to (humanitarian) intervention’ or droit d’ingérence as it was first called upon its invention by the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner in 1987, resonated well at a time that humanitarian crises increasingly resulted from human-made disasters. In 1999 in response to the NATO intervention in Kosovo, British Prime Minister Tony Blair launched a similar notion with his ‘doctrine for the international community’, arguing ‘that a more interconnected world set foreign policies that consider not just interests but also values’ (Barnett 2011: 187). It was not only politicians who were captivated by this notion of ‘humanitarian intervention’. Academics and military were equally drawn to the doctrine, which added new dimensions to their professional areas of work.
The ‘mainstreaming’ of humanitarianism and human rights altered the nature of humanitarian and human rights organizations. Now that they found allies in governments, they started to work much more closely with governmental policy makers and members of parliament. Moreover, they accepted structural governmental funding that enabled their development into full professional organizations with cadres of paid staff who had received academic education and developed expertise in law, lobby and media. Research became the key tool to support that lobby and media work, and many organizations either opened specialized departments for research, or established partnerships with academic institutes. As a consequence of this professionalization, the emphasis of the work shifted from ‘doing good’ to ‘doing it good’. Staff members were first and foremost hired because of their proven expertise. Activism turned from a calling into a career.

As part of the professionalization and expansion, humanitarian and human rights organizations increasingly began to operate according to a market model (Hopgood 2008). In response to augmenting competition on the humanitarian market, the Oxfams, CAREs, Save the Childrens and other major international NGOs decided to establish international federations, apply corporate branding and launch popular mobilization and fundraising campaigns. With the gradual acceptance of larger sums of government funding and the decision to advocate for the use of force if deemed necessary, humanitarian and human rights also took a more pragmatic approach to principles of independence and non-violence - principles that were considered key values during the first surge of human rights activism in the 1970s.

The ‘human rights take-over’

In the 1970s human rights and humanitarian organizations still had their own more or less identifiable DNAs. In the 1990s however, human rights went global, occupying every ‘nook and cranny of world affairs’ (Barnett 2011: 167). This time, it was the end of the Cold War that caused the surge of interest. With the departure of Communism a decade of unbridled hope arose among the expanding human rights community that now the time had come to bring liberty and human rights to the entire global community. In 1993 the largest ever World Conference on Human Rights was attended by one hundred and seventy-one UN member state representatives and eight hundred NGOs, and resulted in the establishment of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The merge of development, humanitarianism and human rights reached a new level when in 1992 UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali spoke of the need to link relief and development (Barnett 2011: 168) and in 1997, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called for the mainstreaming of human rights in all programmes and policies of UN agencies - a policy that was later termed the ‘rights based approach’76.

Following these policy developments, the large majority of international NGOs that had previously focused on development cooperation, also took on humanitarian assistance, thereby expanding into what became called ‘double-mandate’ organizations. In addition,

humanitarian and double-mandate organizations developed branches for human rights advocacy and introduced a rights-based approach into their programming. From this time onwards, it became practically impossible to discern between humanitarian, human rights and development organizations, as the majority of the larger NGOs provided a mix of these interventions, with the (human) rights-based approach as the dominant rationale. Humanitarianism and human rights were most profoundly intertwined in the formulation of the ‘right to life’. The ‘human rights takeover’ had been completed and from now on would guide international relations, so it was hoped.

Gradually however, the realization dawned that the genocide in Rwanda and the ethnic cleansings in former Yugoslavia were no mere aberrations in history. Civil wars in which violence against civilians and mass atrocities became a tactic and pattern appeared to be the ‘new wars’ of the 21st century (Kaldor 1999). The first major response of humanitarian and human rights organizations to this sudden upsurge of ethnic cleansings and systematic state violence against civilians was the massive campaign for the establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC) that would prosecute and try those responsible for mass atrocities. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the campaign that started in 1995 mobilized around 800 non-governmental organizations and came to a successful closure when the Rome Statute was endorsed by the diplomatic conference in 1998.

Establishing an international court however, was not enough to halt the increasing number of civil or intra-state wars. Already in 1992 UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had launched his Agenda for Peace, thereby marking the onset of a rapidly expanding new branch in humanitarianism called peace building. Under this new discipline, policy makers offered two main approaches to deal with the rising threats to civilians - protection and prevention (Barnett 2011: 209). Protection focused on safeguarding of rights of civilians in armed conflicts, as guaranteed in international humanitarian law, refugee law and guidelines for the treatment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Prevention focused on the institutionalization of instruments for peace, human rights and democracy through state and peace building. Initially, humanitarian and human rights organizations advocated the protection of civilians in armed conflict by promoting adherence to international law and other normative humanitarian frameworks. As non-state armed groups appeared relatively insensitive to such pressure however, the use of military force in UN peace keeping and peace enforcement missions became increasingly popular among humanitarians and human rights activists alike.

The sudden spiralling of civil wars and ethnic cleansings beginning in the early 1990s most decisively and profoundly changed the moral sentiments within the humanitarian and human rights community. If one had to pinpoint this major disillusionment with humanity and the consequent change in orientation of humanitarianism and human rights to a particular moment in time, there is one day in which this all seemed to come together. It is the moment in which the atrocities and UN-sanctioned military intervention in East Timor were directly related to the need to find a new international norm to respond to mass atrocities.
VI. The Responsibility to Protect-coalition: a history

On 20 September 1999 Kofi Annan addressed the UN General Assembly in New York in a speech that set the path toward the development of the responsibility to protect. He asked from the Assembly ‘a willingness to think anew about how the United Nations responds to the political, human rights and humanitarian crises affecting so much of the world’, about ‘the dilemma of what has been called humanitarian intervention’ and about entering ‘an era where strictly traditional notions of sovereignty can no longer do justice to the aspirations of peoples everywhere to attain their fundamental freedoms’ (United Nations 1999). On that very day the International Forces East Timor (INTERFET) landed in East Timor to halt the militia violence following the referendum. Kofi Annan explicitly referred to East Timor in his speech, calling it both a reason to develop a new norm for humanitarian interventions and an example of how such an intervention should look in the future:

Our reflections on these critical questions derive not only from the events of last year, but from a variety of challenges that confront us today, most urgently in East Timor. […]

Let me say that the Council’s prompt and effective action in authorizing a multinational force for East Timor reflects precisely the unity of purpose that I have called for today.

Secretary General Kofi Annan’s address to the General Assembly, 20 September 1999

Speaking to the UN member states about the need to reframe the notion of sovereignty in the light of humanitarian interventions, Kofi Annan did so knowing that for the development and acceptance of any further ideas he was in great need of help from outside the UN to further this highly sensitive issue, as he admitted in an interview:

There are certain issues that are better done outside […] take a look at the intervention issue. I couldn’t have done it inside. It would have been very divisive. And the member-states were very uncomfortable because, as an organization, sovereignty [of UN member-states] is our bedrock and bible - here is someone coming with ideas which are almost challenging it. So I had to sow the seed and let them digest it but take the study outside and then bring in the results for them to look at it. (Jolly, Richard, Louise Emmerij and Thomas G. Weiss eds., 2009: 175-76)

He had to wait for a while for the idea to be picked up but then, in early 2000, ‘Canadian foreign affairs officials Don Hubert, Heidi Hulan and Jill Sinclair began advocating an ‘International Commission on Humanitarian Intervention’ (Bellamy 2008: 620). Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs who had also been instrumental in the creation of the international treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines (Ottawa Treaty), latched onto the idea. He persuaded the Canadian Government to put in money and staff and helped
to establish the Commission, just before he retired from office in September 2000. Kofi Annan then ‘sanctified’ the Commission under the slightly altered - and less sensitive - name of International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS).

The ICISS was assigned to deal with ‘the question of when, if ever, it is appropriate for states to take coercive - and in particular military - action, against another state for the purpose of protecting people at risk in that other state’ (ICISS 2001: vii). It should help ‘to build new international consensus on how to respond to massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law’ (ICISS 2001: 81). The Commission was co-chaired by the Algerian diplomat and Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General Mohamed Sahnoun, and by former Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Gareth Evans who had by then become the President of the International Crisis Group (ICG) - an international non-governmental organization for early conflict warning. Although twelve commissioners had been appointed to the ICISS, the actual drafting of the ICISS report was largely done by Gareth Evans, Ramesh Thakur (an Indian scholar in international relations) and by Michael Ignatieff (a Canadian scholar in history and moral philosophy) with Gareth Evans as ‘the driving force throughout’ the whole process.

From that time onwards Gareth Evans became the principal advocate of the R2P-coalition.

In his book *The responsibility to protect: ending mass atrocity crimes once and for all* (2008) Gareth Evans himself cites the genocide in Cambodia as a core motivation driving his strong commitment to promoting the responsibility to protect. In 1968 he visited Cambodia as a young student and made many Cambodian friends. Only a couple of years later ‘every last one of them died […] under Pol Pot’s murderous genocidal regime. […] the knowledge, and the memory, of what must have happened to those young men and women is something that haunts me to this day’ (Evans 2008: 1; 2).

Evans’s leading role in the promotion of the responsibility to protect stands in stark contrasts to the role he played as Australia’s Foreign Minister (1988-1996) in the East Timor case. As we have seen above, many East Timor activists came to despise Gareth Evans for what they regarded as his ‘rank complicity’ in the human rights violations committed during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. They mentioned Evans’s strong support for the Indonesian government, the trade deal he made with Indonesia to jointly exploit oil located in the Timor Sea, and his playing down of the Santa Cruz massacre by calling it ‘an aberration, not an act of state policy’ (Fernandes 2011b). Gareth Evans himself became furious when at a conference in 2012 a co-panelist suggested that ‘the principal advocate’ for the Responsibility to protect ‘had, as foreign minister of Australia, supported far greater repression by the Indonesian regime against the East Timorese’. In Evans’s own view, his position in the

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77 The ICISS also received funding from various private foundations in the US and from the Governments of Switzerland and the United Kingdom (ICISS 2001: 85).
78 Interview with a former member of the ICISS, 22 November 2011.
79 ‘Technically, the mass killings in Cambodia should be called ‘politicide’ because the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide does not cover violent prosecution of groups with a particular political affiliation.
East Timor issue as Australia’s Foreign Minister was a matter of *Realpolitik*. Convinced that independence for East Timor was unachievable, he reasoned that the East Timorese people would be better served by continuing a dialogue with the Suharto regime to try and improve the living conditions of the Timorese. Indonesia watchers like Adam Schwarz shared the view that under the Suharto regime independence for East Timor was very unlikely (Schwarz 1999: 228). Whatever their opinion on Evans’s position in the East Timor issue, colleagues and critics alike agreed that he made tireless efforts to promote the responsibility to protect, and was pivotal to its endorsement and implementation by the UN.

During a meeting in New Delhi in November 2000 ‘around a small table in a hotel’, it was Gareth Evans who proposed to call the new doctrine the “responsibility to protect”. The phrase was inspired by the term ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ that was coined by the Sudanese diplomat Francis Deng in a report that he wrote as UN Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons in 1996. When, building on Deng’s concept, Gareth Evans proposed the term “responsibility to protect” to the other commissioners, they got ‘quite excited’ as they all felt this was the phrase that would take the notion of humanitarian intervention away from its framing as a ‘right to intervene’.

The *droit d’ingérence* or ‘right to [humanitarian] intervention that had been introduced in 1987 by French Foreign Minister and MSF-founder Bernard Kouchner had been widely used to justify humanitarian interventions in the 1990s. However, the emphasis in this term on the right of the intervening party provoked anger among formerly colonized countries who perceived it as a pretext for neo-colonial intrusion by the big (Western) powers. The commissioners badly needed a notion that could bridge the supposedly irreconcilable positions of sovereignty versus humanitarian intervention and the ‘responsibility to protect’ seemed to do the trick. It shifted the emphasis from right to responsibility and from intervention to protection - as a former ICISS commissioner explained:

> it took the ownership away from the intervener and put the emphasis back on the duty of the sovereign to protect. Which then in turn put the emphasis on prevention, rather than on military intervention and allowed us to do the prevent, react, rebuild.

Interview with a former member of the ICISS, 22 November 2011

Indeed, the other main contribution for which the ICISS report has been praised by R2P-advocates, was its ‘holistic’ approach to mass atrocities: for example its proposal to not only develop better ‘reaction’ instruments to effectively halt mass atrocities, but to also invest in the *prevention* of mass atrocities and in the *rebuilding* of societies recovering from mass atrocities. Also key elements in the report were the ‘precautionary criteria’ for military intervention that

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81 Interview with Gareth Evans in 1990 by Australian radio, accessed in CHART archive, Melbourne.
82 Interview with a former member of the ICISS, 22 November 2011.
were largely based on those of the ‘just war’ of right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospect of success (ICISS 2001: 35-37). Of course, all these ideas were not accepted on the spot and many debates and drafts were discussed before consensus was reached among the commissioners. By the end of August 2001 however, the commissioners were able to finalize a report ‘that had in it not a single line of recorded dissent’ (Evans 2008: 4).

The ‘war on terror’
When the commissioners finalized the ICISS-report in August 2001, they thought that they were ‘were facing forward to a new world of humanitarian intervention in the 21st century’. After the endorsement of the Statute for an International Criminal Court in 1998 by 120 UN member states, the responsibility to protect seemed to complete the human rights apparatus with an international policing force, and pave the way for the successful global enforcement of human rights in the coming century. Ten days after the finalization of the ICISS-report however, the commissioners woke up ‘to a whole different world’.

When two passenger aeroplanes flew into the New York Twin Towers and killed nearly 3,000 people, ‘nine-eleven’ did not only take away the momentum for the launch of the ICISS-report: the ‘war on terror’ that was soon ‘declared’ afterwards by US President Bush decisively ended the 1990s decade of hope for human rights. The anti-terror laws that were swiftly issued by the United States and many other Western and non-Western legislatures severely restricted the human rights of citizens. Counter-terrorism measures introduced far-reaching breaches of privacy and liberty of movement, extension of pre-charge detention periods and mechanisms to cut off financial sources of non-governmental organizations that were suspected of channelling money to ‘terrorist’ organizations.

Most harmful to the concept of the responsibility to protect was the pre-emptive strike doctrine that was launched by President Bush to justify the US military interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). This so-called ‘Bush doctrine’ initially argued for the right of the United States to strike pre-emptively against countries that harbour terrorist groups. In an attempt to win more of the public’s sympathy, it was later embellished by a call to promote democratic regime change. Thus, the US and its allies ‘sold’ the military intervention in Afghanistan to the public by presenting it as the liberation of the Afghan people - in particular women - from the repressive Taliban regime. Likewise, the invasion of Iraq was framed as the liberation of the Iraqi people from the ‘brutal dictatorship’ of Saddam Hussein. These developments were fuel for R2P-critics who feared that the institutionalization of the responsibility to protect would pave the way for a new ‘humanitarian imperialism’ that would use human rights as a pretext for militarily enforced regime change, according to a fierce R2P-opponent (Bricmont 2006).

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84 Interview with former member of the ICISS, November 22, 2011.
85 Interview with former member of the ICISS, November 22, 2011.
*Engaging civil society*

The attention given to the ICISS report *The Responsibility to Protect* (2001), which was officially launched in December 2001, largely disappeared in the chaos following ‘9/11’. In July 2002, William Pace, the Executive Director of the World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP) was in London when he received a phone call from a Canadian diplomat. Pace had gained respect as the Convener of the sizeable NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) that had successfully lobbied for the UN endorsement of the Rome Statute. The Canadian government that had sponsored the ICISS wondered if William Pace could repeat this ‘trick’ and launch a project to promote the responsibility to protect with the aid of civil society.

William Pace was interested. The Institute for Global Policy of the World Federalist Movement had been established as a non-governmental organization in 1954 ‘to seek to invest legal and political authority in world institutions to deal with problems which can only be treated adequately at the global level’.

The promotion of the responsibility to protect fitted that mission very closely. However, simply copying the model used to promote the International Criminal Court was not possible:

The ICC had an intergovernmental process attached to it which allowed [us] over a period of years to build a[n NGO] Coalition. The responsibility to protect was being promoted as an international report of a high level commission and was not subject to any intergovernmental process.

William Pace, 29 November 2011

So far, R2P had been the outcome of a state-led, isolated process and first needed to be presented to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for them to decide whether they wanted to promote the doctrine at all. Pace decided to test the water with some ‘humanitarian and human rights groups’ first, for ‘if they don’t buy into R2P, then it’s not going anywhere anyway’. Thus in 2002 civil society consultations on the ICISS-report were held in Washington, Geneva, Ottawa, New York and during a side event of the World Social Forum in Brazil. Overall, civil society organizations demonstrated a real concern with the focus of the ICISS report on military intervention. They did recognize a need to create more political will to halt mass atrocities, but were wary of R2P being misused as a humanitarian veil for military ‘big power’ interventions. Yet, if the emphasis were to be on the prevention of mass atrocities instead of on military intervention, the majority of consulted NGOs were happy to promote R2P.

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87 The various reports of these civil society consultations can be downloaded on the website of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP), [http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/) (accessed October 16, 2014).
Encouraged by this response and the fact that two major NGOs, Oxfam International and Human Rights Watch, were willing to promote R2P, WFM-IGP then launched the Responsibility to Protect - Engaging Civil Society Project in 2003. The R2P-Engaging Civil Society Project started very much as an awareness project ‘to ensure R2P was not understood as military intervention only’.

Meanwhile, Kofi Annan and Gareth Evans continued to promote the responsibility to protect inside the UN, in what looks like a well-directed play for two. In late 2003 Kofi Annan established the UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to ‘recommend clear and practical measures for ensuring effective collective action, based upon a rigorous analysis of future threats to peace and security’. Gareth Evans was appointed to be a member of this Panel and ensured that the endorsement of the responsibility to protect was among the Panel’s recommendations published late 2004. Secretary General Kofi Annan then again took over by adopting the recommendations in his ambitious report to the General Assembly In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all, which presented the proposals for discussion at the 2005 World Summit.

The 2005 World Summit, as it was called, marked the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. It was designed to tackle pressing global issues of poverty, security and peace building, and to endorse substantial institutional reforms of the UN. However, the signs of the pre-summit negotiations, where member states were supposed to reach a certain degree of consensus on all the ambitious plans, were somewhat discouraging. ‘World summit on UN’s future heads for chaos,’ read the header of an article in The Guardian. According to the British newspaper, there were ‘still more than 200 points of disagreement’ on the draft outcome document that had to be endorsed by the World Summit. The responsibility to protect was but one of the many items that was to be discussed. Yet, somehow, while many of the larger issues on the agenda failed to pass, paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Outcome Report on the responsibility to protect survived ‘almost unscathed’ (Evans 2008: 47).

It is unclear what precisely caused this major victory for the responsibility to protect. As some R2P-observers suggested, there might have been an element of luck in that the responsibility to protect was merely a footnote among all the major issues on the Summit’s agenda. A more explicit push however, was given by a group of non-governmental R2P-advocates.

Early 2005, the R2P-Engaging Civil Society Project and the involved NGOs began a strategic lobby aiming for the endorsement of R2P at the upcoming World Summit in September. Apart from the R2P-Engaging Civil Society Project, the international NGOs Oxfam International, Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group and Refugees International were most actively engaged in lobbying the UN. Policy and advocacy officers of these NGOs

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88 Interview with former R2P-CSP staff member, March 4, 2010.
had bilateral meetings with UN member states seeking to influence them prior to the pre-
summit negotiations. They wrote letters to the UN ambassadors asking them to endorse R2P.
They analyzed which member states were friends, foes or on the fence when it concerned
supporting R2P. ‘There was a lot of naming and shaming’ of member states who were hostile
to R2P, at joint press conferences of WFM-IGP and Oxfam International, Christine, a former
staff member recalled. Yet, there was close cooperation between NGO-proponents and R2P-
friendly UN member states too:

They [representatives of UN member states] would ask for comments on the draft
[paragraphs on R2P in the World Summit Outcome Document]. And some governments
- I cannot name them because we still have relations with them - would ask us [NGOs],
‘this country is against it [R2P], can you do something about it?’

Christine, 4 March 2010

The R2P-Engaging Civil Society Project mobilized civil society organizations to co-sign a letter
demanding support for R2P from all UN member states.91 Many of these eighty seven NGOs
were relatively small and unknown, but the fact that the signatories came from every region of
the world, including from countries recovering from mass atrocity crimes, was likely to have
made some impression on the ambassadors to the UN. In his double role as the chair of the
ICISS and the president of the International Crisis Group, Gareth Evans delivered lectures and
speeches to promote R2P at various seminars and events around the world. All these lobby
efforts eventually seemed to pay off when the UN General Assembly endorsed the following
two paragraphs as part of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document:

Responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing
and crimes against humanity

138. Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from
genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility
entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate
and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with
it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to
exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early
warning capability.

139. The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility
to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance
with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help to protect populations from genocide,
war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are
prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security
Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case

org/files/Dear_Ambassador.pdf, retrieved May 27, 2013
basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We stress the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and its implications, bearing in mind the principles of the Charter and international law. We also intend to commit ourselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out.


Though some R2P-proponents, among whom Gareth Evans, regretted that the Outcome Document did not adopt the ‘precautionary criteria’ for military intervention as stipulated in the ICISS report, quite a number of R2P-advocates view(ed) paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Report as an improvement of the ICISS-report, in terms of the clarity of the concept:

One of the striking things about 2005 was the very clear language that was used. The first line of paragraph 138, [conveys the message] ‘we acknowledge this responsibility’ - there is no ‘ifs’ no ‘but’s’ no equivocation, no ‘it only applies some times and not in others’ but it was really clear [...] I think it was a qualitative jump in that it was a significant improvement to what was in the ICISS-report. One is in terms of clarity of scope. The ICISS report was really quite ‘woolly’ on the question of what does R2P refer to. Sometimes it talked about human suffering; sometimes it talked about armed conflict and civil war. [...] In practice if you had something that vague it would get used all the time and it would soon fizzle out and become nothing. By having that clear definition grounded in existing legal obligations and giving yourself a clear script - I thought that was a big improvement.

Former Director Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 19 October 2012

However, paragraphs 138 and 139 did not win everyone over so easily. 'After 2005, there was a low,' a former R2P-Engaging Civil Society staff member commented. In 2006, the Security Council adopted two Resolutions - one in relation to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the other in relation to the conflict in Darfur - which referred to the responsibility to protect, and as such helped to introduce the concept in the UN body that had the actual authority to decide on interventions. In spite of this small token of success, the concept - in particular the idea that a state’s sovereignty could be temporarily suspended to send in troops to halt mass atrocities - continued to be met with great scepticism. In Sri Lanka for example, Gareth Evans, who tirelessly toured the world to promote R2P, was told in a media comment that ‘the so-called responsibility to protect is nothing but a license for the white
man himself to intervene in the affairs of dark sovereign countries, whenever the white man
thinks it fit to do.’92 Early 2008 it was ‘Latin American, Arab and African delegates to the UN’s
budget committee’ themselves who stood up to argue that the 2005 World Summit had never
adopted the responsibility to protect (Evans 2008: 52). Apparently, some UN member states
had merely signed ‘some blurred shreds of paper’ but had not bought into the heart of the
matter, nor fully embraced the norm.

To deal effectively with these setbacks Gareth Evans and Don Steinberg, a senior
staff member of the US-branch of the International Crisis Group, felt that R2P needed ‘an
organization that could help with the unfinished business’.93 Some serious work was warranted
to ensure the acceptance and implementation of R2P as an international norm. There followed
a whole series of meetings with NGOs that had been most actively promoting R2P in the
run-up to the 2005 World Summit - notably WFM-IGP, Oxfam International, Human Rights
Watch, Refugees International and the International Crisis Group - to canvass ideas for a
global centre the sole purpose of which would be the promotion of R2P. ‘Gareth and Don
wanted an organization that could do high level advocacy and research at the UN’ a former
WFM-IGP staff member recalls. Human Rights Watch, on the other hand, felt strongly ‘that
we had to have a mechanism to bring the South into this, also as a way to address the push
back that this was a Western imposition, humanitarian intervention or even worse military
intervention’.94

Eventually, it was decided that WFM-IGP would find funding to transform its R2P-
Engaging Civil Society Project into an NGO Coalition for R2P, and that the International Crisis
Group - led by Gareth Evans - would move forward with the global centre, which would focus
on research and high level lobby at the UN.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
In February 2008, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to protect (GCR2P) was officially
founded by ‘a number of supportive governments, leading figures from the human rights
community, as well as by International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam International,
Refugees International, and WFM-Institute for Global Policy [WFM-IGP].’95 A prestigious
opening at the United Nations featured prominent international figures like Mary Robinson,
Mohamed Sahnoun, and Gareth Evans. The new UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, who
could not attend, supported the establishment of the Centre with a public statement, and Kofi
Annan, Romeo Dallaire and Desmond Tutu were among those appointed patrons of the Centre.

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92 See: ‘Delivering on the responsibility to protect: four misunderstandings, three challenges and how
publication-type/speeches/2007/evans-delivering-on-the-responsibility-to-protect.aspx, retrieved 20 June
2013.

93 According to Christine, Interview March 4, 2010.

94 Interview with staff member Human Rights Watch, March 3, 2010.

95 See ‘About Us’: http://www.globalr2p.org/about_us, retrieved June 9, 2013. The GCR2P was funded by the
governments of Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Rwanda, Sweden and the
United Kingdom. Besides, the Global Centre received funding from the John D. and Catherine T. Mac
Arthur Foundation, the Open Society, and received a private contribution from Scott and Elena Lawlor.
The Global Centre was housed at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center. As such, it was well-situated to lobby the delegates of the various UN member states residing in New York.

The first priority of the Global Centre was to ‘galvanize a group of supporters and prevent a role back’ of R2P, as a staff member explained:

We had to promote the use of force principles and then building all those links with academics. [...] The advocacy priorities were both on country work [that is, analyzing whether atrocities in particular countries could be considered R2P-cases] and engaging the UN more on the norm than on implementation. We were still trying to get the right atmosphere. And we tried to build clarity on R2P.

Interview with GCR2P staff member, 4 March 2010

That clarity was partly sought by issuing a series of research papers around for example the scope of R2P and criteria for intervention. Secondly, building clarity involved a continued campaign that sought to systematically clarify ‘major misunderstandings’ on R2P - as these were called by R2P-advocate Gareth Evans (2008: 56-71), such as: “R2P is just another name for humanitarian intervention” and “Iraq was an example of the application of the R2P norm and a foretaste of things to come”. Thus, education and awareness building should take away the resistance to R2P which, in the view of R2P-advocates, stemmed from a lack of understanding rather than a difference of principles.

The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect

While the Global Centre focused on engaging the member states at the UN, WFM-IGP took on the mission to create a strong support base for R2P among global civil society. Under the banner of the R2P-Engaging Civil Society Project, in November 2007 another series of civil society consultations started with the aim to build a global NGO coalition for R2P. Driven especially by the need to build civil society constituencies in the Global South, consultations were held in Asia, Latin America, East Africa Southern Africa and finally in Europe. Yet, the recruitment of members for the new NGO coalition was not an easy job. Although few NGOs questioned the moral impetus of R2P, many did not clearly see how R2P fitted with their everyday operational work. Besides, many, especially humanitarian advocacy officers, did not see the added value of using R2P in their task as long as it remained so politically controversial. Nevertheless, a couple of smaller NGOs focusing on peace building or human rights were happy to join the Coalition.

Thus in January 2009 the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) was officially launched by ‘eight regional and international non-governmental organizations dedicated to advancing the responsibility to protect at the international, regional, sub-regional and national levels’. Among the founders were the same NGOs that had co-founded the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect - Oxfam International, Human Rights Watch and
International Crisis Group - and the International Coalition also received much of its initial funding from the same sources as the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.\footnote{As mentioned on the ICRtoP website: 'The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect has received the generous support of the Governments of Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Oak Foundation, the Arsenault Family Foundation and individual donations.' See: http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/about-coalition, retrieved 20 June 2013.}

The Secretariat of the International Coalition was established at the WFM-IGP and supported the Coalition members in activities that sought to increase the awareness of R2P among governments and civil society. Initially, the plan had been for the International Coalition to work only with NGOs whose mission was closely related to R2P. However, when this strategy did not really pay off and International Coalition threatened to fall off the radar of donors, the Board decided to open up the Coalition for a broader membership and invest more in civil society capacity building on R2P in 2011. While this change in strategy seems to work in terms of a growing number of members, so far the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect has been far less visible than the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

The Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

Initially, the plan was to establish three regional centres for the responsibility to protect in Asia, Europe, and Africa that would work in association with the Global Centre. Therefore the GCR2P liaised with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana, and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI). While these organizations merely took on R2P as one of their programme lines, the only regional centre fully focusing on R2P was the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) that was housed at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. Again, former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans helped to find the funding and people to establish the APR2P. Scholar in International Relations Alex Bellamy, who was approached by Evans to help establish the Centre, remembers the sceptical responses of R2P-proponents and former ICISS members when hearing about the plan to start a Centre in one of the most R2P-hostile regions - East Asia - and then establish it on the ‘Western’ continent of Australia. The regional response was much less critical than anticipated however, as the founder of the APR2P explained:

\begin{quote}
The response was not ‘how dare you come and talk to us about R2P’, it was ‘fantastic we have been waiting for Australians to come on board where have you been all this time?’ Government officials wanted to talk about what does R2P mean, what is it?. Civil society organizations were keen to know how did it reflect in their work, how it could help them in their work and what can we do to build partnerships. Universities were interested in training and teaching. So we found from day one that we started to talk to civil society and other groups in the region that it just took off.

Founder of the APR2P, 19 October 2012
\end{quote}
In February 2008 the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect was launched with a celebration in Bangkok, thereby emphasizing its strong focus on regional dialogue and cooperation in East Asia. The APR2P got a three-year grant from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) in June 2009. In July 2012 AusAID continued its support for the Centre with a second three year grant focusing on research, training and policy engagement on R2P.\textsuperscript{97} Other than the Global Centre that focused its activities on UN policy influencing and mostly commissioned its research to externals, the APR2P consists largely of academic scholars who conduct their own research and launched a peer-reviewed academic Journal on R2P called \textit{The Global Responsibility to Protect}.\textsuperscript{98} The APR2P also developed intensive trainings on R2P that are tailored to the needs of either government officials or civil society organizations in the region. This training branch of the Centre became so successful that it now frequently ‘outsources’ staff to train officials and civil society representatives outside the Asia Pacific region, for example in Africa.

\textit{In the twilight zone}

While the R2P-Centres raised their profiles, two of the major founding organizations of both the Global Centre and International Coalition for R2P - Oxfam International and Human Rights Watch - took a more low-key position where it concerned active promotion of R2P. This was partly informed by pragmatic arguments: now that they had helped to establish two organizations whose sole mission would be the promotion of R2P, it seemed a waste of resources to duplicate that work. For Oxfam International, the additional reason was the risk involved in promoting R2P for their field operations. In March 2009 Oxfam International was one of the INGOs that were expelled from Darfur by the (North) Sudanese president Al-Bashir following his indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Among the reasons mentioned for prohibiting Oxfam to continue its humanitarian assistance in Darfur was the allegation that they had sent incriminating information on the Sudanese government to the ICC. Oxfam subsequently decided to become more careful in using the politically sensitive R2P-language and instead put more emphasis on the less provocative term ‘protection of civilians’. Oxfam’s step back was illustrative of a broader trend in which humanitarian or double-mandate NGOs operating in the field remained critical of R2P, while human rights organizations became increasingly vocal as R2P-supporters.

Despite this set-back, staff of the R2P-centres invested some hope in the fact that the new UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, who had replaced Kofi Annan in January 2007, made a commitment to implementing R2P. In February 2008 he turned the word into deed by appointing Ed Luck as the first UN Special Adviser on the responsibility to protect. In the same year the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan successfully intervened in the

\textsuperscript{97} This grant programme is conducted in partnership with the Griffith University’s Griffith Asia Institute in Brisbane, Australia, see http://www.r2pasiapacific.org/about, retrieved 9 June 2013.

\textsuperscript{98} The ‘GR2P’ Journal, as it is called, is edited by Alex J. Bellamy, Griffith University, Sara E. Davies, Griffith University, and Luke Glanville Griffith University, and published by Brill in Leiden. The first issue was published in February 2009. See: http://www.brill.com/global-responsibility-protect, retrieved June 9, 2013.
post-election violence that killed over a thousand people in Kenya and was likely to kill many more in what looked the onset of a massive ethnic cleansing. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon responded swiftly by labelling this diplomatic intervention an R2P-example of mass atrocity prevention. Bringing the preventative and non-military aspect of R2P to the fore helped its advocates to counter the criticism of R2P as a mere cover for military interventions. When in July 2009 the General Assembly held its annual debate on R2P ‘a clear majority [of the UN member states] demonstrated not only interest in the norm but also strongly supported implementing the 2005 commitment to prevent and halt genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing’99. However, the jury was still out on whether or not R2P was ever going to be implemented or remained as empty a promise as the Genocide Convention of 1948.

In July 2004, the United States Congress passed a resolution that labelled the violence against Darfuri civilians - allegedly committed by the Janjaweed militia with support from the North Sudanese government - a case of genocide. On 9 September 2004 US Secretary of State Colin Powell drew the same conclusion in an address to the Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee. What was unique about this was that it was the first time that genocide was invoked in relation to an ongoing conflict, and by an executive governmental power. Other than expected however, this ‘historic’ invocation of the ‘G-word’ did not trigger any significant international response. At all costs, R2P-advocates wanted to prevent that R2P would meet a similar fate.

Libya

Libya was the game changer for R2P, according to both proponents and opponents of R2P. On March 17, 2011 the Security Council voted in favour of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 that formed the legal basis for a military intervention in the Libyan civil war. The Security Council responded to ongoing reports by journalists and human rights organizations about systematic and targeted attacks on civilians carried out by the troops of Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi. To R2P-advocates the Resolution, which explicitly referred to R2P, came as a surprise.100 In later analyses R2P-proponents explained the Libya intervention as the outcome of a series of ‘exceptional’ coinciding developments, such as the unexpected call from the Arab

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100 Thus for example, the Resolution states (Preamble) ‘Reiterating the responsibility of the Libyan authorities to protect the Libyan population and reaffirming that parties to armed conflicts bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians’ and (article 4) ‘Authorizes Member States that have notified the Secretary-General, acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, and acting in cooperation with the Secretary-General, to take all necessary measures, notwithstanding paragraph 9 of resolution 1970 (2011), to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi’. See: http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/268/39/PDF/N1126839.pdf?OpenElement, retrieved June 9, 2013.
League to impose a no-fly zone on Libya, the key influence of Samantha Power, then President Obama’s foreign policy adviser, who warned him that another failure to prevent atrocities would be ‘extremely chilling, deadly and indeed a stain on our collective consciousness’;\(^1\) and Colonel Gadaffi himself, who ‘urged his supporters to go out and attack the “cockroaches” demonstrating against his rule’ thereby using hate speech reminiscent of the Rwanda-genocide.\(^2\) To R2P-proponents, Libya signified a ‘victory’ in the sense that it showed how a timely and decisive action prevented the possible killing of about thirty thousand civilians who lived in the city of Benghazi and who were threatened by attacks from Gaddafi’s troops. At the same time however, the military intervention in Libya constituted a serious set-back to R2P because, other than stipulated, the NATO intervention forces interpreted Resolution 1973 as a mandate to overthrow the Gaddafi regime. Consequently, R2P advocates feared that this opened a can of worms: that the whole debate about the legitimacy of R2P would start over again, as Libya ‘proved’ the argument of R2P-opponents who had always already claimed that R2P was a mere cover to forcefully remove regimes that were not to the liking of the big powers.\(^3\)

Surprisingly however, though Libya did paralyze decision-making in the Security Council on issues like Syria, none of the UN member states started to question the legitimacy of R2P as a norm. The Brazilian representatives to the UN who submitted a paper called *Responsibility whilst protecting* protested against the fact that NATO had pushed towards regime change without consulting the Security Council. However, they did not withdraw their support for R2P altogether. Somehow and somewhere between 2008 and 2011 the debate on R2P had shifted from a conceptual discussion on the meaning and legitimacy of the concept to an operational discussion about how to *do* R2P, as the Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect explains:

> At the ministerial meeting that we co-hosted in September, he [the UN Secretary General] gave a speech. He started off in the opening comments, I think it was, and he said, ‘no-one in the world today disagrees with the responsibility to protect’. And that kind of stopped me in my tracks, I looked at him and thought, ‘wow, did he really just say that?’ Then he went on to say some other things but I think, there was a huge amount of truth. He was speaking to a reality which I think other people had not quite caught up to, which was that the norm is a real norm, it’s out there it’s established. Even those who disagree with it, even those who were opposed don’t attack the *concept* so much anymore. They attack the *implementation*. […] The whole debate has [moved] on. The argument about whether the responsibility to protect exists or does not exist is finished.

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3. Also see chapter six, ‘the Libya case’.
In the eyes of more critical R2P observers, among whom many of the larger humanitarian INGOs, Libya meant a set-back, not only to the consensus on the responsibility to protect, but also to the less sensitive concept of ‘protection of civilians’, a concept that many humanitarians favour over R2P. According to these observers, Libya once again widened the division between the former colonists and colonized within the UN. In the Security Council, members from the Global South felt bypassed by the Western NATO troops that had marched on towards regime change without consulting them. It caused polarization and a stalemate in decision-making within the Security Council, one that became most visible in the Council’s inability to effectively contain the evolving humanitarian crisis in Syria.

VII. R2P-advocates: social background and motivation

The ascent of the R2P-coalition illustrates the transformation of human rights and humanitarian activism from an ideological calling into a professional career. Whereas the East Timor movement consisted mostly of volunteer activists, the R2P-coalition manifests itself largely as a work force of paid professionals.

Many of the older generation of professionals, who often had a key role in the inception of R2P and the establishment or management of the R2P Centres, joined or at least witnessed the anti-Vietnam protests in the late 60s and early 70s and developed political consciousness in the era of the civil rights movement, student protests and the Cold War. Beginning in the mid 70s or early 80s, they built careers in academics, politics or at the UN, working in the fields of conflict and peace, international relations or international law. Some started their career as an academic and then took on a job on a UN mission, or vice versa. Others moved between the worlds of international activism and politics. Their professional development unfolded in parallel with the history of international relations (or the UN) in its pre and post Cold War era. What further unites the older R2P-professionals is that they have practically all visited or worked in places that were the scenes of genocide or crimes against humanity. They went on missions to former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, East Timor, Rwanda or South Africa or they visited Cambodia in the wake of the genocide.

Donald for example, is a scholar-cum-UN official who visited Uganda in 1981 and Zagreb in 1991 and saw in both places how ‘the veneer of civilization’ can disappear in the blink of an eye. It motivated him even more to seek a way to ‘put a brake on this craziness that we saw in Yugoslavia’. In his view, deterrence no longer works once mass atrocities are going on and at that point military intervention is the only way to stop the killings. Another example is Pete who went on missions to East Timor and Rwanda: it was these two experiences that taught him mass atrocities are ‘the worst that people can do to each other’, and this realization also compelled a response:

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104 Other than R2P, UN peace keeping operations that are mandated for the ‘protection of civilians’ in armed conflict, cannot be imposed without the consent of the state concerned.
The banal cliché of never again for me was not a banal cliché. It was hell. Once you’ve been there and seen the graves and smelled the corpses, seen tears of the people who have survived. I felt this tremendous sense of ‘what can I do to ensure that this never happens again?’

Pete, 26 October 2011

The younger generation of R2P-advocates, who were born in the 1970s or 1980s, all remember seeing at least some documentaries or Hollywood adapted movies on Rwanda or the Holocaust during their adolescence. Many saw Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List* (1993) as a teenager. Others read or watched *Shake hands with the devil* - the book (Dallaire and Beardsley 2003) and documentary (2004) covering the story of Roméo Dallaire, the retired Canadian Lieutenant-General who was force commander of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) in 1993 and tried to stop the genocide but did not get the support from the UN to do so. Parents might not have provided an immediate role model as in working in the field of conflict and human rights, but when prompted quite a number of young professionals appeared to have a family story of flight and refuge, of Jewish grandparents who fled to the United States or Canada during the Second World War. Others carried family stories or childhood memories of the Latin America dictatorships, of the religious cleansings in Gujarat, India (2003) or on the atrocities committed against Native Americans and Australians. As a conscious choice however, most young professionals only developed their interest in mass atrocity prevention when examining cases of conflict and genocide at university. They would start with a general interest in international law or political science but whilst studying, for different reasons, they would be attracted by issues related to conflict and mass atrocities. They wrote theses on topics like the Rwanda refugees, identity conflict in former Yugoslavia, or the guerrilla movement in Aceh.

The young R2P-professionals describe their motivation as much in intellectual as in moral terms. Sylvana for example, who was a fellow at the GCR2P at the time of the interview, says she likes the work because it stimulates her intellectually - something that she qualifies as ‘more important than earning money’. Debbie, who works at a US-based think tank, explained that studying international law in addition to conflict studies appealed to her because ‘I kind of like to exercise my brain in different ways’. Celia, who is advocacy officer for an NGO in New York told that she never really planned ‘to get into this work’:

I was open and followed things that were interesting to me and made sense to me […]. [This work] keeps me engaged and interested and challenged - I think you need to balance those two if you want to stay in anything long term.

Celia, 22 November 2011

Even though R2P-advocates are driven by deep moral convictions about the ‘wrongness’ of mass atrocities, as true professionals, they tend to validate their work in terms of ‘doing it good’ rather than ‘doing good’. Expert knowledge and thorough scholarly research are vital
to finding the best of possible paths to halt mass atrocities, or at least to try to reduce their occurrence, for R2P-advocates - young and older - are realists too. The younger generation of R2P-advocates wants to develop their professional and personal skills, and they are attached to the idea that they can do ‘something good’ to the world. But ‘changing the world’ fundamentally is not what they are aiming for, nor what they believe in:

What I like about R2P is that it is both realistic and idealistic. The other day David Rieff105 wrote something very stupid, he wrote that ‘the R2P movement’ [wants] to get rid of war. On the contrary, R2P recognizes that war maybe - and I want to stress the maybe part - maybe part of the human condition. As long as there are human beings, there will be the threat of wars, so we have to deal with that. That’s being realist. We have to think always about the possibility that we have to use force and military measures to prevent someone from killing a lot of people. The idealistic part is that we believe that - idealistically - mass atrocities can be prevented.

Miguel, R2P-advocate, 17 November 2011

The older generation of R2P-professionals has been tried and tested by the game(s) of international politics as played out at peace negotiation tables, in high level commissions or in the corridors of the UN buildings. They have been toughened by the reality of international politics and take a realist no-nonsense approach to change-making, informed by a view of the UN and international law as a limited and flawed apparatus, but ‘unfortunately’ the only one left to work with. Like a key R2P-proponent told an audience of R2P-advocates in Australia:

We need to be realists: the UN is the last bastion of Machiavellian106 politics. We have to work within the world that we have and try to change that world. We have to be modest about the capacities that the international community has at its disposal for mass atrocity prevention. We have to be more realistic: states have different interests. We have to be more creative and find ways of least resistance.

Field notes, 2 October 2012

In line with this view - but keeping in mind that R2P is also presented as hallmark in the history of human rights, and as a sign of moral progress - R2P-advocates often present the responsibility to protect as a minimal norm:

The idea that [laughs] human beings have a right to life, that you should not get involved with ethnic cleansing, mass murder… It is not exactly a high bar that we are setting. This is really about as low as you can get!

Donald, 17 October 2011

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105 North American journalist (born 1952) who published books and articles on issues of international conflict and humanitarianism.

106 Described in Oxford Dictionary as ‘cunning, scheming, and unscrupulous, especially in politics’.
If we cannot guarantee the implementation of the wide range of human rights to each and every individual on the globe, the thinking seems to be, then let us at least halt mass atrocities.

Despite the gloomy view of a world stained by brutal violence a persistent belief in progress characterizes the R2P-movement, or, as Lisa, an Australian R2P-advocate said, ‘I am a reluctant realist; I am a realist who holds hope’. Change takes time and persistence but is not altogether impossible. Older professionals like to point to the decades it took for human rights to become a globally accepted norm. The road to moral progress is one of much slipping back, ‘we are always going a couple of steps forward and one back or sideways or something’ but judged over longer stretches of time progress is possible.

VIII. Influencing power from within

Though the number of R2P-proponents that are involved full-time in promoting the responsibility to protect is substantially smaller than the number of activists involved in the international East Timor solidarity movement, the global R2P-coalition has gained significant influence in a relatively short period of time. The R2P-movement might be small but is extremely well positioned for influencing policy due to its determined move into the realm of power. The movement has sought the alliance of three bodies of authority in the world of international diplomacy and humanitarianism. First, there is the association with former state or intergovernmental leaders who gained high moral reputation for their involvement in conflict resolution or human rights advocacy, such as the former Irish President and United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, the South African Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Desmond Tutu and the former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan - all of whom are patrons of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. These and other international figures of high standing who publicly support the work of the GCR2P help to increase the esteem and status of the movement. Moreover, they still have the networks that give them access to the centres of international power, without being tied by diplomatic restrictions.

The second liaison of the R2P-movement is not with former, but with ‘actual’ global political power - with the UN Special Adviser on the responsibility to protect and with the UN member states that belong to the Group of Friends of R2P. The Group of Friends consists of about forty member states from Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa that meet in varied compositions and since 2010 have been chaired by Rwanda and the Netherlands (Bellamy 2013: 20). Its participants informally subscribed to ‘advancing the norm [of R2P] within the UN system'. According to Bellamy ‘the Group of Friends meets four times a year at the level of Ambassadors and meets occasionally at the working level to discuss matters related to the concept’s political and conceptual developments’ (Bellamy 2013: 20). Even though the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect is a non-governmental organization, they are allowed to attend the meetings of the governmental Group of Friends and often help to prepare its agenda in close cooperation with the Chairs. In this the Global Centre copied the model
that had been successfully used by the campaign to ban land mines and the campaign for an International Criminal Court. This approach, called ‘new diplomacy’ (Davenport 2002), involves circumventing the big - and opposing - powers in the UN, to work instead as allies with the relatively smaller but R2P-friendly member states.

The third R2P-liaison within the UN is the Special Adviser for the Responsibility to Protect, who took up work from the UN Office for the Prevention of Genocide in 2008. Again, the UN Special Adviser on R2P works closely with the Global Centre, for example to discuss the content of his annual reports to the UN Secretary General that outline proposals for the implementation of the responsibility to protect (Bellamy 2013). Other INGOs sometimes respond with jealousy and slight distrust to this close affiliation of the Global Centre with the UN.

Sometimes when people looked at the Centre, they said, ‘Ok, make up your mind: are you inside the UN system or are you outside? So are you an independent NGO protest organization that does lobbying and advocacy or a kind of working-inside-the-system think tank that provides resources to states?’ My answer to this question is: neither, and both. I think definitely a huge part of the strength of the Centre is that it is inside the circle, that we can therefore convene people in a way that’s just not possible for NGOs to do. We can sit with governments and talk with them and interact with them in a way which very few NGOs ever get to do. I cannot really say much more about that on tape than what I can. But I am constantly amazed by the access that we get and the direct opportunity to speak to policy makers about these issues. And that’s a benefit of being perceived as inside the circle. Obviously we have to be protective of stuff that is shared with us and I think there is a trust there that hopefully we don’t violate. The other side of it is: we are not a governmental organization and we’re not a UN organization. It means that we are independent and can say whatever the hell we want and move quickly in a way that sometimes governmental organizations and the UN is not able to. So we are able to maintain that independent advocacy role and not be compromised. So I think the answer to the question is both: we jealously guard our inside status but we also defend our independent voice.

Staff member GCR2P, 29 November 2011

The third and final authority whose company is actively sought by the R2P-movement is that of academics and academic institutions. It is not a coincidence that both the GCR2P and the APR2P are housed in universities. This location ensures direct access to a ‘sustainable body of expertise’ which, according to an R2P-scholar, is badly needed in a UN-system where staff is transferred to other missions every three years. Moreover, the partnership of the R2P-movement with academic institutes raises their credibility (for ‘more independent’) and quality (for ‘based on academic research’) of their policy advice and places them squarely in the community of professionals and experts.

Thus, for many R2P-advocates, activism has become a career. In their view, the ‘ideal’ humanitarian worker is a professional and technical expert, with a touch of altruism and...
heroism, and a healthy dose of realism. R2P-advocates seek to change the world through a chess game that alternates between allying themselves with power, and taking position as an independent body of expertise outside the circles of power.

IX. Conclusion

This chapter identified the major trends and changes that altered the nature and orientation of humanitarian and human rights activism from roughly 1975 to 2011. It did so by describing and studying the particular histories, ideologies and people that make up the international solidarity movement for East Timor and the Responsibility to Protect-coalition. I identified the shock over the genocide in Rwanda and the ethnic cleansings in former Yugoslavia as historical events that drastically changed the mood in humanitarian and human rights activism. Even though that change in mood might have seeped through gradually and many human rights and humanitarian activists might have carried on fighting with the same objectives and strategies for change, overall the moral sentiments that inform the nature and orientation of humanitarian and human rights movements have altered over recent decades. This appeared particularly from the growing interest in mass atrocity intervention.

The idealism of the East Timor solidarity activists has been replaced by the realism of R2P-advocates. While East Timor solidarity activists strove for world-wide social-political change through people's revolutions, R2P-advocates pursue the - in their view - more modest objective of halting the worst manifestations of human rights violations - mass violence and communal slaughtering. Realism replacing idealism also means that collaborating with governments, including with (governmental) actors who have committed human rights abuses themselves, is no longer a taboo.

Professionalization is another trend that decisively changed the nature and orientation of humanitarian and human rights activism over recent decades. This was already visible in the evolving East Timor solidarity movement. Although the movement was built on a cadre of volunteers, it gradually succeeded in raising funds to also hire some full-time professionals. The movement greatly improved its skills and effectiveness in lobby and media work. It could be called a pioneer in the use of internet and social media for networking and public mobilization. With the (accidental) capturing of the shooting at the Santa Cruz cemetery on film, East Timor activists learned about the importance of iconic images of suffering to evoke empathy and outrage amongst the world public.

Professionalization also changed the nature of activism from a calling into a career. The earlier emphasis in activism on 'doing good' - on signing on to activism for life, whatever the consequences or results - was replaced by an emphasis on 'doing it good': on deciding on actions depending on their likely results or effects. Expertise and professional development rather than ideology became a primary motivation for becoming a human rights or humanitarian professional. Much more than the East Timor solidarity movement, the R2P-coalition consists of and closely collaborates with academics.
Last but not least, the ‘human rights takeover’ of humanitarianism that became most visible in the formulation of the ‘right to life’, marked the onset of a gradual reorientation in human rights and humanitarianism from an emphasis on safeguarding the life and rights of individuals to a concern with sustaining the life of the group, of the whole of human kind through the preservation of humanity. This reorientation will be examined and discussed further in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE
Preserving the Life of the Group

While people may disagree on the source of its power, almost everyone agrees that humanity should be considered sacred. As a universal subject, the claims of humanity should, it seems, be paramount - and to speak on its behalf should bring discussion to a close, permit action to begin, and enable lives to be saved.

_Ilana Feldman and Miriam Ticktin, In the name of humanity, 2010

It is said nowadays, with utmost certainty and an air of self-evidence, that human life is sacred. What humanitarian and human rights organizations and activists have in common, despite their wide variety, is that they all seek to preserve the inviolability and integrity of human life. If this secular conception of the sacred is defined as lying in human life, then the question following from that is - what counts as human life? What qualifies as ‘the human’ in the view of those who have made it their ‘sacred duty’ to protect it?

Following Judith Butler, I propose to ‘consider the way “the human” works as a differential norm’.

Let us think of the human as a value and a morphology that may be allocated and retracted, aggrandized, personified, degraded and disavowed, elevated and affirmed.

(Butler 2010: 76)

Norms determine who is and is not regarded as ‘human’ in a certain time and place. They determine whose lives are regarded as ‘sacred’ and consequently, as needing or deserving protection, or, to use Butler’s term (2010), whose lives are considered ‘grievable’ and become the object of compassion.

What sets anti-genocide activists apart from most other humanitarian and human rights activists is that they are not primarily concerned with the protection of the lives and rights of individual human beings. Instead, they call for the protection of multitudes of individuals, of peoples and populations that are threatened or affected by mass atrocities, that is, by genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This chapter studies the specifics of this concern for the human being in the plural. It asks who do the East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates seek to protect, who are their objects of compassion and empathy? In the first half of this chapter I will show that while East Timor solidarity activists call for the protection of the (East Timorese) people to preserve the existence of a particular people (with a distinct national or cultural identity), R2P-advocates talk about the need to protect populations to preserve the whole of humanity.

I seek to uncover some of the main characteristics and assumptions behind these notions by analyzing the visual and discursive representations of the ‘people’ and ‘populations’ that both groups seek to protect. In this, I again build on Judith Butler who, following Levinas argues:
If, as the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas claims, it is the face of the other that demands from us an ethical response, then it would seem that the norms that would allocate who is and is not human arrive in visual form. These norms work to give *face* and to *efface*. Accordingly, our capacity to respond with outrage, opposition, and critique will depend in part on how the differential norm of the human is communicated through visual and discursive frames. (Butler 2010: 77)

Apart from studying discursive frames of ‘people’ and ‘populations’ in public documents, I pay particular attention to the visual representation of these concepts. I take Butler’s rationale that ‘norms work to give face and to efface’ quite literally by studying the display of faces in the imagery provided in the activists’ outreach material. I do so because the capacity to imagine the other in pain becomes more critical when the peoples and populations whom the anti-genocide activists care about - for whom they feel compassion and want to protect - are not in their proximity. When actual encounters between the anti-genocide activist and the victim of mass atrocity are limited because the suffering other is distant, representations of that distant other become all the more important to enhance and evoke feelings of identification and empathy. Visual images of faces - the suggestion that one can actually look the other in the eye - are amongst the strongest means to enhance such identification and empathy.

The second topic of enquiry in this chapter addresses the *nature* of the compassionate relation between the anti-genocide activists and their objects of compassion. I will show that whereas East Timor solidarity activists describe their relation with the East Timorese people as one of ‘solidarity’, R2P-advocates speak of their relation to populations at risk in terms of ‘responsibility’. I will analyze the moral deliberations and sentiments underpinning both kinds of empathic relations.

I would like to reiterate here that my dissertation aims to uncover the worldviews of anti-genocide activists as seen through *their* eyes, from an emic perspective. Consequently, I do not seek to make a power analysis of the empathic relation between the activist and the victim from an external, etic viewpoint. Instead, I study how anti-genocide activists themselves describe and qualify their relation with victims of mass atrocities. The focus is on understanding the compassionate or empathic relation as envisioned by the activist herself - including the power hierarchy that the activist ascribes to this relation.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first two sections discuss and analyze the imaginations, representations and narratives of the people that East Timor solidarity activists defend and support, and of the populations that R2P-advocates seek to protect from mass atrocities. The second half of the chapter examines the nature of the empathic relation between the anti-genocide activists and their objects of compassion. Section three opens with a brief reflection on the (etymological) meanings of ‘empathy’ and ‘compassion’ and on the particular understanding of both as moral sentiments that are imagined (Hunt 2007; Elisha 2008). Sections four and five discuss and analyze interview quotes in which anti-genocide activists reflect on their relations with victims of mass atrocities, articulating these either as relations of ‘solidarity’, or ‘responsibility’. Finally, in trying to answer the ‘why’ of these
differences in articulation, I will argue in the conclusion, that whilst East Timor solidarity-activists view and describe ‘the human’ in secular political terms, R2P-advocates view and describe ‘the human’ in existential transcendent terms.

I. **For the love of... people**

People of Timor I remember you
Your land breathes freedom
The rugged beauty of your mountains
The untamed wildness of your bush
The source of your courage and your strength.
Yet I remember some other things
A people quiet meek and mild, friendly
And generous with the little they have
No hint of violence there.

-Dutch East Timor solidarity activist, author unknown

The wide variety of press releases, booklets, documentaries and banners of the international solidarity movement for East Timor are at one in their plea for the East Timorese people. A flyer of the Australian East Timor Human Rights Centre talks about its aim ‘to protect and promote the human rights of the people of East Timor’. In its 1993 Annual Report the US-based East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN) stated that it ‘supports genuine self-determination and human rights for the people of East Timor’. A poem printed in a 1995 brochure of the Dutch solidarity organization RENETIL (see above) starts with the sentence ‘People of Timor, I remember you’. The booklet ‘Suara Rakyat MAUBERE’ [“Voice of the Maubere People”], printed by the Indonesian solidarity organization LEKHAT, talks about its empathy with ‘the fate of the East Timorese peoples’.

When studying the narratives and representations of East Timorese by solidarity activists, a first characteristic of the ‘people’ that emerges is that of a suffering people. Paul and Matt, two Australian activists who started their solidarity work in the late seventies, described their compassion for (the East Timorese) people in the following terms.

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107 The poem appeared in a campaign booklet that was developed and printed by a Dutch East Timor solidarity organization in 1995.

108 Flyer of the Australian-based East Timor Human Rights Centre, printed in the early to mid 1990s, accessed/available at the Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor (CHART) in Melbourne.


You know, the main thing is concern for people, particularly people who are missing out or people who are suffering in some way. That is it in simplest form, really. Then with that comes all the rhetoric about options for poor and liberation theology and structural analysis and so on and so forth. But at its basis at its simplest, it’s really concern for people.

Paul, 21 November 2012

It’s an ongoing continuous series of stories that I let myself hear, if you like. About people suffering basic needs, persecution, people suffering human rights [abuses]. […] I remember stories of the ‘fence of legs’ [campaign] where the Indonesians put the Timorese in front of their own military so that the Timorese guerrillas would not [attack].111 [There were] constant stories of various sections of the country undergoing starvation. […] People who disappeared, that sort of thing.

Matt, 26 November 2012

The recurring narratives of Timorese suffering as communicated by East Timor solidarity activists, recount the thousands of Timorese people who were seeking refuge in the mountains during the Indonesian invasion, but were brutally bombed by the Indonesian air force. They show pictures of Timorese children and women suffering from famine in the camps that were established by the Indonesian authorities in the late seventies and eighties. They show, again and again, the footage of Max Stahl, the Australian journalist who managed to film how Indonesian military fired at hundreds of protesting East Timorese at the Santa Cruz cemetery.

When embarking on a closer study of these visual representations of ‘people’, it turns out that solidarity activists ‘give face’ to the Timorese people in a strikingly literal way. In the many documentaries that relate the suffering of Timorese people, in the many brochures and pamphlets of the international solidarity movement for East Timor, again and again we see faces,112 the fierce faces of East Timorese students protesting, carrying banners and shouting credos against the Indonesian regime, the devout faces of East Timorese praying while holding candles, mourning over the death of relatives who became victims of Indonesian aggression and the faces of East Timorese wounded in the Santa Cruz massacre.

It is not just the hundreds of Timorese people that form the centrepiece in all these narratives of suffering: as well as the abundant display of Timorese faces, the invisible, but omnipresent figure of the oppressive state looms large. This brings us to a second characteristic

111 As Braithwaite, Charlesworth and Soares (2012: 54) write: ‘the Indonesian military organized civilians in ‘fence of legs’ campaigns during 1981, harnessing tens of thousands […] women, men, children and the elderly, to march across the island in front of units of soldiers, flushing out insurgents before them.’
of the ‘people’ whom East Timor solidarity activists seek to protect - that of a people suffering from state oppression. In the interview excerpts quoted above, East Timor activists talk about the Indonesian military who forced the Timorese to march miles and miles across the island as a buffer for eventual guerrilla attacks, and about the Timorese who were forced out of the mountains through starvation.

It was really part of the military strategy to bomb and scare people through famine out of the mountains. It was a military technique - ‘starve them out’ - and the human cost was terrible.

Paul, 21 November 2012

These recurring stories of famine and starvation bring a third characteristic of ‘people’ to the fore, that is, of a ‘people’ suffering extreme forms of poverty and deprivation. As displaced people deprived of any humanitarian assistance, the Timorese have no housing to protect themselves and barely any food to feed themselves. Solidarity activists express compassion with a people that are poor. Together with the two other qualifications, the ‘people’ whom East Timor solidarity activists seek to protect so far can be characterized as poor, suffering, and oppressed.

At this point in the analysis, it is useful to step aside briefly and look at a Timorese notion of ‘people’ that bears a strong resemblance to the one held by the solidarity activists. The representation of the Timorese as a poor, suffering, and oppressed people was initially produced by the Timorese political party Fretilin who reintroduced the term Maubere. Capizzi, Hill and Macey write:

Maubere is a Tetum word signifying ‘the common person, the poor, ignorant, oppressed Timorese under colonial rule.’ Mauberism thus connotes a general struggle against poverty, illiteracy and economic and political oppression. (Capizzi, Hill and Macey 1976: 389)

The notion Maubere - widely used by East Timorese and solidarity activists to refer to East Timorese people - was introduced by the Portuguese who hoped to create some national unity between the ethnic and linguistically diverse peoples inhabiting the area (Graham 2008: 15). It was later adopted by the Fretilin resistance as a symbol of the ‘nationalist’ maubere peoples struggling against their Indonesia oppressor. Capizzi, Hill and Macey (1976) describe how Fretilin managed to stir strong nationalist sentiments amongst what was previously known as an ethnically diverse tribal society. While cultivating this national identity of the Maubere, the Fretilin leadership cleverly allowed it to fuse not only with typically tribal customs, but also with Catholicism.

The Catholic religion was adopted on a massive scale by the East Timorese when they were forced to register under one of the five official worldviews recognized by the Indonesian state ideology. By choosing Catholicism as their formal religion, East Timorese could again distinguish themselves from the predominantly Muslim population in Indonesia. Moreover,
during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, the Catholic Church became a stronghold for the resistance. Religious services that were conducted in the local language, Tetum, offered meaningful spiritual support to Timorese suffering from oppression. Moreover, many priests provided shelter to persecuted independence supporters.

Although the conflict between Indonesia and the East Timorese resistance was seldom framed as a religious conflict, solidarity activists cleverly used the Catholic identity of the East Timorese people to win sympathy among a Western audience and gain support from leading figures in the Catholic Church. Many of the documentaries on the East Timorese independence struggle show images of pious East Timorese, praying with devout, candle-lit faces. The narrative of a poor, suffering and oppressed people also resonated with a Catholic narrative of suffering. Sister Maria is a Catholic nun from Japan who was ordered by her superior to establish a solidarity organization for East Timor. Although she did not start her solidarity engagement with the East Timorese on her own initiative, she now looks back at it as one of her most enriching religious experiences.

We Christians live the life of the Christian mystery of death and resurrection, which means suffering has a meaning for us, even if it ends with failure and loss. This is what the Timorese people live with their own life. They are the real part of this mystery. They send me a strong message to live my Christian life. I have never seen such strong witnesses (to the Christian mystery) as the people in East Timor.

Sister Maria, 6 September 2012

The image of the East Timorese as a poor, suffering and oppressed people fighting for recognition of their Maubere identity appealed to solidarity activists who sympathized with the idea(l) of a people’s struggle. To some, this ideal had a religious connotation, and was inspired by ‘[Catholic] rhetoric about options for the poor and liberation theology’ as an Australian solidarity activist Paul said in his interview.

To others, and I am inclined to say the majority of solidarity activists, however, the notion of ‘people power’ resonated with the secular ideologies of Marxism and democratization. The following text, written by an Australian solidarity activist as part of a wider East Timor solidarity campaign held in 1991, captures very well this sense of a ‘people liberation’ struggle as emerging in the midst of the Cold War.

For little peoples everywhere this is an unfriendly decade. It is the Seventies after all, and the world is polarised. East and West. North and South. Aligned, non-Aligned. Saigon is about to “fall.” And in every language, foreign policy speaks with forked tongue. Only on this island territory do people trust. They stretch now, reach into their memories. Retrieve their identity, their pride. Listen to their ancestors, hear their songs. Learn Maubere consciousness, speak liberation. Organise political parties, prepare for elections. Establish schools, clinics. Look to their neighbours - for resources, models, support. Wait. And watch.
‘Giving face…’

Figures 3 and 4. Fretelin supporters rally in Portuguese Timor, 1975. Photographs: Penny Tweedie/Panos. Both photographs have a prominent place in ‘the CAVR poster history of Timor Leste’ displayed in the exhibition of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) in Dili, East Timor.

Figures 5 - 7. © Steve Cox, from ‘Generations of Resistance’ by Peter Carey and Steve Cox, 1995, Continuum Publishing, used by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. Photographs of the Santa Cruz massacre by British photographer Steve Cox who was severely beaten at the massacre. The photographs were smuggled out of East Timor and widely circulated amongst solidarity activists.

The above copies are taken from the website of the East Timor solidarity organisation ETAN.
[...] Listen now, it is we the people calling. In this decade, even the Big Brass can hear. And about East Timor? Well - this is the story so far. It doesn't finish yet. It goes on - like Namibia, Western Sahara, Cambodia, the Baltic States. It ends in peace, in justice. In people power, democracy. Not an ending really, but a beginning - just waiting to be made real. The Nineties are East Timor's years.113

All over the world East Timor solidarity activists expressed their love for the suffering Timorese through a rich variety of protest songs and poems. The poems of Timorese poet Francisco Borja da Costa, who became a symbol of national Timorese pride and resistance after he was shot by Indonesian troops on December 7, 1975, were widely distributed amongst international solidarity activists. His poem Kdadalak ("Streams"), that talks about 'Streams flowing together become rivers/Rivers increase, whatever opposes them/So must the children of Timor unite' (Borja da Costa s.d.) inspired an Australian artist to produce a 'spectacular audio visual composition' that was performed in Melbourne.114 One of the best known examples of songs dedicated to the East Timorese people is perhaps the album by the Irish rock band U2 called 'Love from a short distance'. According to the U2-website:

The title of the album is taken from a letter Bono wrote to the East Timorese people, expressing his concern for their plight: “There is no silence deep enough, no black-out dark enough, no corruption thick enough, no business deal big enough, no politicians bent enough, no heart hollow enough, no grave wide enough, to bury your story and keep it from us… Love from a short distance.”115

Also reflected in the above artistic expressions is admiration for a people who, despite their poverty and suffering, heroically resist the oppressive state. As Australian journalist-cum-activist John Pilger says in the closing words of his documentary, 'the eyes of people here speak of resistance, defiance and courage'.116 Activists speak with great admiration about the persistence of the East Timorese and about the sacrifices they were willing to make to liberate 'their country' and people. Solidarity activists did not solely regard the East Timorese as victims: on the contrary, their love and admiration for the East Timorese was full of reverence for their meek, but intensely devoted commitment to the struggle. Sean is an Irish activist who single-handedly started an Irish solidarity organization in 1992, after watching a documentary that showed footage on the Santa Cruz massacre in Dili. He shares the following

114 Brochure announcing the event, found in CHART Archive, Melbourne Australia.
Figure 8. Panels from the permanent exhibition of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR - the Portuguese acronym), Dili, Timor Leste. Photograph: Annette Jansen (2012)

Figures 9 and 10. The East Timorese represented as symbol of resistance and people power at the CAVR exhibition. Photograph: Annette Jansen (2012)
The first exchange was sort of sizing each other up at the airport. He is a tiny fellow, a great friend, I learned so much from him. [...] [About] how he as a person who left East Timor was continuing to support the resistance inside. And it also cemented in my brain because he was such a gentle fellow. No aggression, a determination that this was not going to happen, his country was not going to be integrated, the culture taken and everything, this was not what they would [allow]. And he was also ex-Falintil, ex-resistance. This was my first time to ever meet someone who had carried a rifle in resistance of something like that. So, I was in awe.

Sean, 29 August 2012

The admiration of solidarity activists for the heroic East Timorese reminds a little of the David and Goliath myth. Opposite to the narrative of suffering stands a narrative of victory of a people smaller than their powerful oppressor, but nonetheless could outsmart the 'giant' Indonesia with bravery and intellect. 'I don't think people really appreciate how strategic he was', said Australian activist Matt who was highly impressed by the strategic leadership provided by the Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmao. Likewise, Indonesian pro-democracy activist Wilson recalls in his memoirs how impressed he was by the East Timorese student activists: 'We felt small compared to the quality of the struggle of the East Timorese youth, with their slogan Nation or Death! (Patria au Morte!)'. This slogan not only reflected the fierce commitment of the East Timorese resistance, but also mocked the Indonesians who had used the same slogan in their independence struggle against the Dutch colonial administration (Wilson 2010: 144).

Ergo, for East Timor solidarity activists, the word East Timorese ‘people’ refers to a poor, suffering, oppressed, but resisting people - and this is the fourth and last characteristic of ‘people’ as represented by solidarity activists. It is simultaneously a defining characteristic, as it transforms the notion of ‘people’ as passive victims suffering from oppression into the notion of a ‘sovereign people’ - active agents who resist the oppressive state to claim their rights. It represents the East Timorese as symbol of resistance and people power. As such, the term ‘people’ as understood by East Timor solidarity activists, is essentially political. It signifies what Canovan describes as:

> the people as sovereign; peoples as nations, and the people as opposed to the ruling elite [...] These are all conceptions of collective political identity. (Canovan 2005: 2)

Consequently, for East Timor solidarity activists giving face and voice to the East Timorese people was also an essentially political act. Each public display of an East Timorese face was an act of protest against Indonesian attempts to efface the Maubere people - or even to eradicate them, as many of the activists who talked about genocide believed. The people-to-people solidarity of the political activists - as many East Timor solidarity activists called themselves

117 Skype interview with Matt, 26 November 2012.
was about choosing sides: it was about reuniting as ‘ordinary people’ against the common enemy of the state.

In a later section, I will further examine this notion of solidarity. In the next section, however, I will first seek to uncover characteristics and assumptions underpinning the notion of ‘populations’ that Responsibility to Protect-advocates aim to defend.

II. Populations

Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

-UN General Assembly, World Summit Outcome Document, 2005

Compared to the spirited term ‘people’ the term ‘populations’ seems rather abstract and devoid of political and normative connotations. Derived from the Latin *populatio* meaning ‘a large concourse, numerous assembly’\(^1\) or alternatively ‘multitude’\(^2\), its immediate association is with numbers and statistics used by demographic institutes. Nevertheless, it appears to be the most readily available answer to the question ‘whom do the R2P-advocates seek to protect?’

The various authoritative texts of the R2P-movement consistently talk about the responsibility to protect *populations* from mass atrocities. In the first report of the UN Secretary General on the Responsibility to Protect (2009) for example, the word ‘people’ - as referring to ‘those needing protection from mass atrocities’ - is mentioned only eight times, while ‘populations’ is used twenty times - mostly in the recurring phrase ‘the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’.

So who are these ‘populations’? To what does the term refer? At first sight, it seems that ‘populations’ refers to the subjects of states, for the majority of phrases in the 2009 Report refer to the responsibility of the state and ‘its populations’. Further on however, the 2009 report talks about ‘its populations, whether nationals or not’ (United Nations 2009: paragraph 11) and ‘all their populations, irrespective of identity’. A study of the use of ‘populations’ in the UN reports issued by the Secretary General in 2010 and 2011 brings some additional qualifications to the fore: ‘populations’ are perceived as being *civilian* (‘violence that targets the civilian population’), as consisting of *large* numbers (‘threats to populations frequently result in large flows of refugees and internally displaced persons’, ‘to protect large populations from harm’), and as being *vulnerable* - threatened and unable to protect themselves. A first conclusion to be drawn, therefore may be that the comparatively vague and abstract term ‘populations’ has been chosen deliberately to include *any* living human being at risk on this planet, irrespective of identity or nationality or social-economic background. As R2P-advocates argue, mass atrocities can happen to anybody, rich or poor, living in the global North or South: or, as

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explained in the first UN Report on R2P (United Nations 2009: paragraph 6):

the worst human tragedies of the past century were not confined to any particular part of the world. They occurred in the North and in the South, in poor, medium-income and relatively affluent countries.

Unlike the ‘people’ of the East Timor solidarity activists, the R2P-conception of ‘populations’ is not exclusively associated with the ‘poor, suffering and oppressed’. While the conceptual vagueness of the term ‘populations’ in the UN reports might result from an attempt to be inclusive, it is not entirely clear why this vagueness is sustained in R2P-texts that describe particular populations at risk of mass atrocities.

When opening the web-page of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) that describes the mass atrocities encountered by the Syrian people for example, we learn that the populations at risk in Syria are civilians, and we read about the numbers of civilians and people being killed. No further discursive qualifications of these populations appear on this webpage however, other than being ‘Syrian’. Photographs of the Syrian civilians at risk are not provided on the webpage, nor are there photographs of populations on any of the other web-pages describing ‘populations at risk’. The sole image available on these web-pages is that of a map, indicating the area where populations are at risk.

If, following Butler (2010: 77), we approach the process of defining the human as something that involves giving face through ‘visual or discursive frames’, the absence of any qualifying descriptions or visual representations of the ‘populations’ that R2P-advocates aim to protect is striking, especially when compared to the abundance of imagery and artistic representations of the East Timorese people by the solidarity activists concerned in that region. The image on the website of the Global Centre that comes closest to representing ‘populations at risk’ can only be accessed through downloading a policy report on Libya.

The cover photograph on this report shows a family - father, mother and their two young daughters - photographed while walking along “Tripoli Street, the center of fighting between forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi and rebels in downtown Misrata, Libya,” according to the subscript. However, as the photograph is taken from the back, we cannot see their faces. The cover photograph of another downloadable GCR2P-report on Darfur again zooms out to a further distance (Traub 2010). Instead of people and faces, we see an aerial photograph of a house burning in a village in Darfur. Yet, nowhere do we meet the eye, or see the figure of the populations affected by this destruction.

While visual representations of populations at risk on the GCR2P web-site are few, the web-site does show numerous photographs of formal meetings and workshops held in the surroundings of the UN in New York. Here, for the first time, the visitor of the web-site sees faces - all be it the faces of UN diplomats and policy makers who participated in these

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events. This raises the question of who are the primary people of concern for R2P-advocates. Are these the people suffering from mass atrocities? Or are they the bystanders, the various international diplomats photographed at the many occasions organized by the Centre?

As it is the mission of the Global Centre to gain support for R2P among UN member states, we should also look at representations of ‘populations’ by other R2P-advocates before jumping to conclusions about a perceived focus on the bystander. The seventy-two pages of the colourful report ‘Research in Focus 2012’ of the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P 2012) for example, contains many visual references to ‘populations’ at risk of mass atrocities. There is the picture of a refugee camp on the border between Libya and Tunisia, showing hundreds of white tents marked with the blue-printed letters ‘UNHRC’, and a dozen people gathering in an open space at the back of the terrain (APR2P 2012: 9); there is the image of a man digging a grave ‘for a victim of the Libyan conflict in Misrata’ according to the subscript, standing alone in a cemetery amidst rows of grave stones (APR2P 2012: 13). There are images of refugees fleeing from their destroyed village in Darfur, or waiting in line behind the fences of a refugee camp, of men and women working in the field of what look like south-east Asian landscapes. There are images of UN security personnel patrolling or chatting with women and children somewhere in Africa or Asia, of a single boy, sitting on his knees in the grass and another boy, showing a handful of bullets to the photographer. In the majority of these pictures we see faces, either taken in portrait or profile.

Other recurring images in the APR2P-report are pictures of the Tuol Sleng prison in Cambodia where between 14,000 and 20,000 Cambodians were imprisoned and tortured during the genocidal Pol Pot regime. The pictures zoom in on prison cells, barbed wire, chains and objects that look like torture instruments. As such, the photographs in the APR2P-report also communicate something of the pain and suffering inflicted on victims of mass atrocity.

Thus, unlike the R2P-advocates of Global Centre, the advocates of the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect represent ‘populations at risk of mass atrocities’ in ways similar to how the ‘people’ were represented by East Timor solidarity activists. They show populations that are either from Africa or Asia, that are uprooted and displaced and that are suffering from violence. In addition, they show implicitly that the populations are poor, fleeing with barely any possessions or waiting for food in refugee camps.

One major difference between representations of ‘the East Timorese people’ and ‘the populations at risk’ of R2P-advocates persists however. Nowhere in the APR2P-report is there a picture of a protesting, resisting population, fighting against its oppressor. The ‘populations’ are poor, innocent, civilian, mostly from the global South and, yes, they are uprooted. They are not however, framed as a resisting people. It is public knowledge that rebel groups rose in resistance to the repressive regimes in Libya, Syria and Sudan, and had supporters in civil society. We might have seen pictures of Libyan and Syrian rebels and resisting civilians in the newspapers, but we do not see those same pictures on any of the seventy-two pages of the APR2P research report. The heroism is lacking in the R2P representations of ‘populations at risk’. Expressions of ‘resistance, defiance and courage’ that we saw on the faces of East Timorese people are missing. Instead, we see people who are merely victims of mass atrocity and do not actively resist their oppressors.
‘Populations at risk...’

Figure 11 (left): map on webpage ‘populations at risk’, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P).
Figure 12 (right): ‘Um Zeifa Village in Darfur’, cover photograph GCR2P occasional paper on Darfur (2010). Photograph: Brian Steidle/Polaris.

Figure 13 (above): ‘United Nations peacekeeper writes notes at a mass grave in Gatumba,’ Burundi, August 16, 2004. ©Thompson Reuters. Main photograph on the homepage of the GCR2P-website.
Whereas East Timorese solidarity activists represented ‘people’ in essentially political terms, emphasizing their distinct identity and showing their political agency as a sovereign people resisting state oppression, the populations at risk in the R2P narrative are largely depoliticized. Even though their faces are shown in the various images of the APR2P-report, these faces do not refer to a population with a distinct identity, nor with political agency. Instead, they convey some common human characteristics of populations at risk of mass atrocity, namely, of populations qualified as civilian, vulnerable, poor and as existing of large numbers, but stripped of any explicit political connotations.

In the next section(s), I will examine how the different conceptions of ‘the human’ as held by East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates respectively inform the empathic relations that both groups of anti-genocide activists (imagine to) maintain with victims of mass atrocity. I begin by explaining the theoretical understandings of ‘empathy’ and ‘compassion’ that I use to examine the activist-victim relation in both groups. Subsequently, I concentrate on analyzing the empathic relations of the East Timor activists (section four) and R2P-advocates (section five).

III. Empathic and compassionate relations

‘Compassion’ and ‘empathy’ have slightly different meanings. The word ‘compassion’ is based on the late Latin term *compassio* - a contamination of the term *pati*, ‘to suffer’, and *com* ‘together’, meaning ‘to feel pity’ (for). ‘Empathy’ on the other hand is more about placing oneself in the position of the other, about imagining feeling the pain of the other. Thus, the Oxford dictionary defines ‘empathy’ as ‘the ability to understand and share the feelings of another’, whereas ‘compassion’ or ‘sympathy’ is defined as ‘feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else’s misfortune’.

As the interview quotes below will show, East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates express both feelings of empathy and compassion for the people or populations they seek to protect. In some of the quotes, the emphasis is on feeling pity for the suffering of the other: in others, activists and advocates actually talk about placing themselves as the other. Consequently, the sections below will not deal with the question whether we should qualify the nature of the relations between anti-genocide activists and victims of mass atrocity as either ‘empathic’ or ‘compassionate’. The reason for still bringing up these two notions however, is that both - especially as explained by historian Lynn Hunt (2007) and anthropologist Omri Elisha (2008) - prove to be analytically helpful to explain the different ways in which East Timor activists and R2P-advocates conceive of their compassionate relation with victims of mass atrocities.

In *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Lynn Hunt (2007) coins the notion ‘imagined empathy’ to describe what in her view fuels the human rights ideology. The idea that such a thing as universal human rights exists, is fostered by a sentiment that Hunt calls ‘imagined empathy’ - the sensation that one feels the pain and suffering of the other. Where political
scientist Benedict Anderson (1991) argued that the spread of newspapers and novels helped to establish the ‘imagined community’ of the nation-state, what Hunt calls imagined empathy constitutes the ‘foundation of human rights’.

The political scientist Benedict Anderson has argued that newspapers and novels created the “imagined community” that nationalism requires in order to flourish. What might be termed “imagined empathy” serves as the foundation of human rights rather than of nationalism. (Hunt 2007: 32)

As is the case with nationalism, the sense that human rights are natural and self-evident is rooted in imagination and emotion (Hunt 2007).

The claim of self-evidence relies ultimately on an emotional appeal. […] we are most certain that a human right is at issue when we feel horrified by its violation. (Hunt 2007: 26).

Apart from Hunt’s emphasis on imagination and emotions as key ingredients for evoking empathy with suffering others, a further interesting aspect of Hunt’s ‘imagined empathy’ lies in her - borrowed - conception of the community as something imagined. This brings back Durkheim’s (1982, 1915’) understanding of the sacred as a collectively imagined community (see Introduction). Although Durkheim’s notion was developed in reflection on religious communities, Hunt’s notion of imagined empathy opens the door to imagining a ‘sacred community of humanity’, so I will argue in the coming sections.

The aspect of imagination returns in Omri Elisha’s (2008) notion of compassion. In an article on ‘socially engaged evangelicals’ in Knoxville, the United States, Elisha consistently talks about (‘the romanticization of’) compassion as something that is imagined, when stating for example, that ‘compassion, in this sense, is imagined not as a distinct emotion but as the interface of hope and desperation’ (Elisha 2008: 170). Another important angle to Elisha’s notion of compassion is that he postulates it as something perceived to be ‘unconditional, ideally enacted without reciprocal obligations, expectations, or rewards’ (Elisha 2008: 171). He explains this conception of compassion as follows.

The channeling of compassion […] is imagined as a radical departure from economic rationality […] its qualities of generosity and sacrifice are presumed to be wholly distinct from the realm of exchange altogether. (Elisha 2008: 180)

Elisha distinguishes this notion of compassion from the notion of ‘accountability’ that instead, so he argues, ‘imposes reciprocal obligations’ (2008: 156). As I will show in the two following sections, this juxtaposition of ‘compassion’ and ‘accountability’ proves helpful in understanding the different ways in which East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates qualify their relations with victims of mass atrocities, notably as ‘solidarity’ respectively
‘responsibility’. In the next section, I will discuss the relations of solidarity as imagined by East Timor solidarity activists.

IV. Solidarity: preserving ‘a people’

The word ‘solidarity’, derived from the French ‘solidarité’ (first coined in the “Encyclopédie” in 1765), gained wide popularity when in 1980 Lech Walesa launched a campaign for political change in communist Poland under the name Solidarność - Polish for ‘solidarity’. The Oxford Dictionary defines ‘solidarity’ as ‘unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.’122 Some of these aspects can indeed be found amongst East Timor solidarity activists.

On occasion, solidarity activists would meet East Timorese people who had fled their country to fight for independence from abroad. Various photographs that solidarity activists had taken during those encounters show them sitting cosily together with the Timorese like real ‘pals’. In interviews, activists emphasize the egalitarian nature of their relation with the East Timorese people. Paul, an Australian activist who was already briefly introduced earlier, relates:

> The relation with ordinary Timorese was very important and it was sort of very natural for [my wife] and I to go and live amongst the Timorese and have Timorese living in our house when the 2006 crisis blew up and Timorese refugees looked for somewhere to live and all that stuff.123 That was really natural and easy and has been incredibly rewarding and enriching. Being Aussie sort of helps with that as well, you know, we tend to be perhaps a bit more egalitarian than some other societies.

Paul, 21 November 2012

The solidarity activists did not only attest to the egalitarian principle by sharing their houses and food with the Timorese. Egalitarianism also involved immaterial sharing - an exchange of thoughts, ideas and knowledge. Megan, a North American solidarity activist who became engaged with East Timor as an exchange student in Yogykarta, Indonesia, talks about the importance of ‘learning from one another’ in solidarity relations.

> So this idea of solidarity has become very… It’s part of who we are, but it has our meaning. And my meaning for it is learning from one another. When I am in East Timor, I hope I am able to contribute something and I know that I am learning


123 In April 2006, violence flared up in Dili, the capital of East Timor, when tension between factions within the newly established East Timorese army mounted into riots. An estimated 21,000 people fled Dili, fearing the outbreak of a civil war. Some of them found temporary shelter with solidarity activists in Australia.
tremendous things. I think that’s a key. Solidarity means friendship, it means equality, it means communication, mutual respect and understanding and learning from each other. So whatever work we do here we try to keep that understanding of what solidarity is clear. But not just here [in East Timor] even in the US. In the US I work with mostly Mexican immigrants. […] There are always differences [between yourself and people with whom you show solidarity]. So also valuing the differences and trying to learn from the differences instead of just finding the similarities. That’s good, finding the similarities, but also becoming richer by learning about our differences and different perspectives.

Megan, 5 September 2012

This attempt to connect through sharing the immaterial becomes quite concrete in Matt’s account. Matt, who was quoted before, is an Australian solidarity activist who regularly travelled with his wife to Indonesia as a Jesuit priest involved in social development work. He and his wife sought to foster relations of solidarity between Australian Christians and East Timorese people through the exchange of life stories.

One of our underlying philosophies […] was to give people the opportunity to tell their story and to connect that story with the experience of people in Australia or people in other countries. So that stories of individuals in parts of East Timor who were struggling, who were suffering and so on, related to the stories of Australians who were going through the same stage of life, such as child-bearing, or running a family, or trying to be a good person and so on. [We did so] to create the solidarity to build that relationship: ‘This is my experience and this is their experience. How do the two experiences match up and if they don’t match up, what is going wrong, why is that the case?’

[My wife] gave the example. She said that at the time when she had two very young children and she heard the story of a woman in Timor who was struggling with her children in the mountains - trying to bring up their children in an environment where there’d been Indonesian oppression - she related to that and she thought, ‘okay, this is something that is just intolerable, we have to do something about this’. She remembers that story clearly and that then led to a lifetime of action.

Matt, 26 November 2012

Thus, ‘creating the solidarity to build that relationship’ involved making an active effort to identify yourself with the Timorese. To ‘put yourself in Timorese shoes’ as Megan, the North American solidarity activist remarked at another instance, reiterating:

I just remember having the experience of trying to put myself in […] Timorese shoes and thinking about the bravery and the horror and thinking… ‘What more can I do?’

Megan, 5 September 2012
The East Timorese were not only and merely regarded as victims by the solidarity activists. As Pam and others said, the East Timorese were regarded as a 'brave' people. Having solidarity with them implied supporting them in their heroic struggle. As already observed in chapter two, the solidarity relation between the activist and the East Timorese made them allies fighting the same enemy.

Sean, the Irish solidarity activist who was introduced in the section on 'people', recalls how his initial view of the East Timorese as victims suddenly changed on his first encounter with a former member of the East Timorese resistance. This East Timorese man, whom I will call Jaoa, lived in the United Kingdom but travelled to Ireland to attend an event organized by the Irish solidarity movement in commemoration of the Santa Cruz massacre.

It was important that then we saw the Timorese in a different light, because up till then we had seen them as victims and spoke of them as victims. Our contact with Jaoa opened up this whole new world to us, of resistance, of resistance of people... It was our first contact, direct contact, [Jaoa] was telling us exactly what had happened and why they resisted. And that 'you [with emphasis] in the solidarity movement are in an ancillary role in our struggle'. That was important. 'You are in a solidarity role, an ancillary role, [but] we carry the struggle'. That was really important for us to learn about. That was a huge change of mind-set.

Sean, 28 August 2012

Being 'ancillary to the struggle' meant that the solidarity activist was backing the struggle of the East Timorese in a quite literal way. The East Timorese were in the lead and the solidarity activists followed and supported them; the solidarity struggle was first and last fought in the name of the people fighting for liberation.

The East Timorese people are regarded as a sovereign people by solidarity activists, and this shapes their compassionate relation in an important way. Compassion is often associated with a paternalist attitude, with intervening out of care or concern for the victim without asking the victims’ consent (cf. Barnett 2011: 34-35). This is certainly not the case with the solidarity activists: for them, enacting compassion does not imply overriding the autonomy and agency of the Timorese. The bonding between the solidarity activist and Timorese, however close and strong, does not evolve into a transgression of the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Both the solidarity activist and East Timorese remain autonomous agents in their own right and even have their differences - as Megan remarked in the quote above. What is more, the compassion experienced and enacted by the solidarity activist, is channelled precisely and entirely as a way to help the Timorese regain their autonomy and agency. The moment of culmination, the day that the East Timorese finally obtained political agency, of course was that of the referendum on East Timor’s independence. Solidarity activist Megan who volunteered as an international observer of the referendum, describes how she accompanied the East Timorese people who were walking to the polling station on that early morning of 30 August 1999.
And then the vote happened and, from my experience, it was peaceful, where we were. Oh, and it was so emotional, you know, so emotional… So we got up very, very early in the morning to walk. It was myself and another IFET observer124, we all had partners. And so he and I left the house we were staying at to walk - it was maybe a forty minute walk - to the polling station. So we left very early, it was still dark. And as we walked, there was nobody on the street but people came out to join us, which told us that people felt safer being with us.

One of the first people to come out of their house and join us was a quite elderly woman and she walked right next to me: almost touching me. We walked for, I don't know, five minutes, when suddenly she took my hand. It was very meaningful, you know, it said something: it felt very powerful to have her take my hand. And we kept walking, her holding my hand. I must have said something to her and I remember how she responded: ‘This is my first time voting ever, ever in my life.’ And then we walked and there was this pause, dramatic pause, you know, this silence that was very full. And then she said, ‘I am gonna vote with my heart.’ And that was something I heard again and again during that time.

Megan, 5 September 2012

At first sight, it seems as if there exists a power imbalance between the solidarity activist and the East Timorese, as the East Timorese woman walked next to Megan for protection. However, when the East Timorese grabbed the hand of the activist, she talked about her intention to vote ‘with her heart’. She was moved by the fact that she was allowed to vote in free elections for the very first time in her life. This is what, in turn, moved the solidarity activist. Walking towards the polling station whilst holding the hand of the East Timorese woman, she witnessed the resurrection of political agency amongst a people who have been deprived of that for over twenty-five years. Now, the expression ‘I am gonna vote with my heart’ is something she heard again and again, from the numerous East Timorese who flocked the streets to vote in the referendum.

Omri Elisha writes about ‘the romanticization of compassion’ as something entailing ‘[…] a desire to collapse or transcend the boundaries of human intersubjectivity’ (Elisha 2008: 158). Indeed, the above interview quotes display a certain desire to identify and connect oneself with the East Timorese, a certain romantic longing to remove the boundaries between oneself and the other. Living that compassionate relation according to the principle of solidarity is not ‘simply’ about giving charity, about being the do-gooder giving food to the poor as a superior to an inferior. It includes an honest attempt to connect as people-to-people on an egalitarian footing.

As said, solidarity establishes the activist and the East Timorese as allies in a political battle. It is based on the idea, or ‘imagination’ as Elisha puts it, that relations of solidarity are unconditional, entail no economic exchange. In the eyes of the activists, the solidarity

124 The International Federation for East Timor (IFET) had organized an international observer mission for referendum day - see also chapter two.
relations are ‘imagined as a radical departure from economic rationality’ and ‘presumed to be wholly distinct from the realm of exchange altogether’ (Elisha 2008: 180). The unconditional lies in the fact that the solidarity activist does not start her solidarity campaign in order to ‘win the game’. As became clear in chapter two and will again emerge in chapter six, the solidarity struggle is fought against all odds. Geoffrey - an ‘all-round’ Australian activist who, besides from East Timor, also supported the struggle for self-determination of the Zapatistas in Mexico and had joined the struggle for labour rights back home in Queensland - says the following about ‘the logic of the activist’.

There was that sense of ‘if not us, then who?’ That’s the logic of any activist, I think, especially the more hopeless the cause. […] In [19] 95, I was not especially confident [that we would win our cause], and personally, I think that anybody who was, was a little bit deluded [laughs]. But the principle […] by Thomas Mann or I cannot remember [who], was ‘the optimism of the will over the pessimism of the intellect’ […] An activist needs to have the optimism of the will over the pessimism of the intellect.

Geoffrey, December 12, 2012

The activist joins the struggle because of the principle of solidarity, irrespective of its outcome and independent from any calculation.

This ‘unconditional benevolence’ (Elisha 2008: 156) of the solidarity relation between the international activists and the East Timorese people, is qualitatively different from the relation between the R2P-advocate and the populations at risk, framed in terms of ‘responsibility’. If I were boldly - and somewhat roughly - to replace the term ‘solidarity’ with ‘compassion’ and ‘responsibility’ by ‘accountability’, then the following statement by Omri Elisha could turn out to be quite illuminating.

Compassion invokes an ideal of empathetic, unconditional benevolence, whereas accountability imposes reciprocal obligations on the part of others as a condition of continued benevolence (Elisha 2008: 156, referring to Bartkowski and Regis 2003).

In the next section, I will show that ‘reciprocity’ and ‘obligation’ are indeed important notions informing the sense of ‘responsibility’ that R2P-advocates feel towards victims of mass atrocity and humanity.
V. Responsibility: preserving ‘Humanity’

For too long the world has stood by in the face of atrocities. The responsibility to protect is a commitment to act.

-Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

However morally committed solidarity activists might be, compassionate relations that are grounded in solidarity still concern voluntary engagements. With ‘responsibility’ we enter a more compelling form of moral engagement - that of moral imperatives and obligations.

If R2P-advocates agree about one thing, it is that responses to mass atrocities should no longer be haphazard and dependent on political will. The responsibility to protect should be equally and consistently applied across the board, because - as reads the main slogan on the opening page of the GCR2P website - ‘for too long the world has stood by in the face of atrocities: the responsibility to protect is a commitment to act’. R2P-advocates have great difficulty in comprehending or accepting that one would not act in response to mass atrocities. In their view, such passive behaviour would be ‘unnatural’.

Annette: Why should mass atrocities be halted?
Emilio: Okay, well… [laughs]. I think there is a moral obligation. I think, for us to really - even at a personal level when you see someone whose basic rights are being violated - the natural response, at least for me, is ‘this person has a right to live and live in a dignified way’. I think for me it's very natural, a moral obligation on the part of individuals. That is why even Ed Luck and Francis Deng would say,125 ‘R2P is also an individual responsibility’. And when you see it on a mass scale and you don’t speak up, you just tolerate everything that is going on… for me that is unnatural. Probably, there is something wrong with the person who does not feel bad when someone is being killed without [getting] any help or assistance. For example, if there is flooding and people die or get to be threatened by floods, you want to help them. And how much more [would you want to help] when there is violence involved and people just take guns and kill. For me it's morally wrong [to stand by idly] because individuals have a moral responsibility. So in a way, I believe in ‘you are your brother's keeper’ [laughs]. At a personal level.

Interview, 17 October 2012

Are you asking why the bystander thing cannot happen again? I just don't know how we can know something is going on and not do something about it. Take [for example] smaller crimes within your own country. […] If a lot of crime is happening in a certain

125 Former UN Special Advisers for the Responsibility to Protect, respectively the Prevention of Genocide.
area, we make note of it, we send our police there to do patrols. We assess the situation and try to do something about it. How we can know that something is going on that’s that horrifying, somewhere else, and just stand back and say, ‘that’s not my problem’… I don’t get it. How do you let that occur?

Becky, 2 December 2011

Not acting to halt mass atrocities does not only cost the victim who continues to suffer: it also costs the individual who stands by idly. There must be ‘something wrong’ or ‘unnatural’ with that individual, Emilio, a Philippine R2P-advocate hinted above. Not acting seems like acting against human nature. Not acting means that the passive bystander loses some of her ‘humanity’, Becky a North American R2P-advocate suggests. As a young university lecturer, she had to teach a course on the genocide in Rwanda in which she again and again screened the same documentary. Becky talks about the ‘fury’ she felt when watching the feeble response of a US state representative to the genocide in Rwanda.

There is this woman who is the state department’s spokesperson, and each time she gives the statement, there is someone in the media, in the audience saying, ‘So, what’s going on with this genocide?’ And she just like mumbles ‘We’re not ready to call it genocide yet’. And you’re just like, you are infuriated watching this thing, ‘cause you’re like, ‘are you kidding me?’ You are concerned with the humanity of the people who are doing the killing, but you’re also like, ‘what is going on in the minds of these people who cannot just say the word genocide? How do they sleep at night?’

Becky, 2 December 2011

In an article on the role of the bystander Zygmunt Bauman (2003) argues that ‘there is an affinity between ‘doing evil’ and ‘non-resistance to evil’ (Bauman 2003: 138). This is what Becky suggests in the interview quoted above. She is not just concerned about the ‘humanity’ of the perpetrator, but equally with the ‘humanity’ of those who passively stand by and refrain from action whilst genocide is taking place.

Apparently, the responsibility to protect does not only ‘oblige’ one to intervene to protect those directly affected by mass atrocities. It also includes accountability to ‘humanity’. In the 2009 report on the Responsibility to Protect, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon appealed to all UN member states to adhere to the responsibility to protect because ‘humanity expects it and history demands it’ (United Nations 2009). So how should we understand Ban Ki-Moon’s notion of ‘humanity’, and the ‘humanity’ to which Becky refers above?

Talal Asad points at the dual meaning of the term ‘humanity’ as referring both to a biological species and a particular kind of ‘compassionate behaviour’ (Asad 2013). It is clear that for R2P-advocates this ‘compassionate behaviour’ concerns protecting each other from mass atrocities. That is what makes one ‘humane’, that makes one a member of the community.

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of ‘humanity’. Failing to act compassionately, on the other hand, is considered ‘unnatural’ and might even make one less humane in the eyes of R2P-advocates.

What is important about this responsibility to act compassionately in the face of mass atrocities is its reciprocity. As said, Elisha (2008: 156) defines ‘accountability’ in compassionate relations as imposing ‘reciprocal obligations’. I should protect you from mass atrocities, as you should protect me from mass atrocities, because ‘humanity expects it, and history demands it’ (United Nations 2008: 5). This sense of reciprocity is well reflected in the following two interview quotes.

Everyone can be the best they can possibly be. And if I can have it, if I can have this safe environment, everyone else should be able to have it as well. It is about a fundamental equal opportunity for everyone and mass atrocities are the direct opposite of that. And eventually it will haunt us all. You cannot allow mass atrocities on that scale to occur around the world without it one day coming back to haunt us. You cannot have that degree of grievance, loss and pain and suffering without one day people thinking, you who stood by and watched it cannot deserve much compassion yourself. I don’t look at it in terms of zero sum or reciprocal. But just what we want for ourselves we want for others. Very simple like that.

Lisa, 19 October 2012

What is beautiful about human society?
Ooh [bit annoyed] everything that doesn’t involve being an assassin. Just people! It’s just, I cannot say more than that, just people. People are intrinsically beautiful, their intrinsic value and worth, the life they construct, their need for acceptance and community gives us meaning and purpose. That’s where we get validation from where all of the nice stuff comes from. That’s the kind of root of it. I mean, people are nice, aren’t they? You know we all like to have a gossip and a joke and give each other a drink. And we share so much more in common. It would be daft not to prioritize protecting each other!

Steve, 19 October 2012

‘It would be daft not to prioritize protecting each other,’ says Steve, the founder of one of the R2P-centres. The reciprocity of this pledge brings to mind Judith Butler’s (2010) notion of precariousness.

Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we do not know, or barely know, at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged upon by the exposure and dependency of others […]. These are not necessarily relations of love or even care, but constitute obligations toward others. (Butler 2010: 14).
We do not only impart compassion for others because of a love for humanity, but also because we simply have to, Butler (2010; 2011b) argues. Because as social beings, our lives depend on other lives and vice versa: ‘one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other’ (Butler 2010: 14). R2P advocates seem to acknowledge that. That is why they regard the responsibility to protect as a reciprocal obligation.

For R2P-advocates, the essence of ‘the human’ resides in our common vulnerability. Our vulnerability makes us member of the same community of humanity, and this brings us to the second meaning of the term ‘humanity’; that of ‘humanity’ as referring to the same ‘biological species’ united in the global community of humanity.

In Vulnerability and Human Rights, sociologist of religions Bryan S. Turner (2006), points to the increased use of the term ‘humanity’ in the era of globalization.

Anthropological research suggests that preliterate societies did not have an expansive or comprehensive notion of humanity, but on the contrary, regarded themselves in exclusionary terms as “the People.” Rituals that created a decisive sense of otherness often enclosed traditional communities. (Turner 2006: 15)

In a globalized world however, borders of ‘traditional communities’ have become permeable: flows of migrants and refugees cross national borders to seek a better life, or save their lives. Threats to human security have become more global and interdependent in nature. Effectively dealing with these threats requires the creation of a more encompassing notion of community, one that is not based on a ‘decisive sense of otherness’ (Turner, above quotation), but that instead generates a greater sense of the commonalities between all human beings. As Steve said above, people all have a ‘need for acceptance and community [...] we all like to have a gossip and a joke and give each other a drink, and we share so much more in common!’ This emphasis on human commonalities opens the way to a much more inclusive notion of community - that of the global community of humanity. In this context, us-and-them distinctions lose clarity and significance and are increasingly replaced by expansive notions of ‘we’.

In a previous section I talked about the inclusive character of the term ‘populations’ as one ‘chosen deliberately to include any living human being at risk on this planet, irrespective of identity or nationality or social-economic background’. The inclusiveness of the term is grounded in an awareness that mass atrocities can happen anywhere, to anyone on this planet. This awareness blurs the boundaries between the victim and the bystander - between ‘us’ and ‘them’. A bystander of mass atrocities today might be a victim tomorrow, and vice versa. Another awareness shading the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is that of the (increased) affinity between the perpetrator of mass atrocities and the bystander, as discussed above. All these forms of entanglement between bystander, victim and perpetrator, give rise to a strong sense that ‘we are all in it together’. This opens the way to conceiving of humanity as an ‘indivisible we’, as Kofi Annan did in his 1999 speech on humanitarian interventions.
If the new commitment to intervention in the face of extreme suffering is to retain the support of the world's peoples, it must be - and must be seen to be - fairly and consistently applied, irrespective of region or nation. Humanity, after all, is indivisible. (UN 1999)

The notion of humanity as an ‘indivisible we’ is not just the outcome of rational reasoning - of the observation that the world’s problems are increasingly global and interdependent in nature, and that as a consequence, our lives are increasingly in the hands of others. It is also fuelled and fostered by the imagined empathy that Hunt (2007) writes about, this feeling that makes one experience the suffering of the other as one’s own. This is well illustrated by Rosa, who was a junior researcher at the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect at the time of the interview.

Interview with Rosa, 8 March 2010

‘It’s my own suffering,’ says Rosa. Not acting to halt suffering of others could rebound on us, Lisa, the Australian R2P-advocate suggested above, ‘eventually, it will haunt us all’.

In the section ‘empathic and compassionate relations’, I already hinted that a merger of Hunt’s notion of universal human rights as being fuelled by ‘imagined empathy’ (Hunt 2007), and Durkheim’s (1982, 1915) notion of the sacred as a collectively imagined community, opened the way to imagining a sacred community of humanity. ‘Humanity’ as conceived by R2P-advocates refers to an expansive notion of the sacred community that encompasses not only one’s own ‘people’ but the whole human race. The sacredness of the global community of humanity is sustained by adhering to norms for ‘compassionate behaviour’ that affirm the ‘humanity’ of members of that community (Asad 2013).

As Sharpe (1994: 84) writes, explaining Durkheim, ‘[religious] obligations [incumbent on every single member of the group] have no other sanction than that provided by the need to perpetuate the life of the group; but they are given a further absolute sanction by being referred to supernatural agencies, which are in effect products of the collective imagination’. For R2P-advocates, the ‘obligation incumbent on every single member of the group’ is the responsibility to protect each other from mass atrocities. The ‘supernatural agency’ that sanctions this moral
obligation and that is ‘in effect [the] product of the collective imagination’ (Sharpe 1994: 84) is that of Humanity writ large. This ‘supernatural’, or I prefer to say ‘transcendent’ notion of humanity is threefold. It refers to a humanity ‘beyond’ as in (1) an indivisible ‘we’ that emerges from the essential precariousness of human life, the given ‘that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other’ (Butler 2010: 14); (2) a human civilization or ‘human ways of life’ (Asad 2008: 68) that spans not only this but also future generations and; (3) a reciprocal and universal obligation imposed on all members of the global human community to protect each other from mass atrocities, sanctioned by the need to preserve and perpetuate the life of the group (Sharpe 1994), that is, the global community of ‘humanity’. Closely following Asad (2008), I argue that other than the East Timor solidarity activists who concentrate their actions on preserving one distinct ‘people’, R2P-advocates embark on an existential mission to secure not just one’s own life and that of one’s peers, but also, and moreover, that of human civilization and identity, or ‘human ways of life’ (Asad 2008: 68). This latter aspect, that of the mission to secure ‘human ways of life’ (Asad 2008) will be further discussed in chapter four.

VI. Conclusion

When validating the findings of this chapter with regards to the second proposition in this dissertation - that is, that a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence can be observed in the call for mass atrocity interventions - the following (trends) can be detected. In the case of the international solidarity movement for East Timor, which has been selected as an early example of anti-genocide activists, ‘the human’ was defined in essentially political terms as ‘people’ - ‘the people as sovereign; peoples as nations, and the people as opposed to the ruling elite’(Canovan 2005: 2). The term ‘people’ referred to a group that was poor, suffering and oppressed, but that nonetheless had the rights and power to resist. For East Timor solidarity activists, political agency constitutes the essence of ‘the human’.

In the case of the Responsibility to Protect-coalition that has been selected as a more contemporary example of anti-mass atrocity activism, the focus of compassion seemed to shift to the more depoliticized concept of ‘populations’, of groups devoid of any political or identifiable characteristics. R2P-advocates hold a more biopolitical notion of human life: vulnerability and precariousness are the essence of ‘the human’. It is this common vulnerability and interdependence that envelopes all human beings in the global community of humanity. This ‘humanity’ is postulated outside the political realm of ‘peoples power’, and legitimated by a universal notion of an ‘indivisible we’. It thereby becomes transcendent.

The shift in conceptions of ‘the human’ - from a political notion of ‘people’, to a depoliticized, transcendent notion of ‘humanity’ - is illustrated by a gradual effacing of identifying qualifications and political references in visual representations of ‘populations at risk’. It could be perceived further in the different ways in which East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates describe their relation with suffering others, notably as one of ‘solidarity’ or one of ‘responsibility’.
R2P-advocates speak of their compassion(ate relation) as a ‘responsibility’. ‘The responsibility to protect is a commitment to act’, it says on the homepage of the website of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. East Timor solidarity activists express their compassion in relations of ‘solidarity’. ‘Solidarity means friendship, equality, communication, mutual respect and understanding and learning from each other,’ an East Timor solidarity activist said.

There is a difference between compassion expressed as related to solidarity, and compassion expressed as related to responsibility. Solidarity reflects motives of a political ideological nature. In a solidarity relation the activist supports, becomes ‘ancillary to’ the (people’s) struggle. In this relation the activist and victim retain their political agency and autonomy. Although the commitment of the activist to the solidarity struggle campaign is ‘unconditional’ - very much in tune with Elisha’s notion of compassion as ‘unconditional benevolence’ - (s)he still frames their relation as an engagement between two autonomous agents. The feelings of compassion are strong, but not so ‘strong’ as to overflow the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The suffering other remains object of compassion, true to its original meaning as ‘feeling pity for’.

Responsibility has a more neutral, non-political overtone, reflecting a more rational, calculated attitude. At the same time, responsibility does not only involve protecting the victim of mass atrocities, but also includes accountability to the whole of ‘humanity’. In this obligation to preserve ‘humanity’, the distinction between ‘us’ (saviours) and ‘them’ (victims) fades. Your survival is indirectly linked to my survival and vice versa. Responsibility is about ‘we have a mutual obligation to preserve Humanity’. It is the sense of accountability that Elisha (2008: 156) describes as imposing ‘reciprocal obligations’.

Now that I have described what constitutes sacred human life for East Timor solidarity activists and Responsibility to Protect-advocates, in the next chapter I will examine what kinds of violence constitute a threat to this ‘sacred’. Why do anti-genocide activists regard mass atrocities as a particular threat to a ‘people’ or ‘humanity’? What makes them accept war and military force as part of the human condition, but reject mass atrocities as something ‘barbaric’ and ‘inhuman’?

127 See: www.globalr2p.org, retrieved 9 September 2013.
128 Interview, 5 September 2012.
‘Why should mass atrocities be halted?’ I asked Miguel, an R2P-advocate with whom I had been chatting for an hour in a peaceful office in New York. ‘I have thought about that’, he replied. Then, after a long pause, he continued, ‘because it attends to the innermost part of our soul. It is shocking, it is immediately shocking. It is more of a reflex’.

There is something about the ‘way of killing’ in mass atrocities that makes its observers respond with feelings of disgust, dread and horror. Those feelings can be so intense and immense that they can evoke physical responses. Rosa, the junior GCR2P researcher whom I introduced in the previous chapter, shares the following about her initial response when hearing about a massacre that had occurred in Nigeria the previous day.

Annette: Let’s go back for a moment, if we can. Could you tell something… do you remember when you first heard this news about Nigeria? Could you actually go back to what your first thoughts were?

Rosa: This morning?

Annette: Yeah, as far as you can articulate it…

Rosa: Shock… shock basically. Thinking of…

Annette: Do you feel that somewhere?

Rosa: Yeah… generally my stomach that is where I feel things. But yet it’s like revolting. And then just like something appalling… Like totally shocking!

Rosa, 8 March 2010

These and similar responses to scenes of mass atrocities bring to mind Talal Asad’s definition of ‘horror.’ ‘Horror,’ Talal Asad (2008: 68) writes, ‘is a state of being that is felt.’ ‘Horror explodes the imaginary,’ he continues (Asad 2008: 68), and is ‘essentially not a matter of interpretation’ (Asad 2008: 81). Although he examines the horror evoked by suicide bombing, the scenes that he describes are in many ways similar to those of mass atrocity that arouse horror among anti-mass atrocity activists, and that will be discussed in this chapter. If the imagery and imaginations of scenes of mass atrocities elicit ‘reflexes’ of ‘immediate shock’ among activists, as Miguel indicated above, what is it then in this ‘way of killing’ that makes them respond with such horror? What is it about this particular ‘kind of violence’ that makes them label it as something ‘barbaric’ and ‘inhuman’? What is it in mass atrocities that makes anti-genocide activists want to stop them at all costs, if need be through the use of military force?

129 Interview, 17 November 2011.

In the previous chapter, I analyzed what qualified as ‘the human’ that both groups of activists seek to protect. In this chapter I will trace some of the ideological assumptions that make anti-genocide activists respond with horror to what they regard as the most brutal violations of that ‘human’. When is ‘the human’ or ‘humanity’ felt to be violated or under threat in the eyes of anti-genocide activists?

The larger part of this chapter examines three ‘common denominators’ in scenes of mass violence that particularly appear to evoke horror among anti-genocide activists - the deliberate infliction of bodily pain and bodily mutilation, the widespread and systematic method of killing in mass atrocities, and the ‘terror’ that can be aroused by the anomie or ‘normlessness’ exposed in scenes of mass slaughter. My analysis is based on reflections on mass atrocities considered to be the most shocking by activists who shared these with me: that is the atrocities committed in East Timor, Rwanda and during the Holocaust. I asked questions like, ‘what atrocities shocked you most, and why?’, and ‘what do you find particularly horrifying in the scene you describe?’ That activists were not used to talking about atrocities in such terms became clear from the fact that they frequently needed to pause to think and find the right words. Moreover, after the interviews, many confessed that they seldom reflected on atrocities in this way and that they felt somewhat ‘grateful’ for the chance I gave them to do so.

After having examined the sensibilities evoked by scenes of mass violence, I discuss the views of anti-genocide activists on mass violence and the human condition. ‘Why do mass atrocities occur?’ I asked again and again, ‘to what extent is violence human, or inhuman?’ I close this chapter with a discussion of the ambiguous attitude of anti-genocide activists to violence, of the idea that violence is needed to end violence.

I. Bodily pain and bodily mutilation

If humanitarianism and human rights evolved as missions dedicated to bringing relief to human suffering (cf. Fassin 2012; Redfield 2013), as stated in the Introduction, it then follows that the deliberate infliction of suffering constitutes the greatest threat to that mission. One of the most immediate and concrete manifestations of such suffering is the deliberate infliction of bodily pain, the intentional wounding and maiming of a human body without his or her consent. As said, anti-genocide activists are especially concerned about the wounding, maiming and killing of multiple human bodies in massacres. In the next two interview excerpts Rosa and Becky, both R2P-advocates who worked at the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, describe what horrifies them about these massacres.

Rosa: This morning as I was walking to the subway, listening to the BBC news, I heard there was a massive killing in Nigeria last night, like 500 civilians killed with machetes, and burned […]. It was horrible, something like an explosion. And I was coming here and I was thinking, ‘okay we are watching Sudan and Burma, but this is really… like an explosive, you
know, I don't know, act of violence. [...] And at the moment, the very same moment that I was reading in the afternoon, Rwanda comes to my mind. Because the images...

Annette: What kind of images?

Rosa: Machetes, you know, like this brutal way of killing people, because I mean if you were using fire weapons - it's horrible it's the same - but I think it is so much more barbaric. Because people, they have their machetes and... [...] I cannot help picturing, graphically, the image of one person killing another, especially children I think that's the part where I get more shocked. [...] Annette: Is that also why you find it more difficult perhaps, to look at someone who is being killed by machetes...,

Rosa: Yeah...

Annette: than by...

Rosa: Yeah, yeah... I think it is more, again like I said; it is more painful, you know, if somebody goes and cuts your arm and cuts your leg and you're not dead yet... It's a level of pain and a level of suffering and it is more... barbaric, I think. It is not like it justifies to... But there are different ways to kill somebody, you know.

Interview, 8 March 2010.

Annette: What were your emotional responses when first seeing this movie on Rwanda? What images come to mind?

Becky: Image-wise, there is two scenes that really stand out. There is one scene - the camera zoomed out, so unless you're paying attention or you are on a big screen, which unfortunately we were, you don't notice it. But in the corner of the screen there are three people killing someone with a machete. You're watching it, it's there, I mean you are not seeing close up what's happening. But you can see that that's what's happening. And then there is another scene where they're just showing this river that's just swelling with bodies that are just floating down the river. And that's just really disturbing. So that was... it's chilling. I don't really know the emotion that's attached to it. Horrified certainly, but... I think it's something you're watching and try to comprehend, but you just cannot. You cannot comprehend hating someone, hating another ethnicity enough to be willing to kill your neighbour, someone you grew up with just because they're different. [...] Annette: Is there a difference for you between someone being killed in the streets in New York in a gang fight and Rwanda where people were being killed with machetes?

Becky: Mass violence is certainly harder to understand than gang fighting. Gang

fighting I usually assume that there is some logical motive. [...] They have a reason for targeting a specific person. Whereas mass killing it’s just…

Annette: More irrational or incomprehensible?
Becky: Yes, because you’re hating a group instead of a certain person. But there is also the kind of killing. Killing in New York tends to be gun violence. [...] A lot is accidental killing or even when it is intentional, it is sort of this very quick ‘kill the person and you’re done’. Whereas killing someone with a machete takes some effort [ironic laugh], where you’re actively engaged in that for a bit of time. To be doing that and seeing this other person in front of you dying, I just don’t…

Annette: Is it shocking because it is more painful, or…?
Becky: It’s the effort! If you shoot someone and 30 seconds later you walk away. Whereas I think, killing someone with a machete takes a lot more effort than pulling a trigger and not taking a second glance. But I mean, that’s Rwanda. Certainly in the Holocaust people were killed en masse and there was that kind of separation in the gas chamber where you’re not watching. And I still don’t understand it.

Interview, 2 December 2011

Being shocked because imagining feeling the pain of the other is one aspect that plays out here, especially with Rosa saying, ‘it is more painful, you know, if someone goes and cuts your arm and cuts your leg and you’re not dead yet’. However, what is at stake here moreover - besides from the ‘imagined empathy’ (Hunt 2007) that was discussed in the previous chapter - is the deliberate violation, sacrilege, of the body. The body that has become the symbol of the ‘autonomy and inviolability of individuals’ (Hunt 2007: 82) that is central to the human rights worldview. Or, to speak with Asad (2003: 84), ‘the integral human body’ that has become the ‘locus for moral sovereignty’ in the secular worldview.

The deliberate infliction of bodily pain did not always evoke moral outrage amongst the European public, Hunt (2007) explains. In 16th and 17th century Europe purification rituals were staged to restore breaches of the sacred pact between God and community. Thieves and murderers were put on the scaffold in ‘public spectacles of pain’ that centred on the mutilation of the human body (Hunt 2007: 92-94). Hunt describes how public torture and executions were not only meant as a deterrence, but just as much to restore the God-given sacredness of the community.

Under the traditional understanding, the pains of the body did not belong entirely to the individual condemned person. Those pains had the higher political and religious purposes of redemption and reparation of the community. (Hunt 2007: 94)

However, a shift in attitude occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century. When
the early modern state was replaced by the much more stable nation-state and authorities exercised greater control over their subjects the belief in justice before God gave way to increased trust in the competence of the human justice system (Spierenburg 1984: 202-205). Further fuelled by Enlightenment ideals of equality and individual liberty, bodily punishment came to be regarded as uncivilized by the elite. Thus, Hunt observes:

Once sacred and to be mutilated or tortured for the greater good only in a religiously defined order, the individual body now became sacred by itself in a secular order that rested on the autonomy and inviolability of individuals. (Hunt 2007: 82)

With the advance of human rights in late eighteenth century Europe, deliberate inflictions of bodily pain and mutilation were increasingly regarded as violations of the ‘dignified self’, of the autonomy and agency that are central to the ‘human dignity’ of the self-conscious individual. The deliberate maiming of the body and the infliction of bodily pain no longer served to repair or redeem the community but, on the contrary, were considered an offense.

In a human rights worldview that centres on the inviolability of the embodied self, deliberate violations of the integral human body are experienced both as a physical and ‘spiritual’ affront, Turner (2006: 27) writes. It is the deliberateness of the mutilation that evokes shock. ‘It’s the effort that is shocking,’ Becky called out, ‘killing with a machete takes a lot more effort than pulling a trigger’. Second, it is the mutilation of the human body, the hacking with the machetes, that is experienced as inhumane, as ‘barbaric’, as Rosa exclaims: ‘if someone goes and cuts your arm and cuts your leg and you’re not dead yet… It’s a level of pain and a level of suffering and it is more… barbaric, I think’.

The hacking with a machete is one of the most graphic examples of bodily mutilation that horrifies R2P-advocates. There are other, less obvious examples of physical maiming and mutilation that they talk about, however. As said, as well as Rwanda, the Holocaust appeared an important frame of reference for R2P-advocates when talking about their abhorrence of mass atrocities. Miguel, who was already quoted at the opening of this chapter, worked for a Mexican Ministry before he came to New York to advocate the responsibility to protect and pursue a PhD in political philosophy. He says the following about images of the Holocaust that he remembers seeing in a documentary.

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132 As Spierenburg (1984: 202) writes, ‘late medieval and early modern executions served especially to underline the power of the state. They were meant to be an exemplary manifestation of this power, precisely because it was not yet entirely taken for granted.’ But once the nation-states were formed and authorities exercised much better control over their subjects, ‘public executions were not only felt to be distasteful, they were no longer necessary’ Spierenburg (1984: 205) concludes. An effective police force had been established. It made the often-quoted saying come true that effective prevention of crime depends on the certainty of being caught rather than on the severity of punishment (Spierenburg 1984: 205).
Annette: What is your first memory of a mass atrocity that you heard about?
Miguel: The one I remember - that was not necessarily the first one…
Annette: No, but the one that is most vivid, or most impressive.
Miguel: It was Auschwitz. When I was a little child, on TV, I watched all the documentaries.
Annette: How old were you then?
Miguel: I was twelve, thirteen or so…
Annette: But you were watching all the documentaries?
Miguel: Yes, on TV, documentaries and movies.
Annette: Do you remember certain images?
Miguel: Yes of course, the images of the Holocaust, of the Jewish people in Auschwitz and others… They are powerful, the images.
Annette: Could you describe which images you found powerful?
Miguel: Well, these people emaciated - like skeletons alive - are very powerful. And then of course, I heard that that was designed, that it was no accident. That it was designed by some, or by a group of, people. And that was very shocking of course.

Interview, 17 November 2011

In a similar tone of shock, and perhaps even disgust, Rosa talks of images of people in Nazi concentration camps as ‘all those, kind of death looking, or I don’t know, very, very weak and thin, skinny, sick people’.133

These descriptions remind one of the pictures of famine that were repeatedly shown by East Timor solidarity activists; of the emaciated bodies of the Timorese suffering from famine in camps controlled by the Indonesian military.

Paul, the Australian solidarity activist, already conducted many human rights investigations before East Timor gained independence, and was later appointed to the team of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR) that investigated the human rights abuses committed under Indonesian occupation. I asked him which of all the human rights violations he had reported on had shocked him most.

133 Interview with Rosa, 8 March 2010.
Emaciated bodies

Figure 15 (left). East Timorese girl suffering from famine. Photograph: Peter Rodgers/Fairfax Media. The photograph has a prominent place in the poster history of the CAVR exhibition in Dili.

Figure 16 (upper right). East Timorese children suffering from famine. Photographer unknown.

Figure 17 (bottom right). This photograph (figure 16) was used by Ramos Horta during a UN press conference in 1979 to support the argument that a famine was ongoing in East Timor. Photograph: Yutaka Nagata/UN Department of Public Information.

Figure 18 (left). Emaciated bodies of Holocaust survivors. Photographer unknown.

Figure 19 (right). An emaciated 18-year old Russian girl looks into the camera lens during the liberation of Dachau concentration camp in 1945. Photographer: Eric Schwab/AFP/Getty Images.
Oh gosh there's so much really… I think I'd say that the famine has always been sort of a… not a sound track but a constant that has run right through the whole thing. The idea that people would die for lack of food; that people would sit starved to death because they could not find enough food. […] I don't think many people understand that famine - not having food - was the major cause of death in Timor. When they hear the figures - a 100,000 civilians dead, or whatever - they assume that they were the direct casualties of bombing, shooting, war. They don't appreciate that they were casualties of war but it was, you know, the Indonesian drive to 'separate the fish from the water' as they said, separate the people from the guerrillas. […] They would bomb and scare and force people through famine out of the mountains. It was part of a military technique, 'starve them out', and the human cost was terrible.

Paul, 21 November 2012

What becomes clear from interview quotes above is that as well as images and imaginations of physical pain, these are images of the bodily remains of victims of mass atrocity that appear to evoke horror among anti-genocide activists - images of slaughtered, mutilated, or starving and in- emaciated bodies. When thinking of Rwanda, R2P-advocates recall seeing images of mutilated bodies; of amputated arms and of rivers 'swelling with bodies', as Becky said. They recall the abhorrence upon seeing (images of) piles of corpses at different stages of decomposition, as found in mass graves for example. To some activists who visited former sites of violence, these images come with a strong, ineradicable smell of death. Pete, an R2P-advocate who visited Rwanda after the genocide recounts, 'it was… hell…once you've been there and seen graves and smelled the corpses…'134

In studying the horror at suicide bombing, Asad pays particular attention to the 'horror of formlessness' (2008: 73) that can be evoked by the deformation of the human body. Quoting at length from a testimony of a suicide attack, Asad describes how the explosion caused by the suicide bombing breaks the bodies of the victims into bits and pieces, and in shapes that the body would never have been in living form. ‘One is presented here not just with a scene of death and wounding but with a confounding of the body’s shapes’, Asad (2008: 70) writes. The remains of the slaughtered bodies in Rwanda - mutilated and cut in pieces by machetes - have been ‘confounded’ in similar ways. Though still alive, the starving, emaciated bodies of the East Timorese and the people in Nazi concentration camps are perceived as 'skeletons alive' as 'kind of death looking […] people' - as Angel and Rosa qualified them above. They too can evoke this feeling that the boundaries that hold the human body together - that delineate the human from the non-human, the living from the non-living - have been transgressed.

134 Interview with Pete, R2P-advocate, 26 October 2011.
Confounded bodies

Figure 20. A pile of bodies in the Bergen-Belsen camp, in Bergen, Germany, found after the camp was liberated by British forces on April 20, 1945. Photographer unknown.

Figure 21. Pile of dead bodies Rwandan genocide. Photograph: Associated Press.
‘Pollution dangers strike when form has been attacked,’ Douglas (1970, 1966: 104) states. Images of bodily slaughter and mutilation trigger anxieties about the precarious boundaries of society. Ever since Mary Douglas’s *Purity and danger* (1970, 1966), anthropologists have built on the notion that ‘the body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious’ (Douglas 1970, 1966: 115). Douglas postulates the body as ‘a symbol of society’ (1970, 1966: 115). The body represents ‘social structure […] in small’ and hence becomes the object of various taboos and rituals of purification that serve to protect it against pollution (Douglas 1970, 1966: 115).

Disordered bodies represent disordered society. If one confounded body can already induce notions of a disordered society, then what do piles of confounded or ‘rotting’ bodies signify to the spectator? This brings to the fore a particular aspect of the horror evoked by mass atrocities, one that is distinct from the shock that can be aroused by relatively limited or isolated human rights violations. Mass atrocities conjure strong sensations of anomie, ‘normlessness’ (Durkheim 1951, 1897), Berger and Luckman 1991, 1966) related to the wide scale and organized method of killing. The following section will therefore discuss the sensibilities aroused by the ‘widespread and systematic’ methodology of death that characterizes mass atrocities.

II. Widespread and systematic killings

According to anti-genocide activists, it is the ‘methodology of death’ and the ‘magnitude’ that make of mass atrocities something ‘worse than war’. Pete is an R2P-advocate who lost relatives during the conflict in Northern Ireland and visited East Timor and Rwanda as part of his work before joining the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. He explains the difference between armed conflict and mass atrocities as follows.

In conflict situations there is a frame of reference, ‘this is what’s happening to us because of this. Because of who we are, because of this injustice’. And I think it provides means for people to cope with the situation. I think what’s so shocking, so deeply, deeply disturbing about East Timor, and even more so about Rwanda - was the magnification of those things that I had experienced. The *total* loss of family, the murder of not one person in your family but *all* people in your family. The thing that was so terrible in Rwanda was the way that people were killed. The methodology of death. The absolute magnitude of what had happened in Rwanda kind of made Northern Ireland look like a cakewalk, made it look like a holiday. And that’s just disturbing on so many levels.

Pete, 26 October 2011

The magnitude and immeasurability of mass atrocities is not just a matter of scale. More importantly, it is related to the particular ‘methodology of death’ applied in mass atrocities, officially described as ‘widespread and systematic killing’ - one of the defining elements that
makes of a crime a ‘crime against humanity’ in international law.135

In a draft document of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) that circulated early on in the Centre’s existence, staff members of the GCR2P try to clarify the precise meaning of the so-called ‘four crimes’ mentioned in the paragraphs on the responsibility to protect in the 2005 World Summit Document (United Nations 2005).136 As they write in this draft document, they want to clarify the ‘scope’ of R2P as a way ‘to clarify what [crimes] the doctrine seeks to prevent’.137 When examining the scope of ‘crimes against humanity’, the authors start by building on the definition of the crime as formulated in Article 7 of the Rome Statute, that is, as ‘any of a series of acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack’. They then distinguish four essential components that, so they write, are now generally understood to constitute a crime against humanity:

- there is the commission of a “prohibited act” directed against a “civilian population;”
- it is committed with “intent and knowledge;”
- committed in a “widespread or systematic” manner; and
- is part of a “state or organizational policy.”

A most interesting part comes up, when the staff members discuss the threshold in terms of numbers of civilians that need to be systematically and knowingly attacked to label an atrocity a ‘crime against humanity’. The only point of potential controversy is on the question of scale. If the case law has primarily found crimes against humanity in situations where an attack is both widespread and systematic, what are the possible implications for R2P? Would a systematic attack on a small group of civilians constitute a “crime against humanity,” and thus be considered within the scope of the responsibility to protect? We would propose an inclusive understanding of crimes against humanity such that even systematic attacks directed even against a small population, if part of an organizational policy or plan, could fall within the scope of R2P. This would be consistent with the importance, implied in the WSOD [World Summit Outcome Document], of prevention.

In other words, it is the organized method of killing that is critical here, and not just as a mere matter of law. The calculated, cold-blooded attitude - the fact that the state planned and executed the crimes against humanity as if it were another urban planning project - arouses

135 The term ‘crimes against humanity’ was first used to define a particular violation of international law during the Nuremberg trials (1945) that were conducted to prosecute leaders of the Nazi regime for crimes committed during the Second World War. The crime was again included in the charters of other international war tribunals, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

136 These four crimes are genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. See United Nations 2005: paragraph 138.

great emotional shock among R2P-advocates and East Timor-activists alike.

Rosa: Some scenes that I’ve seen probably in this movie, you know, deliberately shock. Like, you know, just like the whole humiliation part…

Annette: That is what’s really getting to you?

Rosa: Yeah, I think, yeah, definitely. Because in this case of the Holocaust there was something like… the government of a country! I mean it was institutionalized, you know. It was not just two ethnic groups fighting.

Rosa, R2P-advocate, 8 March 2010

And then of course I heard that that [the Holocaust] was designed, that it was no accident, that it was designed by some organic group of people. And that was very shocking.

Miguel, R2P-advocate, 17 November 2012

Annette: Do you understand how that [militia violence following the referendum] violence occurred - you said part of it was planned?

Jack: Yes in this case it was planned - I am not sure of your question…. Well and the whole occupation had been built on violent suppression […]. The militia had been led to believe, they had been showed, they could engage in violence without consequences but also [it was a] clear pattern that they were doing it on order, so it was in some ways very calibrated. […]

Annette: You said I don’t really understand your question. I am interested in your view on why things like genocide happen.

Jack: [Gasp/sigh]

Annette: Yeah, it’s a very big and difficult question…

Jack: Not really one I could say I had much thought about. I think there is no simple reason. Violence often has a way of feeding on itself. I think all genocides take a high degree of organization. Spontaneous violence would just dwindle… People would just get tired of killing or of the fighting. They would need to go back and regroup if nothing else, or become disgusted with themselves. But I think most genocides, they happen because they’re

As explained in the Introduction, many East Timor solidarity activists believed that genocide was occurring under Indonesian occupation of East Timor - or at least used that in their rhetoric to strengthen their advocacy. After East Timor gained independence, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR) officially established the human rights violations occurring during that period as ‘crimes against humanity’ respectively ‘war crimes’. Paul, the solidarity activist who was a member of CAVR explained in his interview (21 November 2012).

Pro-Indonesia militia responded with violence to the referendum in which 78.5% of the East Timorese had voted in favor of independence. Later investigations by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) found that they killed at least 1,200 civilians, burned down or ‘otherwise rendered uninhabitable’ ‘roughly 70% of all buildings in the territory’ and forcibly deported about 250,000 civilians into West Timor. See: Robinson 2003.
organized. And even if the scale that they happen is not what is planned, there's a lot of planning behind it.

Jack, East Timor solidarity activist, 3 October 2011

Mass atrocity crimes require a consciously plotted plan for mass killing that is carefully designed and executed by political leaders and their accomplices. Although the ‘methodology of death’ applied during the Holocaust requires less physical effort than killing with a machete, the mass killings in gas chambers demand a similar calculated attitude. It is this intent of the killer ‘to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group’ that evokes horror among the activists. Not just because the killing is deliberate and calculated, but moreover because the intent to ‘kill in whole or in part’ alludes to the possibility of unlimited, total destruction. Debbie is an R2P-advocate who works at a US think-tank and graduated with a dissertation on identity conflicts. ‘How far will it go, what are they really driving towards?’ Debbie wondered aloud during the interview.

Annette: What is the difference between mass atrocities and other human rights violations?
Debbie: To me there is an analytical difference and a policy difference, in the sense that when it’s mass, it is clearly part of an incentive driven campaign of some sort, that has a purpose and has a rationale. When it is an isolated gruesome murder, even if it is driven by hate, [it] isn’t necessarily part of a strategic plan by someone who has the capacity to organize [...] on that level and scale. So in terms of what has to be done to stop that from happening, there have to be differences there. [...] I don’t feel like I have a mental distinction in my mind between say a massacre of a 100 people versus a massacre of 50,000 people. [...] At some point, once it’s a systematic campaign to kill people in large numbers, then because every life is valuable, the massacre of a hundred is no less important than a massacre of 50,000.

Annette: So it is the systematic element that horrifies you there?
Debbie: I would say yes, especially because of what it can lead to and what’s driving it. Meaning, if it’s an organized campaign, what’s its end objective? How far will it go, what are they really driving towards? It raises all those questions. So it’s not just what’s happened. It’s the next plan they’re planning. Whereas an individual incident or [...] a spontaneous conflict [...] does not have that same trajectory.

Annette: Where would it end if no one would intervene?

Debbie: In terms of literal images, what pops into my mind is pictures of trains going to concentration camps and a lot of the World War II imagery. [...] It’s not that other incidents haven’t reached that scale in terms of numbers. But in terms of organization, in terms of drive, in terms of something clearly having every intention to fully eradicate... that’s the archetype, right.

Annette: Is it like, ‘we should not go there again’?

Debbie: Yes, certainly and also because of that eradication in and of itself. But also if you can imagine World War II shifting differently. If they had been able to complete that project, had the Nazi regime then been victorious in that moment and maintained their ideology and everything else that was driving them. It’s impossible for me to imagine that there would not have been some new ‘Other’ that needed to be gotten rid of. [...] Because it was a self-driving [force], you know, how do you stop that kind of thinking once it has begun?

Interview, 11 October 2011

The horror at mass atrocities comes not only from the explosive number of killings, but moreover - and perhaps more crucially - by the fear that the organized and systematic way of killing could become ‘a self-driving force’, could become a socially accepted, normalized ‘kind of thinking’. This brings us to another common denominator that appears to evoke horror among R2P-advocates - the confrontation with a situation of anomie, of a total breakdown of all social norms which brings shocking realizations about the precariousness of society (Berger and Luckman 1991: 121) or the ‘veneer of civilization’, as R2P-advocate Donald calls it.\footnote{The term anomie was introduced by Emile Durkheim in his book \textit{Suicide} (1951, 1897) to refer to a morally deregulatory condition that results from a breakdown of social norms and bonds. Berger and Luckman (1991, 1966) expanded the use of this term as one referring to a deep existential crisis in which the ‘symbolic universe’, that is, the system of meanings, collapses following extreme disruptions of life. As they write, ‘All societies are precarious. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos. The constant possibility of anomic terror is actualized when the legitimations that obscure the precariousness are threatened or collapse’ (Berger and Luckman 1991, 1966: 121). Thus, anomic terror can lead to shocking realizations about the extreme precariousness and vulnerability of ‘civilization’.}

Donald, who worked for the UN for a long time before he became an academic and fervent R2P-advocate, gave a very apt account of how the ‘veneer of civilization’ can evaporate overnight. He described how he travelled to former Yugoslavia as an UN official, after the ethnic cleansings had broken out:

Annette: What is so awful about mass atrocities?

Donald: Besides mass murder and suffering, which are not the things that I am trying to facilitate [ironic laugh]. I guess the thing about mass atrocities that most concerns me, is the fact that these constraints, civilization I would say, disappear. One of the most traumatic experiences for me was As a student I had been to the former Yugoslavia, driven all around, went to the...
sea and to Dubrovnik and all that stuff. And then of course the wars broke out. I had spent most of my time in Africa and Asia and Latin America, and the idea that Europe would behave this way - I know this sounds quite of naïve, but Jesus this is really So, my first trip to Croatia. I remember thinking [ironic laugh] ´just how thin is the veneer of civilization and these rules that I believe in.´ Because I went from Vienna to Zagreb. But in order to do that - I could not fly [I had to go by road]. So you leave Vienna with the usual pastry I love and wines and good foods and street cars running all over the place. And you ride into Zagreb, which actually is part of - the Habsburgs were there so you got street cars, you got wine, you got all the stuff. Except for that it took an hour and a half to get there, you would not have known anything happened. So you meet a friend and I had the same meal I had had the night before in Vienna in an elegant restaurant. Then [I] get up early the next morning and drive ten kilometres or fifteen kilometres and all of a sudden everything is changed.

Annette: What did you see?
Donald: This church blown up that mosque blown up... It was as if the veneer of civilization - one day you're drinking wine, you're drinking together and it's in your interest to keep the lid on the cauldron... and then the next day just everything disappears overnight. And a similar kind of experience, I remember... I never got to Uganda while it was still the garden spot of East Africa. I got to Uganda a week or so after Idi Amin had been chased from power. I read all of these things about why the Brits wanted to get there in this wonderful climate and golf courses and all the stuff. And I arrive in what was an absolute hell hole. So you realize that these people who are capable of behaving genteel and serving you a drink and playing at a golf course... All of sudden all hell breaks loose and civility... So it seemed to me that civilization is a very tenuous construction. We human beings have worked long and hard on it and it can disappear very quickly. When the politics are wrong, this can all just evaporate overnight. How do you keep this tenuous house of cards together? How do you get in peoples interest to comply with the basic rules of civilization?

Interview, 17 October 2011

‘Horror applies not only to the perception that our own identities are precarious,’ Talal Asad writes, ‘but also those of other humans - and not only the identity of individual humans but also that of human ways of life’ (Asad 2008: 68). ‘A society can become a kind society in which it is not worth living,’ R2P-advocate Miguel said, ‘there are conditions of life in which it is better to die than to keep living.’"142 ‘It destroys people’s psyche, is psychologically

142 Interview with Miguel, R2P-advocate, 17 November 2011.
destructive,’ East Timor solidarity activist Sister Maria commented. ‘The knock on effect of mass atrocity,’ stated Celia, another R2P-advocate, ‘they stick with countries and communities and it’s destabilizing for generations.’

‘Horror is the total loss of practical and mental control,’ Talal Asad (2008: 78) writes. In the previous section I have already shown that (images of) confounded, mutilated bodies can trigger anxieties about the precarious boundaries of society, disturbing sensations of a disordered society. In this section I have shown moreover, that mass atrocities horrify because they allude to a destruction of human civilization, to situations of anomie, ‘normlessness’. The sensation of ‘total loss of practical and mental control’ is completed by the sense that ‘nothing is what it seems’, that your neighbour, ordinary people, or even yourself, can turn into a killer overnight. This latter and third aspect of horror in the face of mass atrocities brings me to the next topic of discussion - that of the views of anti-genocide activists on the human condition and the human propensity for mass violence.

III. Views of mankind: mass violence and human nature

Pete: The question that confronts you when you stand above a mass grave in Kigali, or, [when] you hear [a] witness testimony in East Timor, you think, ‘how can human beings do this to one another?’

Annette: Why does it happen?

Pete: Well I think that’s the big unanswered question. We can explain it through politics, we can explain it through material circumstances. But there is something… The magnitude of the evil makes us question who we are as human beings. Makes us question the whole basis of our societies.

Interview, 26 October 2011

Both East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates share a similar and rather dark view of the violent nature of mankind. This view basically comes down to the conviction that all humans have the capacity for violence and cruelty and will commit acts of cruelties en masse if ‘the circumstances’ are there.

There is a subtle, yet crucial difference, however, in the locus and definition that both groups ascribe to these ‘circumstances’. It is a difference that might not immediately be recognized by all anti-genocide activists themselves who may still claim to believe in the ‘innate good’ of human beings. It does become apparent however, in the different notions both groups have of the perpetrators and their motives to engage in mass killings.

The majority of East Timor activists believe that human beings are by nature good, but can be trained and indoctrinated by their leaders to become killers. Maya, an East Timorese activist who was a member of the East Timorese student resistance RENETIL, explained the

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143 Interview with Sister Maria, East Timor solidarity activist, 6 September 2012.
144 Interview with Celia, R2P-advocate, 22 November 2011.
atrocities committed by the Indonesian military, using her own experience as a member of the Timorese resistance as an example. She talked about the oath she took to follow any order given. 'If you really follow that [oath],' she said, 'there is no way to say no to any order. This motivated people to do anything they were ordered to do.'\textsuperscript{145} Sean, the Irish solidarity activist, mentioned the impact of terror and impunity on human behaviour. 'If you can rip up enough fear in people,' he said, 'you can get them to do anything. And if you give people enough power with impunity, […] then they will do anything.'\textsuperscript{146} Paul, the Australian solidarity activist, argued that Indonesian soldiers were made to believe that the Timorese constituted a threat to Indonesia's unity and very existence. 'It's this ability to get inside peoples' heads and sort of poison their minds,' he said, arguing that indoctrination by state ideology can be detrimental, causing people commit the worst kinds of violence.\textsuperscript{147}

Many solidarity activists developed this view on the human susceptibility to authority and indoctrination after repetitive confrontations with (mass) violence. Rather than continuing to refer to these atrocities in terms of shock, they merely speak of it as making them 'sadder but wiser'. While the Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor in 1991 caused worldwide public outrage for example, to most East Timor solidarity activists the massacre did not come as a surprise. 'It's like this,' Dewi, an Indonesian solidarity activist explained. 'We as an activist at the time, […] we had to make our heart very strong. Because we already know what this [Suharto] regime has done to the people. One million [people were killed] in 1965\textsuperscript{148}. So if we compare [that] to Santa Cruz - it is also important - but we already know, you see?'\textsuperscript{149} 'We were not shocked or surprised,' Abilio, an East Timorese activist said, 'we just became sadder. We already saw and knew much about the massacres in East Timor, we knew about the cruelty of the Indonesian military. So it wasn't something new to us, it just increased our sadness.'\textsuperscript{150}

Rather than remaining - or allowing themselves to remain - shocked by mass atrocities, the East Timor solidarity activists saw in their recurrence a confirmation of their worldview and view of mankind. To East Timor solidarity activists, the repetitive cruelties committed by Indonesian military against the East Timorese people, confirmed 'that the regime was wrong' and that the dictator 'needed to be toppled' (see chapter six for a detailed discussion of this view). The Indonesian soldiers were not necessarily evil or bad by nature. It was the regime, the dictatorship of Suharto that forced or indoctrinated them to act this way. Consequently, the way to ending the mass atrocities committed against the East Timorese people was to remove that regime, and by prosecuting and punishing the leaders who were responsible for the atrocities in an (international) human rights court. Greg, a solidarity activist from the

\textsuperscript{145} Interview with Maya, 11 September 2012.

\textsuperscript{146} Interview with Sean, 29 August 2012.

\textsuperscript{147} Interview with Australian East Timor activist, 21 November 2012.

\textsuperscript{148} After an alleged failed coup against Indonesian President Sukarno on 30 September 1965, Indonesian General Suharto - who was given the task of restoring order in the country - blamed the coup on the communists and allowed a terror campaign in the autumn of 1965 that lasted until the spring of 1966, and killed - according to estimates - several hundred thousand alleged communists in Indonesia. See: Cribb 1991.

\textsuperscript{149} Interview with Dewi, Indonesian East Timor activist, 8 July 2012.

\textsuperscript{150} Interview with Abilio, East Timorese activist and member of the Timorese student resistance, 28 August 2012.
United States who moved to East Timor after it gained independence, feels strongly about the need to bring Indonesian leaders responsible for atrocities in East Timor to justice.

Annette: So you are advocating to have those cases referred to the ICC?

Greg: No, no! To create a special ad hoc international tribunal like [bangs hand on table] for Yugoslavia, like for Rwanda, like for Sierra Leona - it does not matter where - but that has the jurisdiction and the will to arrest Prabowo before he runs for president of Indonesia next year and bring him to trial for the crimes he committed here. You know the president of Indonesia now [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono] was involved in crimes against humanity in Los Palos in 1983-1984. Everybody in the Indonesian military who was at a higher level position made their careers here murdering people. And they should be held accountable for that.

Interview, 10 September 2012

In other words, the perpetrators of the atrocities in East Timor can be clearly identified and prosecuted; they are the political and military leaders who orchestrated the atrocities: the Indonesian soldiers were merely ‘foot-folk’ following their orders because of fear and indoctrination. When a democratic government adhering to international human rights is established in East Timor, atrocities could be effectively halted in the future - so the solidarity activists believed.

To R2P-advocates, the story looks somewhat more complex. Replacing a dictatorship with a democratic government, and prosecuting the perpetrators might not be enough to halt mass atrocities. During a conference on R2P the former director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect lashed out to a documentary maker who argued that establishing democratic regimes would be the best way to prevent mass atrocities. ‘I think your conception of democracies needs serious review’, she sharply commented. ‘Colombia, Brazil and Guatemala are all democracies, and yet crimes are being committed there’. In a focus group discussion that I organized later, she said, ‘thinking about my own country ([Mexico], I just see […] what a painful process it is to tame violence, and how easy it is to destroy the constraining factors.’

151 In 1983, the Indonesian General Prabowo was stationed in East Timor as a captain of Indonesia’s Special Forces Kopassus, a counter-insurgency unit that according to various reports was responsible for (grave) human rights violations in East Timor. See for example: Van Klinken 2014.

152 I could not find reports on atrocities in Los Palos occurring in 1983-84, but according to the OHCHR (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) report by Geoffrey Robinson (2003: section 10.15), ‘five clergy and four lay people [were ambushed and executed] by a gang of militiamen in Lautem on September 25. The victims included a nun who was hacked with a machete as she knelt praying by the roadside, then thrown into a river and shot dead.’

153 A detailed description and analysis of this conference follows in chapter five.

154 Not literal transcriptions, taken from field notes while attending this conference (June 2010).

155 Focus group discussion with R2P-advocates, 11 March 2010.
This statement is reminiscent of what Donald said in the previous section, about the difficulty of ‘keeping the lid on the cauldron’. It is not only the individual state leaders or the authoritarian regime that are ‘wrong’, so the R2P-advocates believe. At times of mass atrocities, something starts ‘to shift in society and if it becomes permissible, it is what everybody is doing then’, Sylvana, an R2P-advocate who was junior researcher at the GCR2P, said during a focus group discussion.

Annette: To what extent is violence human, or inhuman?
Srilatha: It is one of the most human things. I would agree with you that it’s… what’s permissible. I mean you can go to many levels, depending to what is permissible socially.

Annette: Is it as Hobbes says, if we don’t have a social contract then we start killing each other?
Christine: It goes back to Cain and Abel, like Srilatha said, we call it crimes against humanity but it’s born in all of us that we can be killers, I guess, and we’re stopped by rules. […] We lack the impulse apparently…
Sylvana: That’s one of the things that is so shocking about violence like the Holocaust or Rwanda or something like that. Because it’s not just that such horrible violence happens, but it’s that people who you know up till the day before, [who were] living normal lives just like us, and then suddenly turn into this… That makes you think that, it is in all of us that anyone of us could, you know, turn into that, and it’s, it’s… I think, humans have this sort of ‘follow-the-herd’ kind mentality and if the social constraints are there, and the state constraints are there, we’re fine without, you know… Most of us won’t perpetrate violence, because, well… that’s not what our society is doing. But if our society shifts, and it becomes permissible and it’s what everybody’s doing then. Then we all go along and we just do [it].

Focus group discussion with R2P-advocates, 11 March 2010

Equally horrifying as the magnitude of killing in mass atrocities is the deeper knowledge that a whole civilization can be destroyed in such a way that *homo homini lupus est* - that ‘man is a wolf to [his fellow] man’ - as philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1642) famously suggested in *De Cive* (‘On the citizen’). The fear for the magnitude and scale of mass atrocities is related to the fear of ordinary people running *amok* - of your neighbour, the peasant, the civil administrator - and not just the state or military leaders - turning into a roaring, killing mob.

In his own definition of horror, Asad (2008: 68) builds on Stanley Cavell who defines horror as ‘the perception […] that we may be, or may become, something other than we are, or take ourselves for’. Anyone who has once seen a horror film or read a horror story knows that its success formula is ‘nothing is what it seems’. The innocent child appears to be the incarnation of the devil, the charming lover appears to be a serial killer, the innocent girl who is bitten by the vampire becomes a vampire herself. As said in the last phrases of above
quote, ‘if our society shifts, and it becomes permissible and it’s what everybody’s doing, then we all go along and we just do [it]’. Or, as Miguel said, ‘the problem with genocide is not only about the victims. It is also about the executioners and the rest of us. We are also part of it. We should think about ourselves as part of it.’

In chapter three I already argued that for R2P-advocates the borders that distinguish the perpetrator from the bystander or the victim, have become less pertinent. They observe what Bauman called ‘an affinity between doing evil and non-resistance to evil’, that is, an affinity between the perpetrator and the bystander. Moreover, as appeared from above focus group discussion, R2P-advocates believe that every normal human being has the propensity to commit atrocities, and can turn into a killer overnight.

R2P-advocates experience mass atrocities as an encounter with what Rancière calls ‘the Inhuman’ that resides in every one of us. ‘That Inhuman’, Rancière (2004: 308) writes:

is Otherness as such. It is the part in us that we do not control. […] The Inhuman is the irreducible otherness, the part of the Untamable of which the human being is, as Lyotard says, the hostage or the slave.

Rosa, the R2P-advocate who has been quoted many times before, provides a good illustration of what, in her view, happens when this ‘untamable’ is released en masse, using the metaphor of the energy generated by crowds in a stadium.

[It is] heavy, very heavy, you know, an energy, an atmosphere so… so unimaginably painful, you know. Dark, something like… ‘[it] can’t be, can’t be!’ you know. A lot of people [are] driven by that same energy. […] An American friend was in Brazil and she went to a soccer game, a stadium full of thousands of I don’t know how many people. […] She said, ‘Isn’t it amazing that in Brazil with all the poverty - people are actually struggling. But when you go to a soccer game you see those people there. And they are so happy, they are celebrating! […] Sharing that energy right now, at that moment. […] Cheering and you know it’s a huge energy wave that is there. So in the same way that I can think of this as a very good kind of energy, that’s the opposite [of the energy unleashed at mass atrocities].’

In the face of mass atrocities, the horror at the realization that ‘nothing is what it seems’ - that ordinary folks can turn into murderers, that all the pleasantries of social interaction and human interrelations can evaporate overnight, and that ‘human ways of life’ can be destroyed in ways that ‘explodes the imaginary’ (Asad 2008: 68-69) - all come together. Asad, building on Douglas’ notion of the sacred as protected by purification rituals that ‘punish’ the violator and restore the sacred bond of the community, argues that in the case of suicide attacks, means of transgression - means to repair the harm done to sacred community boundaries - cease to

156 Interview with Miguel, R2P-advocate, 17 November 2011.
157 Interview, 8 March 2010.
exist as there are no bodies to bury and no perpetrators to punish. ‘It is the absence of rituals for dealing with transgression, not the fact of “matter out of place” that generates horror,’ Asad (2008:76) writes. The violence involved in mass atrocities arouses similar feelings of losing any means to repair and redeem the violations, because the bodies are lost, hacked to pieces, decomposed and, moreover, the perpetrators are one of us.

In the case of East Timor, the perpetrators can still be clearly identified - so the East Timor activists hold - in the figure of the state and its accomplices, that is, the Indonesian military and pro-Indonesia militia. East Timor solidarity activists do not regard these perpetrators and accomplices as ‘guilty’ per se or ‘evil’ by nature, but as indoctrinated, drugged and coerced into acts of violence by powerful political and military leaders. These leaders in theory can be prosecuted and punished by law, and as such, the community can be purified by removing and punishing some individual members who have violated the norms of society.

In the case of the genocide in Rwanda and the Holocaust - the cases mostly frequently referred to by R2P-advocates - identifying and separating the perpetrators from the victims becomes much more complicated in the view of R2P-advocates. They are our neighbours, sisters and brothers; they are victim and perpetrator at the same time. In mass atrocities, R2P-advocates (implicitly) argue, the ‘human’ becomes ‘the Inhuman’ (Rancière 2004) that is amongst and within us. In such violations of order the pure can no longer be separated from the polluted (Douglas 1970, 1966); the sacred community boundaries of humanity can no longer be restored.

IV. Using violence to end violence

Uncovering what principal values of human existence anti-genocide activists believe to be at stake in mass atrocities might help to understand better why they ‘want to stop them with all their might, if need be through the use of military force’, as I wondered at the opening of this chapter. It might also clarify the somewhat paradoxical notion that violence is needed to end violence.

Although the East Timor solidarity activists did not seek any ‘actual’ risks on the battle field, they empathized with the Timorese armed resistance and were happy to support them with equipment and through offering their services as messengers. That the East Timorese resistance had an armed wing was neither an issue nor a problem for international solidarity activists. They felt that the Timorese were within their right to resist a hostile, occupying power. ‘It wasn’t a topic,’ East Timor solidarity activist Sean said:
We made a comparison when we were talking in public [about East Timor] with the resistance in France under the Nazis. […] Nazis occupied Europe, Indonesians occupied Timor: end of story. You cannot praise one and reject the other. Because both of them were clear cases of naked aggression. We were uniform [unanimous] in that, that was our decision that Falintil\textsuperscript{158} had a legitimate struggle.

Sean, 29 August 2012

The sympathy of solidarity activists for the East Timorese armed resistance Falintil was enhanced, because the guerrillas did not make nearly as many victims as the Indonesian security forces. After some sporadic offensive attacks on Indonesian police and military posts in the 1980s, Falintil merely took a defensive position and became practically non-violent, solidarity activist Jack explains.

Obviously there was an armed resistance in East Timor. But […] Falintil was also increasingly non-violent. […] The guerrillas were mostly symbolic during the time we were involved. […] Nobody in ETAN [East Timor and Indonesia Action Network], I think, was ready to [laughs] move to the mountains of Timor. And that's what the Timorese weren't asking for either.

Jack, October 2011

Even though international solidarity activists did not join the guerrillas in the Timorese mountains, they were inspired by ideologies of peoples' revolutions. Driving their belief and determination to hang on in the struggle was the conviction that eventually the people’s struggle would prevail. Either because - following Marx - they believed in a people’s revolution as an inevitable outcome of an historical process (also see chapter two), or because they had been convinced by studying democratization movements in other countries. ‘We were convinced that at a certain moment, this country would change,’ Agus, an Indonesian solidarity and pro-democracy activist explained.

At that time, there were changes [revolutions] everywhere - in Eastern Europe, in the former Soviet Union there was democratization. We followed that and were convinced that at a certain moment, it would happen [in Indonesia too]. We believed that our struggle would succeed at the simultaneous occurrence of three things. One, a people’s struggle, second, some cracks in the regime, and third, international support.

Agus, 4 July 2012

While empathizing with the notion of a people’s struggle, asking for an international military intervention to halt the mass atrocities in East Timor was an entirely different thing. Many

\textsuperscript{158} Falintil is short for \textit{Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste} [Portuguese], ‘the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor’. Falintil was the military wing of the East Timorese political party and resistance movement Fretilin.
international solidarity activists, especially in the USA and Australia, had a background in the anti-war movement and were fervent anti-militaries. They did not only ‘fight’ the military dictatorship of Suharto, they also strongly opposed the ‘aggressive imperialist’ stationing of US military troops in the Asia Pacific region and protested against the military ties of the USA, Australia and Great Britain with Indonesia. In their view, as explained in chapter two, these international military partnerships contributed greatly to the violent repression of the East Timorese people. Consequently, when the militia violence broke out following the referendum in September 1999, many international solidarity activists joined the call for an international military intervention with some reluctance. ‘Most of the core activists in ETAN were pretty serious pacifists,’ ETAN activist Nick commented.

‘There was discussion within ETAN,’ Megan, who was in East Timor as an international observer when the post-referendum violence broke out, recalls:

and I remember really appreciating that discussion, but not feeling sure. […] I did not want to say, ‘don’t send peace keepers’, because I was not sure that anything else could stop the violence. And at the same time, there were colleagues in ETAN who wanted to not say that, because they’re armed. And I appreciated that voice, that perspective. And yet I felt like there has to be… I mean, the country was burning!

Megan, 5 September 2012

Although made with somewhat more hesitance, the rationale of above statements by East Timor solidarity activists approaches that of the ethics of ‘principled pragmatism’ of R2P-advocates. This ethics is principled in defending values regarded to be of ultimate and universal importance for the preservation of ‘humanity’. It is pragmatic in accepting alliances with authorities who have ‘blood on their hands’ and in allowing for the use of force as a way to halt mass atrocities. As R2P-advocate Miguel said, ‘sometimes you will need to initiate atrocities. […] We take into account collateral damage’.159

Other than the reluctant call for an international military intervention by East Timor solidarity activists, R2P-advocates initially manifested themselves through an urgent call for action. For ‘robust action’, according to R2P-advocate Donald, or ‘collective action’ in a ‘timely and decisive manner’ according to the formal text in the World Summit Outcome Document (United Nations 2005: par. 139). The call for action is partly based on the view that previous UN responses to (imminent) mass atrocities were ‘too little, too late’. It is also evoked by the

159 Interview with Miguel, 17 November 2011.
feeling that every second counts, as for example expressed in an open statement by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect in response to the situation in Ivory Coast: ‘this is not the time for wavering; it is the time for unified action to save untold numbers of lives’.

Once the beast is unleashed in human being, (s)he can no longer be coerced into stopping the slaughtering using instruments of soft power - the reasoning seems to be. As Donald argued in a second interview that I had with him:

It seems to me that often times, without military forces all the other techniques that I believe in - negotiation, mediation, sanctions - none of these things actually work unless there's a big stick backing them up. I think it's just foolish to think that thugs are going to back off without a bigger stick to threaten them.

Donald, 1 November 2011

In other words, once the slaughtering has started, there is little other than military intervention that can stop the quickly unfolding ‘madness’, according to Donald.

At the same time, R2P-advocates remain hesitant about calling for military interventions. R2P was never only just about military interventions. The use of military force is qualified as a last resort, to be used only if all other attempts to halt mass atrocities - through mediation, negotiation, sanctions, court referrals etcetera - fail. Upon the invention of the doctrine in 2001, these preventive and non-violent coercive measures might have been added partly to make R2P ‘more palatable as a political topic,’ as Donald commented during our first interview. Lately however, the ‘preventionist camp’ within the R2P-movement seems to be on the rise.

The new UN Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, Dr. Jennifer Welsh, stated in an interview that her ‘primary interest over the past two years has been in the preventive dimension of R2P.’ R2P-preventionists argue that violent interventions always bring with them their uncontrollable, messy side-effects. ‘When it gets that late in the day,’ R2P-advocate Steve commented:

it’s always going to be messy, it’s always going to be unpredictable. The real change you can make is at the front end. If you can change the way that governments relate to their populations and populations relate to each other. If you can reduce the number of times it gets so bad. That for me is the golden standard. […] You look at the Syrias and you look at the Libyas, that is always going to be messy at that point. […] When the situation is like that, it’s never entirely clear what the right course of action is.

Steve, 9 October 2012

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161 Interview with Donald, R2P-advocate, 24 February 2010.

V. Concluding reflection

As illustrated above, both groups of activists experience similar feelings of unease and discomfort when calling for the use of violence to end violence. Members of both groups find themselves walking a tightrope, moving between the hope for change and progress against their ‘better knowledge’ of the dark sides of human beings. Yet, there are differences too.

Whilst East Timor solidarity activists still somehow believed in finding solutions to ending mass atrocities in the secular political realm - through people's power, democracy and human rights - R2P-advocates seem to put much less trust in the redemptive power of the people, arguing that those same people can turn into mass killers overnight. This loss of hope for finding solutions for human tragedies in the secular political realm might evoke an urge to find ‘salvation’ in the more transcendent realm of ‘Humanity’.

Reconciling their realistic and at times even pessimistic view of mankind with the mission to preserve a ‘people’ or ‘humanity’ is an endeavour that is fraught with pragmatic and ethical dilemmas. It requires anti-genocide activists to skilfully combine reason, expertise and moral appeals to gain public and political support for their mission (Redfield 2006). The next chapter examines how anti-genocide activists advocate moral truth claims while navigating the ugly social and political realities of the everyday.
Advocating Moral Truths

Some people are not willing to listen to the truth but my assumption is that a lot of people are, eventually, willing to listen to the truth.

-Australian East Timor solidarity activist

In Ritual and religion in the making of humanity (2002), Roy Rappaport, distinguishes between two kinds of truth: empirical truth, or certum, and ‘fabricated’ or moral truth, or verum.

Verum is […] very different from empirical truth, the certum of Descartes, and is founded in historical mythology. […] the fabricated truths particular to humanity, verum, are true only insofar they are known, for they must be known to be accepted and are true only so long as they are accepted. We may recognize them to be truths of sanctity and that they are, in essence, moral. (Rappaport 2002: 296)

As Rappaport explains, these moral or ‘fabricated’ truths cannot be empirically proven as they depend on what a certain society, at a certain time, considers to be morally ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Or, to speak with Foucault (1977: 14), on ‘the types of discourse which it [society] accepts and makes function as true’.

Declaring or sanctifying something as a truth involves the production and reproduction of a certain discourse and ritual practice. As suggested in the Introduction, we may call such processes ‘sacralization’, tentatively defined as the process by which the sacred is produced, allocated, sanctified, acknowledged and sustained. Studying processes of sacralization involves describing and analyzing ‘the techniques and the resources that people have at their disposal to believe, in the sense of taking things to be true’ (Van de Port 2004: 10). It involves a speech act\textsuperscript{163}, ritual performance, and the invocation of a transcendent power that sanctifies a certain claim as ‘true’.

Transnational advocacy constitutes an important ‘technique’ to (pro)claim truths in the human rights and humanitarian community. A first prerequisite for successfully claiming truth is being heard. ‘Speaking truth to power’ (Kennedy 2005: xvi) is about making noise, about giving voice to forgotten victims of atrocities and about breaking the silence over forgotten conflicts. Merely having victims, sharing their pain and suffering however, is not enough in a context of humanitarianism and human rights where truth claims are made in the language of (international) law. As Kennedy (2005: 258) argues, speaking the language of international law is to be a humanitarian, to be part of the international moral community. The most frequently used style of truth claiming by humanitarian and human rights activists

\textsuperscript{163} Speech acts or ‘performatives’ as they were named by its inventors John Langshaw Austin and Charles Edwin Caton in Performativ-constative (1963) are acts in which an utterance or gesture changes the social reality. Such as: “I dub thee knight,” “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth,” “I swear to tell the truth,” (Rappaport 2002: 114).
of which the anti-genocide activists whom I study are a sub-group - is that of human rights and humanitarian advocacy. To obtain acknowledgement that humanitarian or human rights law has been violated, the evidence (certum) of an alleged violation has to be presented and sanctioned in such a way that the community accepts that claim as a moral truth (verum).

This chapter examines how both groups of anti-genocide activists produce, present and sanction evidence to gain public support for their moral truth claim and get politicians to act in a way they consider morally ‘right’. I ask: how do East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates convince society of what they hold to be true? What evidence and proof do they produce to support their truth claim? How do they present that evidence, what style of persuasion do they use to maximize the likelihood of their truth being accepted by the target group? Thirdly, how do they sanction this evidence and related truth claims? What moral authorities do they invoke to give them more weight and legitimacy?

I try to answer these questions by way of presenting two activities performed by East Timor activists and R2P-advocates respectively, to advocate a particular truth claim. The first activity concerns the occupation of the office of the then governing Dutch political party Democrats ’66 (D66) by Dutch East Timor activists in December 1995. The second concerns a four-day conference on the Responsibility to Protect and international law that I attended in June 2010. The two cases have not been selected because they represent a particularly pivotal moment in the history of both movements. Instead, they have been chosen because they are exemplary for the particular form and style of advocacy professed by each group.

The first case - that of the occupation of a Dutch political party office - was staged by Dutch East Timor activists to bring attention to the mistreatment of East Timorese and Indonesian activists who had occupied the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta. Occupations of foreign embassies in Jakarta were frequent in the mid 1990s as they became ‘a new strategy to attract international attention through nonviolence’ ‘called fence jumping’ (Braithwaite, Charlesworth and Soares 2012: 67-77). Although these ‘fence jumping’ actions were amongst the few public protests by East Timorese under the repressive Suharto dictatorship and indeed managed to draw quite an amount of media attention in the foreign countries involved (whose embassies were occupied), they were not turning points in the independence struggle. The action that the Dutch activists organized in response to the occupation of the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta however, reflects in many ways the particular style of persuasion practiced by the wider East Timor solidarity movement. It therefore constitutes a good case to study how East Timor solidarity activists advocate a particular truth claim. Simply put, the truth claim advocated by activists here is ‘the Dutch Minister is wrong in claiming that the Indonesian and East Timorese occupiers are well treated by the Indonesian authorities, for they are in fact mistreated and their human rights are violated’.

164 As explained in chapter two, what could instead be identified as such turning points are the world wide dissemination of film footage of the Santa Cruz massacre (1992), the end of the Cold War, the freeing of Nelson Mandela from prison and the subsequent abolition of Apartheid in South Africa - an issue that until then had been the number one priority of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Ramos Horta and Bishop Belo in 1996 and the financial crisis in Asia and subsequent fall of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998.
The four-day conference on R2P in Sweden constituted no key moment in the history of R2P either. As we have seen in chapter two, the main turning point in the history of R2P occurred about a year after the conference, in March 2011, when the UN Security Council sanctioned a military intervention in Libya under explicit reference to R2P.\footnote{UN Security Council. 2013. UN Security Council Resolution 1973, 17 March 2011. \url{http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm} (accessed December 2, 2013).} It was this move that transformed R2P from a ‘paper’ concept into a ‘living’ norm. At the time of the conference in 2010 however, the newly invented norm of R2P still had to be accepted and made function as true by society (Foucault 1977). With that aim, many conferences had already been organized following the UN endorsement of R2P in 2005 as a way to introduce the norm to wider collectives of civil society representatives, politicians and scholars. The R2P conference that I attended in 2010 in that sense was representative of other similar efforts to promote R2P among an intellectual avant-garde. An additional advantage of studying this particular conference lay in its focus on international law, a discourse that is essential for advocating the responsibility to protect, as will become clear in this chapter. The truth claim advocated at this conference could be phrased as follows: ‘the responsibility to protect should become a norm in international relations’.

I present each of these cases in a different form for the following reasons. As the occupation action of the Dutch East Timor activists occurred before I began my research, I could not observe it myself. Therefore I present this case through the account given to me by one of the activists involved in the occupation, whom I will call Ann (fictitious name). As Ann appeared to be a very gifted and vivid narrator, her choice of words and ways of expression might help to illuminate how the Dutch activists constituted and perceived their truth claim. In addition, for the analysis in section three I use a booklet of over fifty pages that Ann produced on behalf of the Dutch group of activists, covering all actions undertaken in solidarity with the East Timorese occupiers in Jakarta.\footnote{RENETIL-Nederland. 1995. Hoe zit dat nou met die Oosttimorezen? [What’s the issue with these East Timorese?]. Booklet compiled and printed by Dutch East Timor activists.} It contains a day-to-day account of all developments in Jakarta and the Netherlands, copies of the various petitions and press statements issued by the Dutch solidarity activists, newspaper articles, photographs and some ‘home-made’ cartoons.

In the second activity presented in this chapter, the four-day R2P-conference organized in Europe in June 2010, I acted as a participant observer. Thus other than in the occupation action, many more of my own observations and analysis are woven into this narrative.

I begin this chapter by presenting the two aforementioned cases. I will add some comments and observations, especially to the R2P-case, but will not yet embark on a full analysis in this part, for I wish to compare both cases when doing so. The second part of this chapter thus constitutes the analytical part. In three subsequent sections I will discuss the production of evidence, the presentation of evidence and the sanctioning of evidence as practiced in both cases. The conclusion validates these analytical findings in relation to the main enquiries of this dissertation. Building on Kennedy (2005), I will argue that while East
Timor solidarity activists ‘speak truth to power’ by clearly and strongly placing themselves outside the governmental power that they criticize, R2P-advocates engage in ‘providing the expert voice of power itself, deployed for humanitarian ends’ (Kennedy 2005: xvii). I will further argue that a difference in style of persuasion and a related difference in preference for forensic over testimonial evidence (Stauffer 2013: 39) can be observed when comparing the advocacy of East Timor activists with that of the R2P-advocates. This difference could be related to the contemporary need to ground moral truth claims in the more transcendent and depoliticized notion of ‘humanity’ instead of ‘people’.

There is an imbalance between the space allowed to discuss the R2P-conference and the occupation staged by East Timor solidarity activists, but this is for a good reason. As said, at the time of the conference, R2P was still an emerging and contested norm in international discourse. As such, it provides a particular interesting case to study a process of truth production in the making. I have therefore taken the liberty of dedicating more space to the presentation and analysis of the R2P-conference, as I believe this could yield interesting insights on how R2P-advocates seek to change the norms and practices of states and international organizations (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002: 4).

I. Case one: the occupation action

On Thursday, 7 December 1995 fifty-five East Timorese and Indonesian solidarity activists occupied the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta. The activists demanded the withdrawal of Indonesian troops from East Timor, the release of all East Timorese political prisoners and a referendum on independence for East Timor. They also offered a petition to the Embassy staff in which they requested meetings with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the representative of the Red Cross in Jakarta, the Indonesian human rights activist Poncke Princen and a representative of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Dutch ambassador was willing to mediate to try and arrange for the requested meetings, on the condition that the occupiers moved to the back of the Embassy building (out of sight of press and public). In the afternoon a counter-demonstration of pro-Indonesia youth was staged in front of the Dutch Embassy. The Indonesian police remained passive when pro-Indonesia young people climbed over the fences of the Dutch Embassy and, armed with iron bars and rocks, forced themselves into the Embassy building where the occupiers were hiding. The occupiers were brought to safety in the Embassy building, while the Embassy staff persuaded the invading pro-Indonesia youth to leave the Embassy compound. In doing so, they got but scant support from the Indonesian police and consequently, some of the occupiers and the Embassy staff - amongst whom the Dutch ambassador - were injured during the skirmish. Eventually, the pro-Indonesia youth withdrew from the Embassy compound and the situation settled down. The Timorese and Indonesian occupiers remained in the Embassy building.

On Friday, 8 December the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Mierlo reported to the press that he had agreed with his colleague, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Alatas, that they would do everything in their power to ensure that the occupation be ended peacefully. The following day however, the Dutch ambassador issued an ultimatum to the occupiers: they would be given the chance to leave the Embassy voluntarily in buses provided by the Embassy, if the offer was not accepted the ambassador would allow the Indonesian police to remove them by force: in which case the occupiers would be taken into custody for interrogation, but released after 24 hours - so the ambassador promised.

In response to this ultimatum, the Timorese occupiers decided to request asylum in Portugal through the Dutch Embassy. The same evening however, Indonesian police and military entered the Embassy compound while mediations about the asylum request were still ongoing. Most occupiers were taken to the police station for interrogation, but some managed to escape and go into hiding (Wilson 2010: 164-174). Eye witnesses later told Dutch East Timor activists that some of the Timorese and Indonesian occupiers had suffered beatings, cigarette burns and other mistreatment while being held for interrogation.

Hearing all this, a group of Dutch East Timor activists were enraged and decided to organize a solidarity action. The activists reproached the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Mierlo for failing to have responded effectively to protect the Timorese and Indonesian occupiers. They blamed him for having been misled by the Indonesian authorities who had promised to guarantee the safety of the occupiers after their hand-over to the Indonesian police, and for failing to offer the occupiers the protection to which they were entitled according to international law.\footnote{According to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations the “rule of inviolability” accounts for people residing on an Embassy compound, meaning that security forces of the host country may only intervene or enter the Embassy compound with specific permission of the ambassador. Article 14 (1) of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights furthermore states that ‘everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution’. This means that a person who sought protection from persecution (unrelated to alleged criminal acts), may be handed over to local authorities only if the ambassador is sure that person will not risk major harm.} The Dutch East Timor activists wanted to expose Minister Van Mierlo as ‘a liar’ in the Dutch media, Dutch activist Ann recalls:

Van Mierlo was the [Dutch] Minister of Foreign Affairs and had asserted on television [that], ‘nothing [bad] will happen to these young Timorese [occupiers in Jakarta], because I talked to my Indonesian colleague Ali Alatas and he promised this’. And we thought, ‘You prick! Ali Alatas! With whom are you talking?’\footnote{Ann and her activist friends did not trust the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister for a bit as, in their view, he had denied - or downplayed - involvement of Indonesian security forces in other human rights violations such as the Santa Cruz massacre (see chapter two).} And then the gate [of the Dutch Embassy] opened and all those [East Timorese and Indonesian] young people were caught [by the Indonesian police]. And we thought, ‘you prick, you could
have known that! Now we will get you! This has to go to the press. This has to go to the press big time!’ […]

We wanted to confront him [Minister van Mierlo] because in Parliament and on television, he had said everything had gone smoothly as agreed. While we knew, no-no, they [the Timorese and Indonesian occupiers] have all been caught, practically all of them. And they are in this military barrack, that police station, they have been tortured, burning cigarettes have been pressed onto their skin. We had all the facts. We got those super fast because this phone [the four Timorese who were in the Netherlands had direct phone contact with the spokesman of the Timorese activists in Jakarta] was like the hotline. So Van Mierlo had just claimed something without checking.170

The Dutch East Timor activists, who called themselves RENETIL-Netherlands171, designed a sophisticated plan to occupy the office of the Democrats ‘66 (D66) - the political party of the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Mierlo - in The Hague. Ann relates:

We did a whole series of actions, unbelievable, and this in a time that internet was barely operational. I will tell you about the main action. We bought handcuffs and keys. The keys of the handcuffs, we sent to the press. [To] all the [major Dutch] press agents - of the radio, television, newspapers - with an accompanying letter saying, ‘in connection with the Timorese occupation of the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta we are sending you this key. Bring this key to this and this café tomorrow. You will be collected there. The police will be grateful to you for bringing this key’.

On Friday, 15 December 1995, ten activists of RENETIL-Netherlands entered the D66 office under the pretext of offering a petition from the fictive Dutch Christian Youth Association. Once inside they chained themselves to the heating pipes and office tables using handcuffs. Among them were the four Timorese activists from RENETIL who were visiting the Netherlands. Ann recalls some exciting and at times hilarious episodes of the occupation.

I was chained to the office table of a keyboard happy typist and she just continued typing. Amongst us we had agreed that if you chain yourself to something, you have to tell the staff, ‘we are non-violent, don't worry’ and ‘we will eventually leave the building without resistance, but for now, we will be staying here’. You had to take care of that, we

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170 This and the following interview excerpts with Ann are translated from the Dutch (free translation). The interview took place on 13 December 2012, in Utrecht. As I will quote only from the interview with Ann in this section, I will not repeat the source with every new quote.

171 This group consisted of Dutch and Moluccan activists who often met at the political cultural centre ACU in Utrecht, the Netherlands. They were in touch with members of the East Timorese student resistance RENETIL (short for Resistencia Nacional dos Estudiantes de Timor-Leste in Portuguese (National Resistance of East Timorese Students), who happen to be in the Netherlands at the time on the invitation of the Committee Indonesia. As the solidarity action was organized in close collaboration with RENETIL, the Dutch activists decided to launch the action under the name RENETIL-Netherlands.
had agreed on that. So, I am chained to a keyboard happy typist and this typist simply continues typing. So I say to her [Ann acts as if she's lying on the floor chained to the office table], ‘we are non-violent, don’t worry!’ And she replies [Ann mimicking the voice of the typist], ‘oh no, not at all, just carry on!’ And she continued working, just like that! [laughs]

Next, in walks a lady with a coffee cart! And I was chained with one leg to Luís, the Timorese with that long hair.172 He was our spokesman and I was the interpreter, so we had to be chained together in case something happened. So in walks this coffee lady. And Luís is a handsome boy. That coffee lady [to Ann], ‘would you like some coffee?’ Yes, I would like some coffee. We were giggling; we were scared but also determined because we were angry. ‘Would that young man also like some coffee, does he speak Dutch?’ ‘No, he does not speak Dutch.’ And she addresses him in English, ‘milk and sugar?’ To which he replies - he is such a Prince Charming and she must have been about fifty years old - ‘only milk, sugar!’ And she blushes and says to me, ‘hahah, he calls me sugar!’ It was a very weird situation, because the office staff were actually afraid of us. We told them right away, ‘this is about East Timor, and D66 is really at fault. We have a statement and demand to see [Minister] Van Mierlo and we are not going to leave before we’ve spoken to Van Mierlo!’

The staff of the D66 office passed on this demand to the D66 spokesman. When the Dutch RENETIL activists were told repeatedly that Minister Van Mierlo was unavailable, they agreed to speak with D66 spokesman Bob van den Bos instead. They told Bob van den Bos that contrary to Minister Van Mierlo’s promise, the Timorese and Indonesian occupiers in Jakarta were not safe, but have been apprehended and were being mistreated by Indonesian security authorities. The activists then showed a list of the names of all occupiers and details of their whereabouts.

We said, ‘we have evidence [proving] that Van Mierlo lied on television. He does not know the state of affairs.173 These are Timorese [pointing at the four Timorese in the D66 office], we have the facts; we have had contact [with the Timorese occupiers in Jakarta] last night. People have been caught. He can check it, we have the list of people and we are going to publish that [list] and then your entire Party and Ministry will topple, because he [Minister van Mierlo] lied!’

Upon hearing this Bob van den Bos immediately contacted the Dutch Embassy to verify the situation, and was unhappily surprised to find that the Dutch RENETIL-activists were right.

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172 Some members of RENETIL wore long hair to express their sympathy and admiration for the East Timorese guerillas who could not go to the barber because they lived in the jungle of the East Timorese mountains.
173 This implies that Van Mierlo did not actually lie on television, but simply did not know what was happening. Having said that however, I merely report how the Dutch activists perceived and framed the Minister, notably, as a ‘liar’.
He promised the Dutch RENETIL activists that he would look seriously into the matter, and asked what they wanted next.

And he picks up the phone, right away calls the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta, just with us sitting next to him. [Then] he says, ‘all right, I want your facts, I also just received some facts from Jakarta [and] I am afraid that you’re right. Should I order in some food?’ […] And Luis says, ‘may I call Jakarta?’ And Van den Bos hands him his phone, just like that. And Luis calls and takes the list and says [Ann acts as if she is crossing-out something], ‘these two have escaped and are with the pastor now’. And I can see Van den Bos think, ‘right, this is no bullshit’.

When the Dutch activists demanded a press conference, Bob van den Bos replied that he could not arrange for that immediately. This is when the Dutch-RENETIL activists pulled their surprise action. The Dutch journalists who had received a letter of invitation and a key from RENETIL-Netherlands all responded en masse and were waiting to be collected in a café around the corner. Within minutes they were all brought over to the D66 office and the press conference can begin, Ann recalls:

And the door opens and - wham! - the NOS, RTL, Veronica, VPRO [names of various Dutch television stations], the whole bunch walks in, carrying microphones, cameras and note books. I drew a cartoon of it. It was really a crowd, really a horde of journalists and a couple of Moluccans with cameras and fake press cards. Then we were unchained. […] We held a fine press conference in the D66 office, during which I stated a couple of times, ‘we are disappointed that Van Mierlo is not here’. ‘Yes, but he is unable to attend’, the D66 spokesman replied. To make a long story short: this was a very effective action, because they called the Dutch Embassy right away, questions were asked in Parliament and so forth.

After the press conference, the activists were simply released. ‘We are not arrested, we leave shaking hands and walk out of the door carrying Mister Van den Bos’s visiting card in our pockets,’ Ann recalls. That same evening, the national television news opened with an item on the occupation of the D66 office.
Figure 22. Comic of occupation action, published in booklet of Dutch East Timor activists *Hoe zit dat nou met die Oosttimorezen?* [What’s the issue with these East Timorese?], 1995.
Source: archive *Stichting Vrij Oost Timor* [Foundation Free East Timor], Utrecht.
So we are sitting together in the ACU\textsuperscript{174}, television on, just in time for the eight o'clock news. And we sit there and something happens! [The news] opens with the report that a secret Eurotop in Lisbon [appears to be Madrid] was interrupted because Van Mierlo was pulled out of the meeting. [...] And, switch, the cameras move to the office of D66 and there we were. And we were sitting, watching this all in the ACU like, ‘what the fuck…?! We have disturbed the Euro top!!!! Wow!!!! The se-cret Euro Top!!’ We were fabulous. RENETIL, we were RENETIL! [...] We were the main item! We had disturbed the Eurotop because of the crisis in the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta!

A series of other actions were launched by the Dutch-RENETIL activists following the occupation of the D66 office until finally, on 9 January 1996, the spokesman of the Timorese and Indonesian occupiers in Jakarta reported that no more occupiers were being held by Indonesian security authorities. In the subsequent months and years, RENETIL-Netherlands organized various other actions to demand attention for the situation in East Timor. None of these, however, were directly related to the occupation of the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta.

With the above, I have provided a case showing how, in 1995, Dutch East Timor activists staged a solidarity action to advocate the rights of the East Timorese people. To enhance comparative analysis, I will now first describe how R2P-advocates sought to gain support for the responsibility to protect fifteen years later, during an international conference on R2P and international law that was organized in Sweden. In the section following the presentation of this second case study, I will analyze the process of ‘truth claiming’ in both cases.

II. Case two: the R2P-conference

Prologue

It was the late autumn of 2009 when an Amsterdam professor of international law and his PhD student came across a funding opportunity. They decided to submit a proposal for a conference on international law and the responsibility to protect. Neither of them had really worked on the issue before, but they knew that R2P was ‘hot’ and therefore decided to give it a chance. Their chance paid off and the funding was awarded.\textsuperscript{175} They then approached the centre of expertise on R2P, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) in New York, and asked them to collaborate as conference organizers. The director of the GCR2P briefly checked the credentials of the Amsterdam professor to get an idea of with whom she was dealing. When her colleague in Groningen confirmed the high international reputation of the Amsterdam professor, she replied positively, promising to help arrange for

\textsuperscript{174} ‘ACU’ is the previous name of a building that was occupied by squatters and turned into a political cultural centre in 1976. ACU is short for ‘Auto Centrale Utrecht’, ‘Car Centre Utrecht’, and refers to the buildings’ previous function as a garage.

\textsuperscript{175} Dinner conversation with PhD student who co-organized the conference (field notes, 8 June 2010).
the participation of UN representatives.\textsuperscript{176}

In early 2010 R2P had survived the informal interactive dialogue in the General Assembly (GA) of June 2009, in which an extremely critical panel and the GA president questioned the legitimacy of the concept.\textsuperscript{177} The UN Special Adviser on R2P had won some confidence among the various UN member states that broadly supported his 2009 annual report on the implementation of R2P, and was preparing his 2010 report on early warning (United Nations 2009; United Nations 2010). However, it was still the pre-Libya ‘era’ of R2P. While fewer critics questioned the legitimacy of the norm, it remained the question whether R2P would actually change the response of the UN in the face of mass atrocities. As the Amsterdam professor remarked in a conference blog launched for the occasion\textsuperscript{178}:

The jury is still out on the question of whether R2P will in fact make a difference in practice, or whether it adds much to the variety of policies and institutions that already exist.\textsuperscript{179}

I had already heard of the planned conference when working as an intern at the GCR2P earlier that year, and decide to attend.

\textit{Making Sense of the Event}

In early June 2010 I stepped out of the bus that had transported me and a dozen of other conference participants from a tiny airport, and followed them into the lobby of a hotel somewhere in Sweden. The participants were well-dressed, men in suits, woman wearing high heels - but not too high.\textsuperscript{180} Most were in their late twenties or early thirties and came from the Netherlands, Italy, Germany or Scandinavia. Quite a few speakers were of older and from the United States. A handful of participants were from Africa.

The first day they all moved somewhat hesitantly in small groups or individually. They introduced themselves mentioning their nationality, affiliation and discipline, making some

\textsuperscript{176} As the director of the GCR2P told me when I was an intern at the GCR2P (field notes ‘New York 2010’).

\textsuperscript{177} The informal dialogue was organized by then President of the UN General Assembly Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann from Nicaragua, a fierce opponent of R2P. D’Escoto argued in his opening address that, ‘there is little reason to doubt that endorsement of R2P by the General Assembly will generate new “coalitions of the willing” crusades such as the intervention in Iraq led by self-appointed saviours’. Other critical contributions were delivered by Jean Bricmont, author of the book \textit{Humanitarian Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War} (2006), and Noam Chomsky who criticized not so much the general principles of R2P, but rather how ‘the right of forceful [R2P] intervention is interpreted.’ See http://www.un.org/ga/president/63/interactive/responsibilitytoprotect.shtml for a detailed report and video cams of the dialogue (accessed October 15, 2013).

\textsuperscript{178} The conference blog was hosted by the website of The Broker, an online magazine on globalization and development, see: http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/The-Responsibility-to-Protect/Paving-the-way-from-principle-to-practice (accessed, October 14, 2013).


\textsuperscript{180} In this particular cultural context, extremely high heels or stilettos are associated with ‘common’ or even ‘vulgar’ people, while heels of mediate height adhere to the dress code of officials and academics.
tentative contacts: 'I am Israeli and doing a PhD in international law at Colombia.' 'I do a post-doc in Turino, Italy, yes international law too.' As time passed and wine flowed and more dinners were shared, some groups are formed and some new relations were established. People bonded over common study topics or because they had all 'worked in the field.' They connected by exchanging glances, sharing their dislike of a certain presentation. They drew together because they are 'Africans,' 'students,' 'diplomats' or 'practitioners.'

Although the crowd remained somewhat fragmented, there seemed to be consensus amongst them about many things - the main topic of the conference, 'the status of R2P in international law' and the importance of that issue being discussed. They agreed about gathering in a large room to listen to and comment on academic arguments, about the correct order of these presentations, and the proper use of power point or posters, about things that were funny and should provoke laughter. They agreed on the presentations that deserve respect, or needed to be sharply criticized or denounced. There was also quite a bit of confusion. There were moments of relative 'upheaval,' when law experts disagreed and engaged in hair-splitting debates about the question whether R2P could and should be considered law at all. Many in the room protested and seemed to get angry after viewing a documentary featuring victims and perpetrators of genocide from all-over the world. Most frustration seemed to be with the lack of clarity on R2P, on R2P meaning 'too many things to too many different people' as one participant wrote on the conference blog. So what was this all about? According to the editor of the conference blog that was launched for the occasion:

this conference, and the debate that will surround it, may further and give credibility to the process of bringing the potential of the R2P to life - ultimately to contribute to finding the path from principle to practice and to not 'let the ideas die in this room.'

The four day conference consisted of a 'parade of presentations,' the blog editor explained, that would lead participants through 'possibly all the relevant legal aspects of the R2P - its legal basis, its scope, its content and its nature.' Except for the late afternoon in which a documentary was screened, the focus of the conference was very much on 'words' and 'narrative' brought to the fore to substantiate the meaning and credibility of R2P as an emerging norm. As the conference blogger remarked:

183 A few examples of the topics of presentation are: R2P Mediation; Preventative deployment; The responsibility to prevent: on the assumed legal nature of R2P and its relationships with conflict prevention; The scope of crimes that trigger R2P; Who Should Intervene?: Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect. See: Conference Programme, available on: file:///C:/Users/Sat%20P300-175/Documents/Studie/Linkoping/319%20Programme%20-%20Final%20an%20Science%20Foundation.htm (accessed October 8, 2013).
the importance of words and the evolution of a normative narrative can hardly be underestimated.\footnote{184}

What we were witnessing, so I gradually begin to observe, was an attempt to talk R2P into existence.\footnote{185} It was a battle of words and arguments all aiming to find consensus about the meaning of R2P, and undertaken in the conviction that words shape ideas and ideas shape actions, as the UN Special Adviser on R2P said in his closing address:

Ideas really do matter, academia, research, and knowledge really do matter. [Academia] is an authority in terms of knowledge, in terms of experience. And we need a new generation of people to produce them [new ideas].\footnote{186}

Of course, I did not frame the conference as a performance staged to ‘talk R2P into existence’ right from the start. When attending the conference, I set aside my own views and experiences as a humanitarian practitioner-cum-academic in an attempt to view the proceedings as if I were a stranger entering a new cultural environment, not knowing what to expect or on what to concentrate (also see chapter one, ‘ethics’). Frantically, I took notes of practically everything that seemed to matter. Gradually as the conference proceeded however, and especially when reorganizing my field notes afterwards, the idea emerged that I might be witnessing a process of what Redfield (2006) calls ‘motivating truth’, a process in which a collective of scholars in international law, diplomats and UN staff (attempted to) ‘motivate the truth’ of R2P by combining ‘assertions of universalized moral sentiment and opinion with those of specific expertise’ (Redfield 2006: 5).

Although many more processes could be observed and studied during this conference, it is this process of ‘motivating truth’ on which I decided to focus when analyzing my data. In the following ‘report’ of my participant observation, I will first describe briefly the main groups represented at the conference, and outline their particular contribution to ‘talking R2P into existence’. Then I will make some observations on the dominant pattern of presentations and ‘styles of persuasion’. Finally, I will describe two scenes or episodes at the conference that deviated from that dominant pattern and appeared to upset participants somewhat, or even cause some upheaval. It is of common knowledge that it is these deviant moments and patterns that offer the best opportunity for the social anthropologist to study what a community considers to be ‘proper’ behaviour and what not. Or, put differently, to examine the variety of unspoken and hidden codes that makes one an accepted member of the community and to uncover ‘the pattern of meanings that guide the thinking, feeling and behavior of the members of some identifiable group’ (Goodall 2010: 260). In the context of this chapter in


\footnote{185} Klaus Eder (2009: 2) uses this wording ‘talk into existence’ when referring to civil society: ‘that civil society can be talked into existence’. I adopt it in this context, leaving aside Eder’s particular reference to civil society, because this phrase catches the essential significance of this R2P conference very well.

\footnote{186} No exact transcription, based on field notes (11 June 2010).
which I examine the conference as a performance staged to advocate a particular truth claim, studying these deviant episodes might help to understand what the collective considered to be assets for the assertion of that claim - that is, that ‘the responsibility to protect should become a norm in international relations’ - and what, on the contrary, they reject as disempowering this truth claim.

Making Sense of the Participants
When walking back from my hotel room to the lobby, I bumped into a staff member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) whom I knew from my previous visit to New York. We had a brief chat. She told me that their director was actually supposed to attend, but could not make it because of visa issues. She also said that she felt this was more of an academic conference, not so much for practitioners.

She was right, as I began to notice during the course of the first full conference day. Although the list of participants did not indicate peoples professional background, the ‘hello, who are you’ chats that I had had so far suggested that the large majority of participants are academics. ‘Eye el’, which I later came to understand as short for ‘international law’ (IL), seemed the favourite academic topic here, although some academics also specialize in ‘eye are’ (IR) or international relations. Among the dozen or so ‘practitioners’ at this conference - that is, those who did not (only) study ‘IL’ or ‘IR’ but (also) practiced it as a profession - international relations seemed to be the common background. This relatively small group of UN practitioners was amplified by a number of high level UN diplomats. Their undisputed leader was the UN Special Adviser for the Responsibility to Protect, who ranked high in the UN hierarchy as he had to report directly to the UN Secretary General. Then came the four UN ambassadors whom even the conference chair, the Amsterdam professor, qualified as ‘very important’ in his later conference report, writing, ‘there was quite high concentration of VIP persons, I mean four participants in the position of ambassadors’.

I gradually came to view the collective that gathered at this conference as consisting of three dominant groups. The first were the scholars and graduate students in international law whom I will refer to as ‘the lawyers’. Second were the ‘R2P experts’, among whom the UN Special Advisor on R2P, the director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, the representative from the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect and a representative from the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. Third were the UN representatives, among whom the UN diplomats and the UN practitioners from Africa, whom I will refer to as ‘the UN representatives’.

Before starting to describe the ‘rituals’ performed at this conference and some of its deviant episodes, I want to convey something about the specific functions and contributions that each of these three groups seemed to have in ‘talking R2P into existence’. Again, this is something that I only came to see more clearly as the conference proceeded but I want to provide it at this point in my account to give some background on the group dynamics.

Advocating Moral Truths

‘The lawyers’ were crucial in providing the dominant language of the conference - the language of international law that provided a common vocabulary and discourse for all participants to discuss the issues presented. For now, it suffices to state that this language or discourse of international law is framed by the principles of the UN Charter (1945) and by the ‘law of war’, or international humanitarian law, as codified in the 1907 The Hague Conventions and the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Second, and much more important for our understanding, this discourse of international law conceptualizes war as a legal status justified by ethical claims (Kennedy 2005; 2006). The thinking that informs this discourse is that sovereign states cannot just go to war because they feel like it, but that they need a (moral) reason or ‘just cause’ to wage war, such as the halting of mass atrocities. When declaring war, states automatically have to abide by another set of regulations for international relations as laid down in the *jus in bello* or ‘law in war’.

Although all conference participants shared this common discourse in the sense that they all conceptualized war as a legal status justified by ethical claims, ‘the lawyers’ at this conference were the experts in this vocabulary. They were the scriptural experts and exegetes, the ones who knew the texts of the law best and had acquired proficiency in interpretation, as will be illustrated in the following sections.

While ‘the lawyers’ assisted the collective at the conference by bringing precision of wording and interpretation, the contribution of ‘the UN representatives’ was that of ‘talking real’. They recounted the complexity and fuzzy, filthy business of international politics and mass atrocities, and the need to get your hands dirty. Their performances and interventions were shows of pragmatism and realism. Thus, an international diplomat who acted as mediator in several armed conflicts stressed that his only point of departure when mediating to end a bloody conflict was ‘whatever the parties will accept’. He happily confessed having given up reading UN Security Council Resolutions, because ‘[there are] too many requirements there, the appeals do not fit reality’. In a similar vein, the UN Special Adviser on R2P asserted that, ‘at the end of the day, the success or failure of R2P depends on politics, politics, politics’.

The ‘R2P experts’ played an important role as moral guardians of the responsibility to protect by kindly but firmly pointing the collective to the correct meaning of the term. Often, they did so by indicating what R2P is not. Thus, various comments were made to assert that R2P is not an exclusive Western invention: both the UN Special Adviser on R2P and the ambassador of Ghana pointed out that R2P has African roots. With a similar aim, the director of the GCR2P emphasized that ‘states that have lived through traumatic events

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189 Field notes, 11 June 2011.
involving large-scale human rights abuses, such as Guatemala, have been the major drivers behind pushing the debate on the R2P forwards.\footnote{Hoffman, Julia. 2010. Unpacking the consensus. http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/The-Responsibility-to-Protect/Unpacking-the-consensus (accessed September 19, 2014)}. R2P is not a law but a norm to guide behaviour in international relations, the UN Special Adviser on R2P pointed out, cautioning conference participants against confusing what we want R2P to be with what it is. Moreover, R2P is not only about humanitarian military intervention, the UN Special Adviser on R2P kept emphasizing as reported on the conference blog, that force is indeed not the centre piece of the R2P was also emphasized by special advisor Edward Luck, who regretted that the third pillar\footnote{The three pillars of the responsibility to protect refer, in short, to 1) the protection responsibilities of the state, 2) international assistance and capacity building, and 3) timely and decisive response to prevent and halt genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity' - see http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/about-rtop/related-themes/2417-pbc-and-rtop (accessed September 19, 2014). This third pillar, 'timely and decisive response' has often been (mis)understood as exclusively referring to military intervention, however, it includes other non-violent measures that can be taken to coerce a state to halt violence against civilians, such as 'economic, political and diplomatic measures' (same source).} may have received disproportionate attention in the debate so far.\footnote{Julia Hoffman. 2010. Politics, politics, politics! http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Blogs/The-Responsibility-to-Protect/Politics-politics-politics (accessed September 19, 2014).}

Finally there is one group that I need to mention as they seemed to stand out by presence through absence. The least represented but frequently mentioned group amongst the collective appeared to be 'civil society'. Although only one or two civil society representatives were present in the conference room, the academics, diplomats and lawyers who were present seemed to vest much hope in their role to promote R2P in the wider world. 'In the end again it will be civil society leading the charge.' 'A lot depends on the commitment of civil society.' 'There has to be support from civil society.' 'Civil society groups should go to New York to say, you [the UNSC and member states] are responsible for [mass atrocity] violations.'\footnote{All based on field notes, June 8-11, 2010. As these statements were made by various participants, whose details I did not copy while scribbling away with pen and paper - but who were at least not central figures - I cannot make precise attributions.} No further details or definitions were provided on who or what was precisely meant by 'civil society'.

**Styles of presentation**

Discussions between international law experts at the conference often evolved around correct interpretation of laws and articles. They turned into spectacles that were vaguely reminiscent of religious exegeses or hermeneutics, such as the following exchange between two experts in international law.

**Commentator:** Why did you not mention common article one? And the broader obligations to prevent? Or do you think states have no responsibilities beyond their jurisdiction?
Presenter: The International Court of Justice is not very clear on this. We are talking about the responsibility to protect based on multilateralism. Could you point at a state practice in which there was cooperation between… [unclear]?

Commentator: Responsibility can have two meanings: being responsible for something, and having a responsibility [or accountability] to someone. I always thought that the responsibility to protect is a primary responsibility. But state obligation is a secondary responsibility. I now wonder if state obligation should also be regarded as a primary responsibility, or not.

Presenter: In case of serious breaches of international law, all states are actually obliged to do something - the due diligence principle. It appears that in practice, this is about states who are near to the perpetrator and have power. The first question then is, when there is case of a serious breach. [Common article one] is not really clear about it.194

Much value was attached to precision in interpretation and wording. The objects used during the presentations seem to support this linguistic emphasis of the performance and appear to have a functional rather than embellishing capacity. Tables had been put up for the panel members in front of the conference room; a lectern for the speaker was placed to the right of those tables. A banner of the conference funder had been strategically attached to the wall behind the speakers, next to the clearly visible poster of the international magazine that manages the conference blog. Other observable items in the conference room were the power point equipment, books and brochures on conference-related topics, pens, visiting cards, conference programmes and the participants’ laptops. Images or posters of people or countries affected by mass atrocities were not on display.

The body language of the presenters was generally reserved - except for a hand gesture made by one scholar, moving two fingers of both hands in the air to indicate ‘in quotation marks’ to show that she was speaking ironically. Voices were seldom raised and when they were, they appeared to cause some embarrassment among the audience. Thus, I jotted down in my field notes:

Everyone is tired
After break presentation by Britain. My neighbour E whispers to me ‘he talks so loud!’.
[Says] that she is tired and actually wants to go to the museum.
Who should intervene? Humanitarian intervention and R2P is topic of presentation.
I have to laugh a little: he is really loud!

Field Notes, 11 June 2010

194 Exchange between two scholars in international law during the studied R2P-conference (no literal transcription: field notes, June 10, 2010).
Within this disciplined mode of presentation, some room for jokes and laughter was allowed however. These jokes seemed to follow a particular pattern too: many displayed self-mockery, targeting the culture of academia or the UN. Thus, the UN Special Adviser on R2P remarked when talking about the capacity in the UN to handle sensitive information, ‘as we all know, the UN has a wonderful reputation for secrecy’. A scholar in international law who gave a short talk on the question whether ‘humanitarian intervention has become part of international law under the R2P doctrine’, began by saying, ‘the simple answer is “no”… but I wrote an entire dissertation on that’. Another scholar introduced her presentation, saying ‘We have now reached a stage in the conference where everything has been said. But not by everybody’. Other frequently heard jokes were on wordplay. The Ghanaian ambassador explained that before R2P even existed, ECOWAS had already sent troops to halt mass atrocities in Sierra Leone. ‘So in fact,’ he commented paraphrasing the conferences’ subtitle “from principle to practice’, ‘we are talking about from practice to principle’. There was also the scholar who talked about ‘the Harry Potter explanation of chapter six-and-a-half’ of the UN Charter - thus metaphorically speaking of an invisible level that can be accessed through the multi-interpretable articles of the UN Charter.

Presenters who lacked precision in argument and used provocative language receive harsh and uncompromising criticism, like the student who presented a mapping of UN member states that he labelled ‘the drivers of R2P-rejectionism’. Various senior participants sharply criticized his lack of nuance (“Too black and white!”) and incorrect analysis (“Why are Cuba and Morocco on the list?”) in tones of sarcasm and mockery that drew laughter from the audience.

**Anomalies: showing emotion, causing upheaval**

By late morning of the first full conference day participants had become more or less acquainted during the welcome dinner of the previous night, and continued to chat over the breakfast tables early that morning. Towards the end of this first morning a fairly familiar pattern of presentation had been established. The speaker was introduced by the chair of the panel, giving the audience some information about the speaker’s professional background, and explaining the link of the subject presented to the general theme of the panel. Next, the speaker gave a talk lasting ten or twenty minute, presenting the findings of her research, usually supporting her argument with a power point presentation. There followed time for questions and comments from other panellists and then by a round of questions and answers with the audience. Suddenly however, in the middle of a technical exposition on international law, a highly respected Swiss professor of international law stood up to interrupt the presentation. In a somewhat agitated tone, he called out that he wished to comment that law ‘is not only about techniques’. He then pulled a small booklet with the UN Charter from his pocket and started to recite the first paragraph of the UN Charter.

*We, the people of the United Nations determined, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind,*
and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. ¹⁹⁵

He then continued to assert that he, as an international lawyer, was driven first and foremost by a moral concern for human dignity. States, he continued to explain, often emphasize the principle of sovereignty, but to him the prime principle was that of human dignity. By starting to reason from the principle of human dignity, you will automatically arrive at the principles of sovereignty and responsibility - so he argued. 'Sometimes, we spend hours discussing technical issues in international law, but perhaps, we would do better by following ethics as our tactic'.

The audience responded to this interruption by what I interpreted as a respectful silence. They seemed to be listening attentively to the professor; I saw no frowns and heard no giggles or whispers. During his own presentation given shortly after the lunch break, the professor made a similar statement on the prime value of 'humanity'. This time, he referred to an article entitled ‘Humanity as the alpha and omega of Sovereignty’ to stress that international law should be rooted in ethics, and that 'humanity' should have the primacy over state sovereignty (Peters 2009).

A second ‘deviant’ episode that I wish to describe took place during the late afternoon of the first conference day when the documentary Genocide: worse than war was screened under the ‘supervision’ of its maker Daniel Goldhagen ¹⁹⁶. Initially I felt puzzled by the heated reactions and protest that broke out amongst conference participants during and after the documentary screening. Here we seemed to have all ingredients to evoke feelings of awe and


¹⁹⁶ It is important to note that Daniel Goldhagen is also the author of the book Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust (1996), which caused great controversy at the time of its publication. Goldhagen (1996) argued that ordinary Germans did not have to overcome any 'moral scruples' when engaging in mass killing of Jews under the Nazi regime because in accordance with their anti-Semitic worldview they believed these killings to be morally just (Book Review by Richard Bernstein in the New York Times, 9 March 1997). Historians commented that Goldhagen projected a rather one-dimensional view of German anti-Semitism, and other critics called his book 'racist'. The book also received praise however: it was awarded with the Democracy Prize of the German Journal for German and International Politics in 1997 and, despite criticism on its flaws in methodology, the main argument of the book is now widely accepted.

Although the figure of Daniel Goldhagen might have been stained by the controversy occurring some fifteen years before the conference, it was no major cause for the upheaval that I perceived during the conference, so I believe. For one, the criticism fired at Goldhagen by the conference audience was clearly related to the structure and content of the documentary. Although the documentary and Goldhagen were the topic of discussion at many dinner tables that evening and the following morning - discussions in which I actively engaged, no-one mentioned Goldhagen's 1996 book and the related controversy - whilst that informal setting would have been ideal to bring that up. As the majority of participants were in their mid-twenties, they were probably too young to have picked up on the controversy when it occurred in 1996 and 1997, but even the Swiss professor in international law who was forty-seven when Goldhagen's book appeared, and who made sharp comments on the documentary over breakfast, did not bring up the book: nor did the German professor in international law of Heidelburg University who also joined our breakfast discussion that morning, and was thirty-three at the time of its publication.
respect amongst an audience of humanitarians. We had an almost two hour documentary on the very subject that brought all to this conference - genocide and how to prevent it. The film contained interviews with perpetrators, victims and witnesses of genocide from all over the world. The interviewer did not fall into the trap of portraying ‘good’ versus ‘bad’, but succeeded in showing the human, ordinary face of killers too: he was ‘talking real’. On top of that, we had the documentary maker who was himself the son of a Holocaust survivor and thus could speak with strong moral authority and legitimacy - the voice of the victim. Yet the protest that rose amongst participants when watching this documentary turned against him, the documentary maker. Not against those who had killed during genocides, not against the political leaders who had incited hatred, nor against the UN whose response was ‘too little, too late’.

So what happened? Certainly those who commented on the documentary opened with obligatory remarks about their shared moral outrage - ‘thank you for your movie, I have no words for it’; ‘that was a very powerful movie’; ‘I share your moral outrage’ - but then quickly turned to their point of criticism, which was directed at the validity, solidity and correctness of the argument made by the documentary maker. That argument could be summarized as follows.

Genocides are always planned and prepared by political or military leaders. They make a conscious decision to organize or launch one, as genocides are instrumental to achieving a higher political goal, mostly political hegemony over a certain territory or group. This decision is rational and calculated. In order to impact on that decision, we need to change the outcome of the cost-benefit calculations of those who commission mass atrocities. We need to make sure that the costs of launching a genocide are higher for these political or military leaders than the benefits they hope to obtain. One way to do that, Goldhagen suggests, is by much more rapid international military interventions, preferably through focused air attacks. Another more preventive intervention would be to support (export) the building of democracies world-wide, for history shows that democracies have seldom been the theatres of mass atrocities.

The impressive images of the faces of perpetrators and victims portrayed in the documentary, their blank and empty stares of speechless horror and sadness, were soon dismissed by the audience in the conference room. Instead they focussed their comments on the perceived lack of nuance, lack of (political) context analysis and the total absence of any reference to international law in the film. Thus a lawyer from the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) said in a high pitched voice, ‘thank you for the movie, I completely disagree with its substance, you are mixing everything together, how can you ever find effective responses if you’re doing that!’ Another, Harvard graduate in international law added, ‘I share your moral outrage, I think each of us [feels the urge to] to act. But [your argument] lacks political analysis in each of the cases presented.’

The documentary maker was also reproached for a lack of nuance and historical precision in portraying the UN as a failure, and for his suggestion that exporting democracies would help. The director of the GCR2P commented that the UN architecture is not a complete
failure, ‘it managed to bring perpetrators of genocide to national and international courts. This would not have been possible had it not been for the normative layers and legal structures we built over years.’ And democracies?’ she continued in a sarcastic tone, ‘I think your positive conception of democracies is slightly overdone. Colombia, Brazil, and Guatemala are all democracies, yet serious crimes are being committed there!’ A diplomat criticized the generalizations in the documentary: ‘I don’t think you can equate the former president Fujimori with Pol Pot.’ Another member in the audience contested the simplification of the ‘export democracies’ argument: ‘building democracies is a very complex business. Who is going to decide what are democracies and what not? [Don’t forget about] the extermination of Native Americans [by the democratic United States].’

Not making any reference to international law appeared to be another unforgiveable sin in this setting. ‘I cannot understand how you can say such things without knowing any international law!’ my neighbour E, herself a lawyer, whispered angrily to me during the film. Similar comments were made by the senior law expert M and a PhD student, with whom I had breakfast the following morning.

III. Advocating truth claims: analysis

Producing evidence

Evidence is an essential ingredient of truth claims in a discourse of human rights and international law. Consequently, East Timor activists and R2P-advocates have dedicated ample time to the gathering of evidence to prove that mass atrocities are occurring or imminent, and to the identification of political actors or actions that are detrimental to a situation. Both do so by referring to UN treaties and international humanitarian and human rights law. Yet, when comparing the methods of fact-finding of both groups and the kinds of evidence they use to support truth claims, some significant differences begin to surface.

In the case of the occupation, the activists were the fact-finders themselves. The Dutch RENETIL activists in The Hague had direct contact with some of the Embassy occupiers who had gone into hiding following the ‘crackdown’ by the Indonesian police. As such, they could produce testimonial evidence about the whereabouts of the captured activists in Jakarta. It was this list of names and locations that overrode the government claim that ‘the Indonesian and East Timorese occupiers were treated well by the Indonesian authorities’ - so the Dutch RENETIL activists believed. ‘We had the list with names and the evidence,’ Ann said repeatedly in the interview, emphasizing the ‘we’ to show ownership over the ‘real’ truth. This is what gave them power and status and distinguished them from the Dutch governmental representatives who had to rely on the second-hand information provided by Indonesian authorities. Consequently, Ann attached great value and pride to the ‘list of names’ and stressed how meticulously she and her friends worked to ensure there was ‘no bullshit’ in it.

197 Field notes, June 9, 2010.
And Van den Bos who had a few other names on his list, and Luís said, ‘may I call Jakarta?’ And Van den Bos gives him his phone, just like that. And Luís calls and takes the list and says [mimes crossing-out], ‘these two have escaped and are with the pastor now’. And Van den Bos thinks, ‘right, this is no bullshit!’

What also becomes clear is that the evidence provided through the list of names appeared to yield even more ‘truth’ because of the person transmitting them: Luís, who, being an East Timorese activist himself, not only embodied the East Timorese ‘victims’ in Jakarta, but was also appointed official spokesman of the Dutch RENETIL-activists. Thus, Luís functioned as what Redfield (2006: 5) calls a ‘representational persona’, one that can function as a credible advocate of particular truth claims within a larger system of global media and a legal discourse of human rights’ (my italics).

The production of evidence as conducted by the Dutch RENETIL activists is largely representative of that of the wider international solidarity movement for East Timor. As described in chapter two, quite a number of international solidarity activists helped to smuggle information from East Timor to the outside world - the most striking example being the smuggling of film footage on the Santa Cruz massacre by a Dutch journalist-cum-activist (see chapter two). International East Timor activists ensured that this footage was broadcast by the world press. They focused on the collection and dissemination of testimonial evidence, of stories shared with them by East Timorese people during clandestine meetings in East Timorese churches, of numerous letters written by East Timorese on thin blue paper that they were asked to smuggle across the border, 198 of testimonies secretly recorded on film by journalists like the Australian John Pilger, 199 of first-hand accounts on atrocities committed by Indonesian security forces as related by East Timorese who had fled the country and of photographs of tortured bodies of East Timorese people that were at times used to lobby US Congressmen in Washington. 200 In the eyes of the East Timor solidarity activists, these stories of East Timorese people signified the truth, as Australian solidarity activist Matt explained:

I was very much involved in data collection; that was my job. [...] We would try to send in cameras and computers and people to teach people to write stories. I was trying to collect stories that were, you know, paramount. [...] The understanding was that when people know the truth, they were more likely to relate emotionally and intellectually. Some people are not willing to listen to the truth but my assumption is that a lot of people are, eventually, willing to listen to the truth.

Matt, 26 November 2012

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198 The CHART archive in Melbourne has various such letters that I was able to see and read during my visit in October 2012.
200 Interview with two North American East Timor activists, respectively conducted on October 3, 2011 [New York], and 5 September 2012 [Dili].
While East Timor activists attached great value to victims’ testimonies, this kind of testimonial evidence hardly seemed enough for R2P-advocates. At the R2P-conference in Sweden testimonies seemed insufficient proof to support the claim that ‘the responsibility to protect should become a norm in international relations’. The documentary-maker who presented a two-hour testimonial containing a series of interviews with eye-witnesses of genocides from all-over the world was booed and hooted by the audience. To clarify - no-one in the audience seemed to doubt the reliability of these testimonies per se, but they did criticize the quality and soundness of the argument that Goldhagen built based on these testimonies.

Other than the East Timor-activists, R2P-advocates are not involved in first hand fact-finding ‘on the ground’. Instead, they rely on the fact-finding of authoritative international human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and on information collected by official UN investigation teams.201 R2P-advocates have no active role in data gathering, but instead focus on interpretation and analysis of that data to determine whether certain human rights violations amount to R2P-crimes. In their view, testimonies need to be weighed, checked and verified by independent scholarly authorities before they can be accepted as ‘true’. Thus, while East Timor activists base their evidence on the testimonies of suffering Timorese people, R2P-advocates judge the ‘validity’ of such testimonies in the light of particular articles and principles of international law. Rather than testimonial evidence or ‘personal and narrative truth’, they seem to be looking for court evidence or ‘factual and forensic truth’ as Jill Stauffer calls it.

Factual or forensic truth is “defined as a form of scientifically ‘corroborated evidence’, drawn on ‘accurate information through reliable procedures, ‘framed within a ‘social scientist methodology of research’” and so on. That is legalism’s truth for good reason: fair proceedings must rely on verifiable evidence gathered using agreed-upon procedures, or the basis of fairness in the court setting is lost. (Stauffer 2013: 39)

Thus, a difference can be observed between presenting and accepting testimonies of people affected by mass atrocities at face value as it were, to needing another layer of authority to claim facts as true in the case of the R2P-advocates. The voice of the people affected by atrocities no longer seems to suffice to legitimate the truth of the presented evidence. While East Timor solidarity activists seek to convince and persuade others through the (re)presentation of ‘personal or narrative truth’, R2P-advocates put their trust on ‘factual and forensic truth’.

Facing out (the testimonies of) victims of mass atrocities in accounts of mass atrocities may be a more effective way to convince UN officials who prefer a ‘rational’ style of presentation over ‘tear-jerking’ stories, but it does not convey the whole story, Stauffer, referring to the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, observes:

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201 Such as the fact-finding commission for Syria that was adopted by the Human Rights Council Established on 29 April 2011, see: http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e4e2ba72.html.
Levinas points out that philosophers tend to think that truth consists of intelligibility, an “exhibition of being,” the revelation of something that exists and is verifiably true. But, he adds, when philosophers stop there, they fail to ask what shows itself in truth and who looks. (Stauffer 2013: 39)

Stauffer points to the importance of the non-verbal aspects of speaking truth, to the embodiment of the statement in the person who claims truth and the bodily styles of persuasion (s)he uses when doing so. The embodiment of the truth claim and style of (bodily) persuasion are important conditions for it being accepted as true by the audience. In the next section, I will discuss which styles of persuasion were used in the case of the R2P-conference and the occupation of the D66 office respectively.

Presenting evidence: bodily styles of persuasion
As the production of truth consists of the production and reproduction of a particular discourse that a society ‘accepts and makes function as true’ (Foucault 1977: 14) a key ingredient for the production of truth is language. Language as vocabulary, words and texts, and language as speech, performance and rhetoric, that is, as ‘the effective use of particular styles that appeal to the senses and invoke emotions, thus doing the work of persuasion’ (Meyer 2010: 756-757). As such, the art of persuasion is about mastering the bodily technique of speech and performance, of verbal and non-verbal expression. It is about using certain dispositions of the body, such as voice, speech and posture, to evoke particular affects among the audience.

The language that was spoken to motivate the 'truth' of R2P was that of international criminal law. Speaking the language of international law is to be a humanitarian, to be part of the international moral community, Kennedy writes:

This new vocabulary stand[s] for a broader ethical commitment. To speak of war - or peace - in these terms was to be humanitarian. […] not to speak this language, would be to defy the international community, the world - civilization itself. (Kennedy 2005: 258; 259)

Speaking truth in the language of law involves the display of a disciplined body, of a body that exudes professional authority through the mastery of words, text and argumentation. As became clear in section above, R2P-advocates seem to prefer factual and forensic over personal and testimonial evidence and a rational over an emotional style of presentation. The tone of the presentation and the content of the account should remain largely void of emotion and subjectivism.202

‘Law is a mode of universalization thatcivilizes, legitimizes and administers,’ Asad says in an interview (Scott and Hirschkind 2006: 294). Its power resides in abstraction, in transforming personal and testimonial narratives in universal formula of moral reason and

202 As will be shown in the section ‘Sanctioning evidence’, the exception to this ‘rule’ is, that abstract references to main principles of humanity and international law are allowed in the preamble or closure of presentations.
rationality. Since the Age of Enlightenment, she who is a master of speech - of voice, tone, rhetoric, and posture - has been regarded as a master of reason and rationality. A master of reason and rationality delivers her story in disciplined form and content. As Immi Tallgren, quoting a certain Jung\textsuperscript{203}, notes in an article on the ‘sense and sensibility of international criminal law’:

\begin{quote}
Law is ‘rational’. […] An enlightened criminal justice system must, to remain true to its identity, even amidst circumstances alien to its own pre-conditions, carry on trumpeting forth the references to the principle of rationality as ‘a continuous warning that criminal policy should not indulge in the emotionalism of the moment’ (my italics). (Tallgren 2002: 591)
\end{quote}

Seen from this perspective, the style and tone of presentation of the documentary-maker were an affront to R2P-advocates because they are counter-cultural in various ways. First, not speaking the language of international law, nor conceiving of R2P as something framed in a discourse of international law, implied his ‘rejection’ as a member of the humanitarian community (Kennedy 2005). Second, the lack of precision, nuance and knowledge-based arguments insulted the scholars and experts in the conference room. The film seemed to evoke anger due to lack of attention and respect to all that matters in being a good academic or expert - to delivering detailed, context-specific analysis and research based on expert knowledge. Third, displaying strong emotions - or at least arousing strong emotions by showing disturbing testimonies of witnesses and perpetrators of genocide for two uninterrupted hours - did not conform to the rule ‘not to indulge in the emotionalism of the moment’ (Tallgren 2002: 591) either. References to the greater sufferings and missions of humanity are allowed, according to the code of conduct of international lawyers and R2P-advocates, on the condition that they remain abstract and refer to international principles or collective actors like ‘civil society’, the ‘international community’, or ‘humanity’, but one should never make the mistake and ‘indulge in the emotionalism of the moment’ (Tallgren 2002: 591). Finally, the fact that the story was delivered by the child of a Holocaust survivor, might well have contributed to it being perceived as biased by the audience. Being (indirectly) affected by a mass atrocity implicitly made the documentary-maker a ‘party’ to the case under judgment, or at least, did not support his reception as a credible independent authority.

Whilst R2P-advocates downplay the use of body and emotion when motivating the truth of R2P, body language appears to be central to the style of persuasion practiced by the Dutch RENETIL activists. The bodies of the activists form the centrepiece of the occupation action chained as \textit{pieces de résistance} inside the office of the governing political party. The activists contested the government-version of truth where it concerns the safety of the Timorese and Indonesian activists in Jakarta, and they did so by using their bodies as an instrument of protest

\textsuperscript{203} Jung, ?. 1993. New Perspectives or More of the Same? Criminal Law and Criminal Science in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century. \textit{Keto Law Review} 41: p. 46. Please note: Immi Tallgren (2002) does not provide a first name for this ‘Jung’ (who is not the psychologist Carl Gustav Jung), and I could not discover it in any other way.
and obstruction. With the occupation of the D66 office in The Hague, the Dutch activists did not only mimic the Embassy occupation in Jakarta. Moreover, by chaining themselves, they symbolized the captivity of the bodies of the Timorese and Indonesian activists that had been taken into custody by the Indonesian police.

The Dutch East Timor activists did not shy away from proclaiming truth ‘in open association with a point of view’ (Redfield 2006: 5). They presented their views about ‘true’ and ‘false’ with little hesitation and few scruples, so it seems. In the interview, Ann accused outright the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs of lying. ‘We have evidence [proving] that Van Mierlo lied on television,’ she told the Minister’s spokesman. In the booklet on the occupation action that was compiled and printed by RENETIL-Netherlands, a cartoon is included that ends with the clear words ‘Van Mierlo, FUCK YOU!!’ (see Figure 22). The activists were furious because they felt that the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs was hiding the truth about the safety and human rights of the Timorese and Indonesian occupiers in Jakarta. Besides expressing this anger amongst themselves, the activists also used and showed their emotion to persuade the public and politicians. Thus, other than the R2P-advocates and sympathizers at the conference, the East Timor activists sought to strengthen their truth claim by instrumentalizing ‘the emotionalism of the moment’ (Tallgren 2002: 591).

That R2P-advocates prefer to refrain from ‘indulging in the emotionalism of the moment’, does not automatically imply that they do not show moral sensibility at all nor use their body to express that. As will become clear in the following section, the highly-regarded Swiss professor in international law used his body at a pivotal moment during the conference, in an attempt to lift international law to higher moral grounds.

Sanctioning evidence: invoking moral authority

Moral authority, in its simplest definition, is about ‘who says so?’ One can bring to the fore a great quantity of evidence, but this can prove to be worthless if it is not sanctioned as ‘true’ by what a given society regards as a credible authority. In human rights, Stephen Hopgood argues, moral authority thrives on the absence of context.

The elaboration of [this] “truth” in the classic Amnesty style is designed not to tell a story but try to do the opposite. […] Richard Wilson wants context, as do many other critics of Amnesty’s classic style. I suggest moral authority relies on its absence. Only then we can hope to make plausible a claim that there is a normative sphere somehow beyond politics, with all its conflicts of interest and identity. The bare facts [encounters with violent death] are like fleeting glimpses of this sphere, a place where we see our true vulnerability, both as individuals and as a species. (Hopgood 2006: 205-6, my italics)

Indeed, human rights and humanitarianism are driven by the recognition of the vulnerability and precariousness of human life (Butler 2010; Turner 2006), and by the pledge that follows that recognition, that is, on the earnest promise to protect each other from harm (also see chapter three). Thus the highest moral authority invoked by East Timor solidarity activists
Advocating Moral Truths

and R2P-advocates respectively is that of the ‘people’ or ‘humanity’, as we have seen in chapter three. Arguing that one is speaking in the name of ‘the people’ or ‘humanity’ is one thing, but finding a credible spokesperson or ‘representational persona’, ‘one that can function as a credible advocate of particular truth claims within a larger system of global media and a legal discourse of human rights’ (Redfield 2006: 5) is quite a challenge.

In the case of the occupation action by Dutch East Timor activists, the ‘representational persona’ (Redfield 2006: 5) can be identified with relative ease. The activists of RENETIL-Netherlands spoke on behalf of the East Timorese people. In this particular case they voiced the concerns and demands of the East Timorese activists that were reportedly mistreated by Indonesian and Dutch authorities following their occupation of the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta. In the political struggle for East Timorese self-determination the prime moral authority rested with ‘we, the people’ - with the East Timorese people. Thus, in the case of the occupation action the spokesman should preferably be an East Timorese, and the Dutch RENETIL activists found one in the person of Luís. Luís was in direct contact with the victims in Jakarta who recognized him as their spokesman in the Netherlands. This made him a credible representational persona.

Who can be seen as a representational persona of ‘humanity’? Who can be brought to the fore as the most credible spokesperson to claim the truth of R2P? This question is difficult to answer not only because of the extremely abstract quality of the term ‘humanity’, but because the ‘truth’ of R2P as a discourse that (international) society ‘accepts and makes function as true’ (Foucault 1977: 14) is still in the making. Consequently, there might not yet be a conclusive answer to that question.

To explore this, I take a closer look at the first deviant episode at the R2P-conference, at the intervention by the Swiss professor of international law. What was happening in this scene? Why did the professor feel the urge to interrupt the order of the proceedings, to disturb the rule which prescribes critical remarks should be made after the presentation, and not during? Why did he feel the need to stand above the audience, thereby risking embarrassment for both the speaker and himself?

In the last paragraph of the section ‘Producing evidence’, I quoted Jill Stauffer, who - in turn referring to Levinas - wrote about the importance of representation in revealing truth. Factual and forensic truth, she commented, risks not delivering the full story, for verifiable truth stops short at asking ‘what shows itself in truth and who looks’.

By invoking ‘humanity’ and not the victims of mass atrocities as the prime moral authority, the professor shows a different kind of solidarity than that of the East Timor activists. His primary loyalty seems to reside with not the victims of mass atrocities, but with the whole of mankind, with a universal transcendent notion of ‘humanity’. A notion that, as I wrote in chapter three, refers to a humanity ‘beyond’, an indivisible ‘we’ that emerges from the essential precariousness of human life, the given that ‘one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other’ (Butler 2010: 14).

When standing up and rising above the audience, the professor did not show the body of the victims of mass atrocities. Instead, he showed his own body - that of the highly
respected international scholar of international law. When standing up while simultaneously invoking the principles of ‘humanity’ and ‘human dignity’, the professor implicitly proposed to the audience to accept international law as a moral authority that can sanction the truth of R2P. With this intervention the Swiss professor not only aimed to restore the moral authority of international law, but also implicitly volunteers himself as the representational persona of that moral authority.

The question however, is whether his proposal is accepted by the collective at the conference. Whether international law is indeed regarded as representing the prime moral authority that can sanction the truth of R2P? Many discussants at the conference questioned whether R2P could be called law and wondered whether one should wish for it to be(come) law at all. The UN Special Adviser on R2P, Ed Luck, was very explicit about this. In his view, R2P was not a law but a norm to guide behaviour in international relations. If R2P were to be turned into a legal obligation, member states would never have endorsed it in the first place, for they would thereby legitimize an eventual military intervention in their own country, so he explained to me during a coffee break.204

What all participants did seem to agree on however, was that in the end of the day, the fate of R2P would be decided by ‘politics, politics, politics!’ - that is, by international diplomacy. Here the term ‘politics’ does not refer to political campaigning through media and popular mobilization, but to the politics of silent international diplomacy. It refers to international politics and diplomacy taking place in the rooms and corridors of the UN building. Such dealing and wheeling does not thrive on publicity and public campaigning, but instead needs secrecy, professional experience and expertise in order to succeed.

In spite of providing the dominant vocabulary or frame of reference at the conference, most participants regarded international law as no more than an instrument of international politics and diplomacy. ‘Civil society’ was invoked many times, but as its representatives were not in the room (and have not become the primary R2P ambassadors that R2P-advocates hoped them to be) they seemed to be no realistic and credible candidate to become the representational persona of R2P either.206 In an article Klaus Eder proposes to conceive of civil society ‘as a script which is used by a series of collective actors’ as a ‘mode of justification’ (Eder 2009: 23). ‘Normative justifications,’ Eder explains, ‘refer to big narratives which we invoke in order to make our practices appear as good practices’ (Eder 2009: 24). During the conference references to civil society seemed to be made to assert that the legitimacy of R2P as a norm in the end depended on the support of ‘civil society’, that is, on the backing

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204 Field notes, June 8, 2010.
206 The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRoToP) was initially established in 2008/9 with the aim to establish an NGO-Coalition for the support of R2P that was partly modelled on the NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court. Other than expected however, many civil society organizations, especially the major humanitarian organizations, were critical of R2P and did not want to become a member. Those who were sympathetic to the norm, like Oxfam, were wary of publicly supporting R2P because it was so politically sensitive and could endanger their humanitarian access to countries such as Sudan. See chapter two for details.
of independent, trustworthy civilians, as opposed to biased, untrustworthy politicians and government leaders. Or, to speak with Hopgood, an attempt was made to somehow establish R2P as a norm ‘beyond politics’ (Hopgood 2006: 206).

At the same time, the ‘R2P-experts’ at the conference went to great lengths to claim the support of an authority that is still largely understood to be political - that of the UN acting as representative of the ‘international community’. References to the African roots of R2P were frequently made by invited speakers to counter the criticism of R2P being a Western invention, imposed as ‘the white man’s right to intervene’ (Evans 2008: 53). An effort seemed to be made by the conference organizers to invite representatives from all parts of the globe. Not only the ambassador of Ghana, an outspoken R2P proponent, but also the ambassador of Morocco who chairs the most critical UN block of non-aligned countries, addressed the conference. Thus the organizers created their own model UN to show support for R2P from the entire international community (Kennedy 2005: 103). Where this ‘international community’ is located was not entirely clear, but the strong suggestion was that it refers to something more than the collection of the UN member states, to a ‘normative sphere somehow beyond politics’ to again quote Hopgood (2006: 206). Rather than to the UN General Assembly or the even more politicized Security Council, ‘international community’ seems to refer to a newly emerging ‘body above the states that can have remedial responsibility’ as one of the conference participants stated.207

To conclude, the moral authority invoked to sanction the truth of R2P seems to be sought in a new understanding of the ‘international community’, one that is not represented by the political UN diplomats but by the representatives of ‘humanity’ as united in the ‘international community’ of the UN that is ‘somehow beyond politics’ (Hopgood 2006: 206). The collective that gathered at the R2P conference did not only talk R2P into existence. It simultaneously tried to talk a newly emerging international authority into existence. In this the UN Secretary General and his ‘lieutenant’ the UN Special Adviser for R2P seemed to be the proposed candidates to become the ‘representational persona’. Ideally an R2P-advocate once explained to me, such a representational persona should operate as a ‘secular pope’ who stands above the highly politicized UN member states and guides their moral behaviour to protect the international community or humanity as a whole.208

207 Three years later this particular conference participant, Dr. Jennifer Welsh, was appointed UN Special Adviser for the Responsibility to Protect, thereby replacing Prof. Ed Luck who had finished his term.

208 Interview with staff member of the GCR2P, February 18, 2010 (field notes New York 2010).
IV. Conclusion

In the previous sections, we have seen that there are quite a number of similarities between the ‘production processes’ employed by both groups to advocate truth claims. Both attached great value to the accuracy of facts put forward as evidence, both applied a discourse of international law to affirm truth, both employed performative acts to raise the public’s attention, and both sought to sanction their truth claims through the invocation of moral principles and authorities. Yet there are some differences too.

In the action performed by the Dutch East Timor solidarity activists, the activists ‘spoke truth to power’ by clearly and strongly placing themselves outside the governmental power that they criticized. They denounced the actions of the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, using a naming and shaming technique to deliberately expose him as ‘a liar’ in front of the full Dutch press. ‘This has to go to the press big time,’ Ann said, and she kept her word. Even the negotiations with the Minister’s spokesman Bob van den Bos, were followed by a press conference demanded and organized by the activists. According to Kennedy, and as already noted in chapter two, this style of advocacy is typical for what Kennedy (2005) calls ‘speaking truth to power’: it is a style of advocacy that places itself ‘outside the centers of power in global affairs, and seek[s] to speak to those powers - to advocate - in the name of humanitarian ideas and causes’ (Kennedy 2005: xvi).

The conference co-organized by R2P-advocates was an attempt to ‘talk R2P into existence’; to contribute to the establishment of R2P as a universal norm. Government representatives and UN diplomats were invited to participate and were even regarded as ‘VIP’s’ by the chair of the conference. Other than the East Timor activists, R2P-advocates professed a style of advocacy that ‘speak(s) the language of strategy, of problem solving, of getting things done - less speaking truth to power than providing the expert voice of power itself, deployed for humanitarian ends’ (Kennedy 2005: xvii).

The difference between both styles of advocacy is largely influenced by a general change in advocacy methods that evolved over the last two decades as part of the professionalization of humanitarian and human rights organizations. As explained in chapter two, the overall trend in humanitarianism is towards acquiring ever greater levels of professionalization. Expertise, rather than moral zeal, becomes the distinguishing value here. One should first and foremost present oneself as a humanitarian or human rights expert to become eligible as a member of the community, an expert who holds an academic degree in health, disarmament, international law or such, and who has experience working in various conflict and disaster-affected areas. The style of advocacy practiced by the Dutch East Timor activists in 1995 is still professed today - by Greenpeace or the Free Tibet-movement for example - but has become far less dominant in the humanitarian and human rights community.

The difference between advocating by speaking with the voice of the victims or people - as East Timor solidarity activists did - or advocating by speaking ‘the expert voice of power itself’ - as R2P-advocates did - was also reflected in the kind of evidence that each of the groups used to build their case. Testimonial evidence was highly valued by the solidarity activists as
representing the voice and will of the East Timorese people, which epitomized the highest moral authority in this discourse of civil and political (human) rights. Thus, the East Timor solidarity activists struggled for self-determination, democracy and freedom from oppression for ‘actual individuals’, that is, the East Timorese people. Showing the faces and making heard the voices and will of the East Timorese people through personal and testimonial evidence was not regarded as overtly emotional or sentimental. On the contrary, it was regarded as the only ‘right’ thing to do, as an affirmation of their free choice and political agency.

While testimonial evidence was highly valued by East Timor activists and the power holders they sought to convince, R2P-advocates seemed much more wary about the ‘truth’ of testimonies and demanded mediation by independent scholarly authorities to validate them. For the R2P-advocates, it is no longer the will of the people that has the primacy, but the will or judgment of the international community that they regard as the highest moral authority. Intervening to halt or prevent mass atrocities is not just about saving the lives of the victims, but also about the preservation of ‘humanity’, of which the international community, represented by the UN, is the moral guardian. Rather than the personal or narrative truth as reflected in testimonial or victims’ evidence, R2P-advocates need factual and forensic evidence to build their case. Rather than the secular-political concept ‘people’, R2P-advocates ground their truth claim in the much more transcendent and depoliticized notion of ‘humanity’.

This change in the locus of authority to legitimate calls for the protection of (sacred) human lives could point towards an altered conception of ‘the sacred’ in human rights and humanitarianism. From ‘sacred human life’ as embodied by actual victims of mass atrocities, grounded in the moral authority of the (sovereign) people, to ‘sacred human life’ as ‘embodied’ by a much more abstract and transcendent ‘humanity’ grounded in the moral authority of the ‘international community’.

This brings us to our next question: who can be identified as the legitimate guardian of ‘the sacred’ in the worldview of East Timor activists and R2P-advocates? Who has the sovereignty and legitimacy to decide on mass atrocity interventions? In the following chapter I will study the views of both groups of activists on the meaning of ‘sovereignty’, and on the related duties of sovereign powers.
CHAPTER SIX
Legitimizing Interventions

The life that, with the declaration of rights, became the ground of sovereignty now becomes the subject-object of state politics.


So far I have spoken of sacred life as human life that is considered sacred in and of itself, as life endowed with inviolability and integrity. It is the sacredness that encapsulates the human being in a protective veil, untouchable, as it were, by violations: but what if that sacred veil is removed? What if some state or ruler declares particular lives as unworthy of being protected, no longer regards them as deserving to be called ‘human’ (dehumanization) or deprives them of their rights?

This is the situation that anti-genocide activists confront, and that they fervently and vigorously seek to halt and prevent. It is what happened under the National Socialist regime in Germany, when leaders gradually deprived Jews, the Roma, disabled people and many more groups of their rights so that they could be subjected to an elimination plan. It is what occurred in Rwanda, when Hutu leaders aided by the radio station RTLMC209 started a campaign to dehumanize the Tutsis, calling them ‘cockroaches’ that needed to be exterminated. It is a situation such as in East Timor under Indonesian occupation, when the Indonesian regime no longer protected its East Timorese inhabitants, but instead started a violent campaign, placing them in camps and subjecting them to torture and starvation.

In Homo sacer: sovereign power and bare life, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998) offers some helpful concepts to describe the desacralization of human lives by the very authority that is supposed to protect those lives - the sovereign state or ruler, called ‘sovereign power’ in Agamben’s book title. Agamben defines ‘sovereign power’ as the only authority that has the decision-making power to temporarily suspend the law in a state of exception. This can be the case for example, when a sovereign state or ruler declares martial or emergency law during a war or a major humanitarian crisis. Usually states take such measures with the intention to protect their civilians against outside threats (war), or to enable a rapid humanitarian response to assist the victims of large-scale natural disasters. In the case of genocides and other mass atrocities however, the sovereign state or ruler instead suspends the law to facilitate the violent persecution of its own people. The sovereign removes the umbrella that protects these people under the rule of law, thereby effectively reducing them to ‘bare’ lives: lives ‘exposed to death’ (Agamben 1998: 88). ‘Bare life’ is the life lived by Agamben’s homo sacer, ‘sacred man’, the human who is stripped of his civil-political rights and thereby merely exists in a biological sense.

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209 Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines [in French] meaning ‘One thousand hills free radio and television’.
With *homo sacer*, Agamben postulates a notion of 'sacred man' that is not 'sacred' in a Christian or humanist sense - as life entitled to protection against violations of its (bodily) integrity. On the contrary, Agamben's understanding of 'sacred man' refers to the life of the banned human, the outlawed, whose life is 'exposed to death' by the very sovereign power that is supposed to protect him (Agamben 1998: 88).

What should be done with the sovereign who fails, who abandons or even harms the lives of its own people - overthrow it, defeat the dictatorship, as some of the East Timor solidarity activists proposed? Should its sovereignty be temporarily suspended, as R2P-advocates propose? Both groups of activists believe that the sovereign, that is the government or head of state, has certain duties to its subjects. If the sovereign systematically fails in these duties, it forfeits its sovereign powers. As such, East Timor activists and R2P-advocates subscribe to a long-standing view in political philosophy that there are limits to sovereign power, that sovereign rulers and states are accountable 'to God, the people, or international society for the performance of their duties' (Glanville 2013: 20).

This chapter studies the views of both groups of anti-genocide activists on the principle of sovereignty and the related duties of the sovereign. In what situations does the state or ruler fail to perform its duties and what should be the course of action to halt or change that according to the activists? I seek to answer this question by addressing three sub-questions. First I need to comprehend the meaning that both groups of activists attach to the principle of sovereignty, to understand when, in their view, the sovereign forfeits its sovereignty. This question will be addressed in the section 'The principle of 'sovereignty': two approaches'. The subsequent section 'On whose authority?' asks on whom the sovereignty should fall if the sovereign state or ruler fails in its duties. The section 'Strategies of salvation', finally asks how, in the view of both groups of activists, mass atrocities can best be prevented in the future to liberate the human race from these horrific episodes in human history.

In order to answer all these questions, I will begin this chapter by describing two cases that lend themselves to studying the three sub-questions. The first concerns the response of the Portuguese government and Portuguese solidarity activists to the Indonesian occupation of East Timor (1975-1999). Compared to other nationalities, Portuguese solidarity activists in particular were confronted with questions of sovereignty and sovereign power, because East Timor was formerly administered as a Portuguese colony. As became clear from chapter two, East Timor solidarity activists are generally against any form of governance based on domination and suppression, and therefore strongly anti-colonial. When the Portuguese dictatorship fell in 1974 and was replaced by a democratic government however, the Portuguese solidarity activists claimed a special responsibility for the Portuguese government to solve the East Timor-issue based on its position as East Timor's former colonial power. Because of the

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210 The term *homo sacer* is derived from Roman Law and refers to the Latin meaning of *sacer* as something that constitutes a 'taboo' in society and is 'cursed.' *Sacer esto,* Agamben writes (1998: 79) quoting Robert Marett, 'is in fact a curse; and *homo sacer* on whom this curse falls is an outcast, a banned man, tabooed, dangerous.'

211 Please note: when I speak of 'the sovereign,' I refer to the *authority* - be it the state or a ruler - endowed with *sovereign power,* and when I talk of 'sovereignty' I refer to a *principle* of governance instead.
tensions and dilemmas inherent in this position and the many discussions following from that, Portuguese solidarity activists developed articulate views on sovereignty and legitimate sovereign power. This makes of this case an attractive one to study the questions mentioned above. In this chapter, and particularly in the analytical sections, I build on conversations that I had with five Portuguese East Timor activists, on what they regarded as the ‘special’ responsibility of Portugal towards the East Timorese people.

The second case describes the views on sovereignty and sovereign power as held by R2P-advocates. It is based on conversations that I had with five central figures in the R2P movement on the UN sanctioned international military intervention in Libya (2011). On 20 October 2011 images of the dead body of Muammar al-Gaddafi were broadcast all over the world and R2P-advocates were not pleased. The killing of the Libyan dictator seemed to confirm the conception that the UN intervention in Libya, sanctioned under explicit reference to R2P, was a cover-up for a regime change. It thus strengthened the position of R2P-opponents who argued that the North Atlantic Treatise Organisation (NATO) - that executed the military intervention in Libya - from the very start had planned to overthrow the Gaddafi regime under the pretext of saving civilians from mass atrocities. Consequently, the Libya intervention instigated a heated debate within the R2P-movement about the purport of the notion in R2P that a state’s sovereignty may be suspended to allow for mass atrocity interventions. This makes the ‘Libya case’ particularly suitable to study the views of R2P-advocates on sovereignty and sovereign power.

This chapter will argue that there is a difference in the way in which both groups of activists understand the meaning of the principle of ‘sovereignty’. Furthermore it will show that both respond differently to the question of who or what authority is legitimized to intervene in case the sovereign state or ruler fails to perform its duties. To East Timor solidarity activists, ‘sovereignty’ means ‘self-determination’, as in the political right to chose one’s own government in free and fair elections. If the sovereign fails to respect this political freedom, then it loses its sovereign power and the sovereignty reverts to the people. To R2P-advocates, sovereignty means ‘responsibility’ as in ‘the responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocities’. If the sovereign fails in its responsibility to protect, the sovereign power falls not to the people threatened by the atrocities, but to the international community of ‘humanity’ as represented by the United Nations.212

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212 The responsibility to protect also addresses violence against civilians conducted by non-state actors insofar that if a state is unable or unwilling to halt that violence, the international community in principle could intervene. In practice however, states usually ask for international assistance of UN peace keeping forces in such situations to either help them combat non-state armed actors, as happened in the Democratic Republic of Congo where UN troops launched a joined military operation with the national Congolese Armed Forces against armed groups in the northeast of the country in 2009, or to assist in providing protection to civilians, the mandate under which many UN peace keeping missions are sanctioned nowadays.
I. The East Timor-case and Portugal (1974-1999)

East Timor became a Portuguese colony at the beginning of the 16th century when Portugal vested its colonial trade interest over Timor (Pureza 2004; Robinson 2009). It established a colonial administration in the current capital of East Timor, Dili, in 1769 (Robinson 2009: 23) and signed treaties to settle the borders of the eastern part of the island with the Dutch (who held the western part) in 1859 and 1914 (Robinson 2009; Fernandes 2011a., 2011b.; Pureza 2004). The Portuguese colonial footprint in East Timor, remained 'light' - both in terms of its military presence and development efforts (Robinson 2009: 24-25). This might have contributed to the fact that no national liberation war broke out in East Timor, while liberation movements in Portugal’s African colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea all took up arms against the Portuguese colonial power during what became known as the Portuguese Colonial War (1961-1974) (Robinson 2009: 25). Although Portugal had become member of the United Nations in 1955 - a body that urged the colonial powers to start a rapid decolonization process - the authoritarian regime of Portugal held on to its colonies claiming 'historical rights' (Pureza 2004: 195). This position changed drastically with the Carnation Revolution in April 1974 that marked the onset of democratization in Portugal. Portugal’s new democratic government 'adopted a law in July 1975 (Law 7/75) that established a decolonization programme for the territory, to be pursued through a popular ballot and in line with the United Nations legal doctrine, offering three choices: independence, integration or free association with a third state' (Pureza 2004: 196).

When Indonesia launched its military invasion of East Timor on 10 December 1975 no legitimate, UN-recognized popular ballot on East Timor’s future had yet taken place. In response, both the UN General Assembly and Security Council issued resolutions affirming the right of self-determination for the East Timorese people, demanding Indonesia’s rapid withdrawal and calling upon Portugal, as East Timor’s administrative overlord, to assist in finding a peaceful solution.213 However, as the United States firmly backed the Indonesian occupation, fearing a communist take-over of East Timor, these and the following resolutions were of no effect: Indonesia continued to occupy the eastern half of the island until the referendum in 1999.

Although the Portuguese government was embarrassed by the violent Indonesian take-over of its colony, it initially responded with a strategy that sought to increase the responsibility of the UN, while downplaying its own responsibilities to find a resolution. This was much to the dismay of the Portuguese solidarity movement who ‘argued that East Timor remained a non-self-governing territory, according to Chapter XI of the UN Charter’ (Pureza 2004: 197). In their view, Portugal effectively remained East Timor’s administrative overlord until a legitimate self-determination ballot had taken place. It was due to the persistent lobby of the Portuguese solidarity movement that from 1986 onwards the Portuguese government

finally took a more ‘militant’ stance on the issue (Pureza 2004: 206-212). It decided to actively support East Timor’s self-determination in negotiations with Indonesia, held under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Portuguese East Timor activists whom I interviewed spoke about Portugal’s responsibility for the East Timorese people in historical, political and moral terms. The historical responsibility of Portugal for the fate of the East Timorese people lay first and foremost in its obligations as East Timor’s former colonial, and current administrative, power - so they felt. One activist admitted being partly motivated by a sense of colonial guilt:

I am not sure about this, but the colonial trajectory, the colonial past, the colonial era of the Portuguese empire was [a] crucial one for my generation. We grew up with the feeling we were the oppressors. Therefore the autonomy - the freedom of organization, of expression, of organizing oneself as a state for the people - was a basic expression of freedom for our generation. We belong to a generation for which situations like the colonial empire or other sorts of imperial attitude are quite negative.

Jorge, 13 November 2013

Some Portuguese solidarity activists also found grounds for historical and moral obligations in ‘the historical alliances between the Timorese and Portuguese kings’ and in the strong connection between the Portuguese and Timorese Catholic Church. Five of the six Portuguese solidarity activists with whom I spoke about Portugal’s responsibility, were engaged with what they called the progressive Catholics. This was a national branch of Catholic Action, or the Young Christian Workers (JOC) group, an international Catholic movement that had been established by the Belgium priest Joseph Cardijn in 1924 (Bedouelle 2006: 205). In Portugal, the progressive Catholics played an important role in channelling protests against the dictatorship of the Salazar (1932-1968) and later the Caetano (1968-1974) regime. When the Colonial War broke out in 1961, members of the progressive Catholics joined the struggle against colonialism, recognizing that both they and the colonized people had a common enemy in the Portuguese dictatorship. As one activist explained:

As Pureza (2004) explained in 1986 the Portuguese State Council rejected a UN plan in which it would have to give up the status of East Timor as a non-autonomous territory in transition to independence, in exchange for guarantees by the Indonesian government that it would respect the human rights of the East Timorese and the Portuguese cultural heritage in East Timor. Portugal rejected this plan because it would thereby effectively recognize Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor. When Portugal became member of the European Community that same year, it used its ‘new status […] to internationalize, in a sustained manner, the Timorese problem’ (Pureza 2004: 209).

More biographical details of the Portuguese solidarity activists that I interviewed will be shared in the analytical sections.

The same priest and movement had also been a source of inspiration for some Australian East Timor activists, see chapter two.
Legitimizing Interventions

there would not be freedom in the colonies without democracy in Portugal and vice versa: there would never be democracy in Portugal if Portugal kept being a colonial power.

Afonso, 15 November 2013

The progressive Catholics were further inspired by the encyclicals of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI that, according to activist Jorge, ‘were opening the floor to emancipation for colonized peoples.’ In 1965, a letter was published by progressive Catholics priests who outright condemned the colonial oppression and human rights abuses committed by Portuguese troops in the African colonies, and advocated self-determination for the colonized peoples.

Although religion, and progressive Catholicism in particular, played an important role in the motivations of Portuguese solidarity activists to join the struggle for East Timorese self-determination, each of them, independently, hastened to explain that their primary motivation was political, not religious. A Catholic priest who was involved in the East Timor solidarity struggle stated that he could not separate his political from his religious role. He regarded his duty as a representative of the Catholic church as taking an active role in solving social problems. Another activist explained that he was not primarily motivated to join the struggle because of pity or compassion for the suffering inflicted on the Timorese ‘brothers and sisters, but rather, because of the politics that caused that suffering:

In fact, both Father Benedito and me, we were engaged already in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism before the (Carnation) revolution. This means that there was [first and foremost] political motivation. At a certain moment, you asked what kind of atrocities wake us up. But before the atrocities there is the politics that leads to atrocities.

Afonso, 15 November 2013

Finally, the repeated denunciations of the Indonesian occupation by the UN Security Council and General Assembly strengthened the conviction of the Portuguese solidarity activists that they stood on their rights in a legal sense too. According to international law, the case of East Timor was ‘crystal clear’, one solidarity activist explains:

There had been a violent occupation by a foreign power. Therefore the [violation of] basic rules of ethics and in international law were very clear. They were crystal clear in the superficial, first sight analysis.

Jorge, 13 November 2013

Thus in the view of the Portuguese activists, the sovereign who behaves as a dictator should be deposed outright - there is no other solution than that: but the ‘enlightened’ sovereign who heads a democratic government should take full responsibility for the protection of its people.

The next section contains the second case study selected for analysis in this chapter.

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217 Interview with Jorge, 13 November 2013.
218 Interview with Afonso, 15 November 2013.
presents the views of R2P-advocates on the responsibilities of the sovereign as emerging from the debate following the international military intervention in Libya.

II. The Libya case and the responsibility to protect

On 15 February 2011, inspired by the nonviolent revolutions in the neighbouring countries Tunisia and Egypt, Libyans took to the streets in the city of Benghazi to demand the stepping down of the authoritarian ruler Muammar al-Gaddafi who had held power in Libya since 1968 (International Crisis Group 2011; Kuperman 2013). The Benghazi uprising soon spread across the country. According to an observer of the International Crisis Group, demonstrations were launched to protest against ‘decades of authoritarianism and political repression combined with corruption and mismanagement’ (International Crisis Group 2011: 1). Other than in Egypt and Tunisia, Libya’s ruler did not try to appease the protesters with promises of democratization. Instead, according to the International Crisis Group, he ‘made it clear he had absolutely no intention of standing down and declared that he would fight until the bitter end and by whatever means necessary to hold on to power’ (International Crisis Group 2011: 1). Although later studies (Kuperman 2013) argue that the protests were not altogether nonviolent from the start and that Libyan security forces did not indiscriminately target civilians in attempts to halt them (Kuperman 2013: 108 - 113), at the time reports by Human Rights Watch and international media suggested otherwise. On 20 February 2011 Human Rights Watch for example, reported that at least 173 protesters had been killed within four days of protest.219

On 26 February the UN Security Council responded by issuing a resolution that could be called unique in terms of its ‘timely and decisive response’ and unanimous adoption. Security Council Resolution 1970 recalled ‘the Libyan authorities’ responsibility to protect its population’ and imposed a series of measures and sanctions, including referral to the International Criminal Court, an arms embargo and a freeze on assets.220 Prior to the endorsement of the Resolution 1970 the Arab League had banned Libya from attending its meetings. In addition, both the African Union and the UN Human Rights Council decided to despatch fact finding missions to Libya.

Nevertheless, these sanctions and appeals did not seem to immediately deter Libyan security forces from using violence. Journalists and human rights observers continued to report a on the escalating violence in Libya221 and armed opposition groups were being established.


When on March 16, 2013 the commander of the Libyan forces claimed ‘that it would defeat opposition forces in Benghazi within 48 hours’, developments within the UN Security Council accelerated. Driven by the fear that a violent takeover of Benghazi by Gaddafi’s forces might result in a massacre of civilians, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 on 17 March 2011 by a vote of ten in favour to none dissenting, with five abstentions (Brazil, China, Germany, India, Russian Federation). Resolution 1973 sanctioned the establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya, to be implemented by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). 222

To the dismay of many, including R2P proponents, NATO applied a very wide interpretation of its mandate and instead of focusing on ‘the immediate establishment of a cease-fire’ as was stipulated in Resolution 1973, began to attack retreating Libyan forces and supported rebels with intelligence and arm supplies (Kuperman 2013: 113-114). Critics concluded that NATO misunderstood its mandate as a carte blanche for overthrowing the Gaddafi regime. Their concern was echoed by members of the Security Council and regional bodies like the African Union (AU) that had previously supported the Resolution. The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) that had endorsed or at least not opposed Resolution 1973 felt that the ‘Western’ NATO forces had simply marched on with their own agenda without consulting them. Brazil submitted a concept note to the UN Security Council and General Assembly entitled ‘Responsibility while Protecting’, in which it stated that ‘there is a growing perception that the concept of the responsibility to protect might be misused for purposes other than protecting civilians, such as regime change’. 223 Russia and China who, for the first time in a long period, had abstained from using their vetoes on Resolution 1973, felt misled as well. Advocacy officers of humanitarian organizations like Oxfam and the International Red Cross concluded that Libya had brought the Security Council into a stalemate position. 224 In their view, this had serious implications for its capability and will to effectively deal with the humanitarian crisis that was meanwhile evolving in Syria 225. Members of the Security Council were wary that their Resolutions would ‘again’ be misused for interventions they had never meant to sanction - as was the case with Resolution 1973 on Libya - and consequently became extremely conservative in their support

223 The concept note amongst others proposed to take measures to ensure that in case of a mandate to use force for the protection of civilians, the utmost should be done to limit that use of force.
224 Interview with the Head of Advocacy at the Oxfam International’s New York Office, 3 November 2011.
225 Inspired by the Arab Spring in neighbouring countries, protests in Syria began in March 2011 with civilians demanding democratic and economic reform from the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. The Syrian government responded with a military crackdown that triggered an armed rebellion amongst (various) opposition groups. The Syrian Civil War caused an ever greater number of civilian casualties civilian when both sides of the war started to receive weaponry and military assistance from outside actors, and are both allegedly involved in targeting civilians. On January 7, 2014, the UN announced that it would stop updating the Syrian death toll, which had been estimated to be over 100,000 in July 2013, as it could no longer provide sufficient verifcation (see: http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/1/7/un-abandons-deathcountinsyria.html). According to an UNHCR update of January 2014, over 4.2 million people have been displaced by the violence in Syria, and over 1.8 million civilians have fled the country (see: http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486a76.html).
for Resolutions proposing interventions for the protection of civilians in Syria.

R2P proponents joined in the chorus saying that R2P should not be a euphemism for regime change. The responsibility to protect had never been designed with that aim, and in that sense Libya constituted a severe set-back to the acceptance of R2P as a universal norm. Thus, an R2P-advocate (from Human Rights Watch) who was closely involved with the establishment of both the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect argued that while Resolution 1970 signified a big step forward for R2P, Resolution 1973 that sanctioned the NATO military intervention, practically nullified that gain.

The other big development of course has been Libya. It is sort of two steps forward and three steps back, or something [laughs]. Because the first resolution 1970 was a huge step forward. And if we had ended there and not had a military intervention, we would have been talking about the new age of R2P, and 'look the Security Council relied on R2P' and things like they put in place strong sanctions and they referred the case to the ICC. [...] Everyone sees talking about R2P, intervention, about action at all as a road to Libya. So it is a model that is going to be looming out there in these discussions for a while.

Winny, 18 October 2011

Other R2P proponents were less gloomy about the harm done to R2P by the NATO intervention in Libya. The founder of the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect agreed that Libya caused a temporary set-back to R2P but also felt that things were 'starting to settle down again'. Although the director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect emphasized that R2P was not about regime change, he also argued that despite the eventual set-backs, Libya had 'saved' R2P:

In all the debate about Libya, I think one thing that was missed was… If Resolution 1973 had not been passed and the no-fly zone had not happened… Or let me put it in a different way. If nothing had happened - if R2P had been invoked in resolution 1970 and Gaddafì had been allowed to then just storm into Benghazi and commit a massacre and retake the city and killed as many people as he wanted - R2P would have been dead as a concept because it would have been another Srebrenica moment, another Rwanda moment. It would have shown [that] the international community yet again actually cannot respond when people's lives are at risk.

Interview, 29 November 2011

Likewise, R2P’s prime ‘ambassador’ Gareth Evans wrote in an opinion article that while Libya had indeed caused ‘paralysis’ in the Security Council over the question how to deal with Syria,
it had not altogether ‘ousted’ R2P.226 The majority of UN member states, including those on
the Security Council, continued to support the principle of R2P - so he argued. Like other
R2P-proponents, Evans argued that Libya did not challenge the principle of R2P *per se*, but
rather shifted the debate to the question of how to implement it.

III. The principle of ‘sovereignty’: two approaches

R2P-advocates are often portrayed as neo-imperial interventionists, in contrast to the East
Timor solidarity activists who are generally viewed as anti-imperial activists. Yet in the Libya
and Portugal cases described above the R2P-advocates argued *against* regime change, whereas
the Portuguese East Timor activists argued in favour of the defeat of the Indonesian Suharto
regime. This position was strongly informed by their own struggle against the Portuguese
dictatorship, still fresh in their memories. Portuguese solidarity activist Inês explained:

> [I wanted to take] a role in change and change for us was - it was the same thing as for
the Timorese. The change for us was to defeat the dictatorship and it was very vague
[laughs]. […] so it is exactly the same.

Inês, 12 November 2013

‘It is exactly the same,’ Inês said, meaning that she regarded colonialism and dictatorship
as two sides of the same coin, as political systems that are both based on the suppression
of people. When Inês and other Portuguese activists continued to emphasize that their
struggle was first and foremost political, they underlined their conviction that colonialism
and dictatorship were absolutely and principally wrong as political systems. Jorge talked
about ‘the perversion of colonialism’ and the ‘perversion side of colonialism’, later describing
this ‘perversity’ as ‘domination, exploitation, the denial of basic human rights of individuals
and peoples’.227 From this perspective, colonialism and dictatorship are intrinsically linked as
they are rooted on the same ‘perversion’ authoritarian political ideologies that facilitate peoples’
domination and suppression. That is why they should be tackled together, as Portuguese
activist Afonso explained above when he said that ‘there would not be freedom in the colonies
without democracy in Portugal and vice versa’.228 In other words, the East Timor solidarity
activists might well all be anti-imperialist activists, but that does not automatically constitute
them as non-interventionists. As Abulof (2009: 26) explains, ‘self-determination […] does not
posit non-interference, but rather non-domination.’

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227 Interview, 13 November 2013.

228 Interview, 15 November 2013.
While the Portuguese activists were hostile to the Portuguese government under the Salazar and Caetano dictatorship, arguing that the defeat of the Portuguese dictatorship was the only road to liberation, their attitude towards the Portuguese government changed drastically when it became democratic. Then, instead of demanding it to release its sovereignty over the East Timorese people, the activists started a fervent lobby to pressure the Portuguese government to hold on to its sovereignty as the administrative power of the East Timorese people. After East Timor had fallen prey to the Indonesian dictatorship of Suharto, the Portuguese activists regarded their government as a crucial agent to help secure the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination. What was ‘wrong’ about the Portuguese dictatorship was equally ‘wrong’ about the Indonesian dictatorship. The sovereign who engages in systematic oppression and killing of its people forfeits its sovereign powers.

Just like the East Timor activists, R2P-advocates hold that (state) sovereignty is no ‘license to kill’ - as R2P proponent Gareth Evans repeatedly stated. This brings us to the question, what is the nature of the principle of sovereignty that each of the groups advocate? If R2P advocates talk about sovereignty-as-responsibility, what do they mean? If East Timor solidarity activists again and again invoke the principle of self-determination, what do they mean? 

Sovereignty as self-determination
In an insightful paper, political scientist Uriel Abulof (2009: 10) postulates self-determination as a universal speech-act that gained wide international recognition and political power in the aftermath of World War I. On 11 February 1918 US president Woodrow Wilson spoke before Congress stating that:

'Self-determination' is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril. [...] national aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent’ (Wilson quoted by Abulof 2009: 19)

When Wilson spoke these words, Abulof (2009: 19) writes, he had no idea that he thereby triggered a series of peoples’ uprisings for decades to come. Postulating self-determination as a speech act, as Abulof does, means that by speaking out, by expressing their political choice through speech or vote, declarations of people can transform the political status quo. Thus

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229 To clarify: although prior to the Carnation Revolution, the Portuguese activists did not conduct actions that specifically or singularly advocated self-determination for East Timor, they were engaged in protests against Portuguese colonialism as a whole, including the Portuguese colonial rule over East Timor.


231 Please note: the question who is the legitimate beholder of sovereignty will be addressed in the next section ‘on whose authority’.
declarations of independence can effectively call into existence new nations (Abulof 2009: 21). The oldest historical roots of this understanding of self-determination can be found in the notion of the plebiscite, Abulof (2009: 11) writes, ‘derived from the Latin plebiscite, the “decreed” (scitum) of “the common people” (Concilium Plebis).

So what was so important about this principle of self-determination for the Portuguese East Timor activists: why did they feel so deeply about it? Inês and Elisa both worked for the Commission for the Rights of the Maubere232 People (CDPM) - a Portuguese East Timor solidarity organisation that was established in 1982 by the non-governmental organization CIDAC (Centro Informacao e Documentacao Amilar Cabral). While Inês had headed CDPM from 1984, Elisa, who is younger, joined CDPM ten years later. Being of a different generations and having lived through different phases in Portuguese history, the motivations of both women differ slightly as well.

Elisa came across upon CDPM East Timor when a friend invited her to a meeting of CPDM. She had just graduated as an anthropology student and had grown up ‘with this idea of responsibility: we are not alone, we live in a society and we have responsibilities to help others’. Although Elisa initially joined CDPM ‘by accident, it could have been any other issue’. Gradually ‘when I started understanding what was going on, the details and the violence… that was what made me become involved really’. More than some of the older Portuguese solidarity activists who stressed that they are first and foremost political activists advocating political revolution, Elisa regarded her solidarity as motivated by concerns over human rights violations.

Inês had a quite different background. She grew up while seeing and experiencing the political suppression of the Portuguese dictatorship at close range. Inês was the granddaughter of a former Portuguese Foreign Minister (Fernandes 2011b). Her father and mother were involved in the struggle against the dictatorship and her brother was imprisoned a couple of times.233 Consequently, Inês described her empathy for the Timorese struggle as based on ‘political grounds, just political grounds’.

Despite these differences in (historical) background and motivations, both Elisa and Inês responded in strong terms to the principle of self-determination. During the duo-interview that I had with them, each brought up the term self-determination a couple of times, and when one of them mentioned it, the other usually responded by repeating it.

Annette: So already in the beginning you would refer to international law and the UN Charter?

Inês: Yes, all the time, all the time.

Elisa: And the right to self-determination…,

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232 As explained in chapter three, the term ‘Maubere’ is a Portuguese word referring to the East Timorese people that was introduced again by the independence movement to emphasize the political-cultural identity of the East Timorese as distinct from the Indonesians. By using that same term, solidarity activists made clear that they too recognised the distinct political-cultural identity of the East Timorese.

233 Interview with Inês, 12 November 2013.
Inês: And the right to self-determination.
Elisa: …from the beginning.
Inês: Because we asked this - the recognition of the right to self-determination - for all Portuguese colonies.

Interview, 12 November 2013

This repeated mention of the word ‘self-determination’ impelled me to ask towards the end of the interview what was so important about this principle:

Annette: One last thing. You both have slightly different backgrounds but strongly respond to self-determination. Why is self-determination so important in this world?
Elisa: Because it is about people as individuals and as peoples, communities being able to think about their lives, their wishes, their dreams and act on it. It is about being involved about deciding. And to decide you need to understand and think about it individually and as a community.
Inês: It’s autonomy!
Elisa: Its being able to understand what is going on around me and making choices.
Annette: And why is that important for a human being, for mankind, for the world?
Inês: It’s the only way I conceive that people can be human - if I can say [it] like this [laughs]. Because if not, we do things that others decide [and] I don’t see the sense of that. So in every sphere of life - your personal life, you as a member of the community, as a national of a country, you as a member of the world of the human community. I think humanity has only sense if we can choose what we want to do. But not only as individuals, but in all these different spheres.
Annette: To fully realize what it is to be human?
Inês: Because someone has to decide.
Elisa: Every day you [are] faced with decisions in your life in the world.
Inês: If you don’t decide yourself, someone will decide for you.
Elisa: Then you’re just like a machine.
Inês: Then it does not make sense.

Interview, 12 November 2013

For Elisa and Inês, a human being is only fully human if she is free, if she can enjoy freedom of expression and choice and can exercise control over her own life. Life that is not free ‘does not make sense’, Inês says. Afonso, a retired professor from Oporto University who was a leading figure in the Portuguese solidarity movement, replied in similar terms to my question.
Annette: What did self-determination mean to you, how important was it in your struggle?
Afonso: This is freedom!

Annette: Why is self-determination so crucial to mankind and the world in your view?
Afonso: I think because people like to be free and take decision about their own life. It is natural, normal. After I signed this document on torture, I said [with force]: I prefer to die than to live without freedom in this stupid country! A country closed. And to live in the fulfilment of the human beings, you must be free! Otherwise what are you?

Annette: The essence of human beings is freedom?
Afonso: Yes, yes, yes. I never accept to live without freedom. This [living under a dictatorship] was not life, this was not to live. And I understood very well that the Angolans, the Mozambiqans, the Timorese and so they wished to be free also.

Self-determination is ‘freedom’ for Inês, Elisa, and Afonso, and for Jorge, who responded to my question, ‘why is self-determination so important to you’, with a short and determined: ‘freedom!’ When these solidarity activists, three of whom still carry vivid memories of living under the Portuguese dictatorship, talked of ‘freedom’, they talked about political freedom, about the right to elect your own government in free and fair elections, and the right to openly express your political view. The solidarity activists regarded these political liberties as a primary human right, Jorge explains:

The respect for basic human rights in the daily life of the Timorese was an important element, but that would not fill the whole demand of the people. Self-determination had to be put in place. We often felt that diplomatic negotiations with the good offices of major European powers or the US were trying to guarantee a minimum of dignity but without giving space for people to express themselves in terms of self-determination. Our major concern was that we could [ask for] both things at the same time - human rights and at the same time keeping the capacity of organizing the referendum.

Jorge, 13 November 2013

Jorge linked self-determination, the organization of a referendum, to the fulfilment of human rights. His view echoed that of Inês, who stated:

We also always said, the first human right to be recognized is the right to self-determination. People must be independent and people must have a say about their future, about their situation, because this is the first of the human rights of the peoples and without that, it is not possible to safeguard the human rights.

Inês, 12 November 2013
This kind of reasoning, of viewing self-determination as a primary condition for the fulfilment of human rights, reminds one of a similar logic used by R2P-advocates to promote mass atrocity intervention. Many R2P-advocates regard mass atrocities as ‘the most egregious mass violation of human rights’ (United Nations 2008: paragraph 67), as a violation that needs to be stopped first before one can start the successful implementation of the full plethora of human rights, as R2P-advocate Donald explained:

R2P..., sometimes people think it is impossible. But for me, it is at the other end of the spectrum: “If you cannot do this, you cannot do anything!”[laughing] We can talk about children’s rights, and universal education, and universal access to clean water and all this stuff, yeah great. […] [But] if you cannot stop mass murder, we’re not gonna do universal primary education!

Donald, 17 October 2011

To stop ‘mass murder’, R2P-advocates do not advocate a notion of sovereignty grounded in the principle of self-determination. Instead they promote a notion of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’.

Sovereignty as responsibility234

Art: So we’re saying in the UN Charter which has this article 2/4 [2/7] which says that the UN and the international community will not intervene in the domestic affairs of a state. [Picks up book with UN Charter and reads out]: ‘Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter’.

Annette: And R2P turned that up-side down?

Art: What it [R2P] says is: yes your sovereignty has a right but we are changing it now for these three worst crimes - war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. If you commit these crimes, then the principle of non-interference does not count. You can no longer use the sovereignty shield to commit these crimes.

Interview 29 November 2011

The Westphalian notion of sovereignty as non-interference lost credit after the ethnic cleansings and genocide occurring in the 1990s. It was the traumas caused by Rwanda and Kosovo that prompted Kofi Annan in 1999 to call upon the UN member-states to find a way out of the sovereignty versus intervention dilemma. Pete, the R2P-advocate who visited

234 See chapter two for a short background on the invention of this term.
East Timor and Rwanda after the atrocities and was introduced before, talked in similar terms about the historical events that informed the urge to put limits to state sovereignty. He explained the emergence of the notion of sovereignty-as-responsibility as follows:

You kind of need to go back. Never again was in serious danger of just being something you carve in stone above a concentration camp or a mass grave. And I think it’s a noble sentiment, but the question is, how do you transfer the noble sentiment into actual practical action. I think the issue with humanitarian intervention was it talked all about ‘a right to intervene’ and clearly was about military force and was about violations of sovereignty, albeit morally justifiable, but that’s what it was about. Whereas I think that the essential difference between that and R2P is that R2P does not talk about any country’s right to do anything to any other country. If it talks about rights at all, then it talks about rights of ordinary people to be protected from mass atrocity crimes.

I think the emphasis on responsibilities is not just diplomatic artifice. I think it is essential: it is an essential difference. It talks about sovereignty as responsibility, obviously the responsibility of a state to protect its people [and] the responsibility of broader world to assist countries that are struggling to protect their people from these crimes. And then, only if they are manifestly failing - unwilling or unable to protect its populations - then and only then does it talk about the responsibility of the international community to act. And how it acts, I think […], unlike the language of humanitarian intervention […], could be a wide range of possibilities. […]

I think it [R2P] really did grow out of […] Rwanda and Srebrenica. Those two events probably were the single lowest points in the entire history of the United Nations. In the first case the world community basically sits on its hands for a hundred days, while a genocide takes place in the middle of Africa. The fastest genocide of the twentieth century, you know, almost a million people in a hundred days, killed mainly with machetes and farmer’s bullets - terrifying. The UN had a force on the ground of course, but did almost nothing. And then Srebrenica, the year after, where the world community - after wagging its finger and making all kind of glorious speeches about ‘never again’ and about protecting people and setting up safe havens - shown [exposing itself] as being completely weak and impotent in the face of tanks rolling in, and then of course everything that happened. In order to understand the psychology of those people who have framed the responsibility to protect, those two events are the seminal events. How do we build out of that shame, that humiliation and the abject tragedy of those two events? And how do we build an idea which forgets about the sacrosanct notion of national sovereignty?

Pete, 29 November 2011

What Pete praised in the notion of the responsibility to protect is that it shifted the language of the debate on humanitarian intervention from an emphasis on the rights of the intervener, to an emphasis on the responsibilities of states. What Pete and other R2P-advocates like and
admire about this shift in language is that it opened the door to bridging the divide between Western powers and critics of Western imperialism who argued that the term ‘humanitarian intervention’ was misused to satisfy the political interests of the United States and other major powers. Steve, the Australian R2P-advocate who was introduced in chapter three, stressed the importance of the concept’s ability to bridge the North-South divide within the UN:

Clearly it [R2P] is not neo-imperial because how do you explain the 110 former colonial states who voted in favour of it and have done so repeatedly. Sounds [as if] you’re saying, ‘You’re stupid’, and ‘they don’t understand what they are voting for’. […] Where the value, I think, for R2P comes [in], is that you have this consensus! Every state has signed up to it. Nobody is saying they don’t accept these responsibilities. Nobody is saying they don’t think the Security Council has these rights. Sure there’s is big debates about how to implement it. But you got this core consensus. […] That’s what has marked R2P, that consensus it really got that strength behind it. That’s why R2P can be - already has been - a game changer.

Steve, 19 October 2012

Finding consensus among all member-states is so important for the R2P-advocates, because the responsibility to protect can only legitimately be invoked and activated by the international community as represented by the UN, which brings us to the topic of the next section. Which authority can legitimately order intervention to protect people from violence inflicted upon them by their own state or ruler? To whom should the sovereignty fall if the sovereign state or ruler fails in its protection duties?

IV. On whose authority?

Among the fiercest criticisms encountered by the Portuguese East Timor activists was that of those who argued that the activists were only extending the suffering of the East Timorese people. With their solidarity work, these critics argued, the Portuguese activists motivated the East Timorese to continue a hopeless struggle that cost many lives. It was a valid point of criticism, Inês affirmed, one that was discussed seriously in the Portuguese solidarity group CDPM.

There was a very interesting discussion. […] CDPM was accused, several times, of extending the suffering of the East Timorese people. This was a very strong argument, saying ‘Well, there’s nothing we can do, East Timor will never be independent so they have to accept it and build another way of living with Indonesia. In helping or supporting the East Timorese struggle you are just extending the suffering of the people’. This was for many, many, many years and on many occasions a very strong argument. We discussed this at length and always said [banging hand on table while saying this]:
‘As far [long] as there are East Timorese struggling for their freedom, we will support them. When they stop it and say, ‘We are really Indonesian and we give it up’, then we will stop also. But we cannot stop while there are Timorese struggling.

Inês, 12 November 2013

For the Portuguese East Timor solidarity activists, the authority to decide on international interventions that aimed to reduce - or put an end to - the oppression and suffering of the Timorese, clearly rested with the people. It was the East Timorese people that had the first and last say in this matter, it was the ‘will of the people’ that was their lead.

Although many Portuguese and international East Timor solidarity activists had an anti-militaristic background and were wary of armed international interventions, they had no major problems with the UN peace keeping troops that intervened in September 1999 to stop the post-referendum violence. Firstly, because the East Timorese people themselves had called for a UN intervention, but secondly, and perhaps more crucially, because the sending of troops seemed the only viable option to secure the outcome of the referendum, as Jorge explained.

Annette: How did you, at the time, feel about the call for UN peace keeping interventions?
Jorge: Well, after the referendum I think that it was urgent for the international actors to guarantee the respect for the results [of the referendum]. What was in fact my major concern was the guarantee of the respect for the results of the referendum, which were obviously […] denied by the movements of the militia etcetera. More than anything else, […] with the organization of the referendum, there was an opening of the possibility of freedom of expression towards the capacity to organize for the Timorese people, an independent state. […] So therefore I was in favour of - whatever the mission was - something that could guarantee the whole process of expression of will of the Timorese people. For that purpose, the UN was absolutely crucial.

Annette: And also absolutely responsible?
Jorge: Yeah, yes…, they were in fact morally and politically responsible towards the Timorese people because they opened the narrow window for their [the East Timorese] possibility of expressing their will, so afterwards they were not supposed to leave those people alone. They should do something to avoid atrocities that were starting in a huge manner. So it was moral credibility and it was a political credibility that was needed. [Because] it was very clear, it was really very clear at that moment, that the will of the people - the results of referendum - were absolutely clear. So there was an added element of legitimacy: the will of the people.

Interview, 13 November 2013
It is precisely on this point, on the question of the autonomy and agency of the affected people in decisions about international interventions for protection purposes, that Jorge criticized the concept of R2P:

Which [the will of the people] is something that most of the time when we talk about responsibility to protect, is not tested. Some of the authors or agents that talk publicly about responsibility to protect, they express their own understanding of duty or happiness, or order locally. But they express that from the outside, without knowing in fact, without having any element of legitimation that comes from the inside.

Jorge’s observation is correct. The decision to intervene in Libya for example, was not legitimized by a plebiscite amongst the Libyan people. It was the UN Security Council who decided to intervene militarily in Libya. Although the UN Security Council felt strengthened in their decision to intervene by various statements of Libyan human rights organizations calling for a no-fly zone, the primary authority for that decision did not rest with the Libyan people. As Anne Orford, scholar in international law, writes in her book *International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect*:

While the responsibility to protect concept challenges the tyranny of states or insurgents in the name of the people, it does not propose to vest the power wrested from the state in the people, or at least not immediately. Instead, it posits the international community as the champion of the people’s right to protection. (Orford 2011: 134)

Shifting the primary authority for legitimate decision-making on interventions from the people to the international community greatly increases the need for undivided, international consensus on the principle and process guiding that decision-making. This helps to explain why R2P-advocates - like Steve and Pete in the previous section - attach such value and importance to the consensus with which R2P was adopted, in their view. Likewise, Winny highlighted UN Security Council Resolution 1970 on Libya, precisely because it was perhaps the first far-reaching resolution imposing measures to coerce a member-state to its responsibility to protect, that was adopted unanimously by the fifteen members of the Council.

The great thing about it [UN Security Council resolution 1970] was that it was a consensus resolution. You actually had Russia and China signing on to something that said R2P and talked about it in the context of the Security Council is acting in light of the fact that there is [R2P]. If one of the key steps is moving R2P into something that is accepted as a premise for international action and moving away from the sovereignty and other barriers to R2P, it could have been a great moment. Because you actually had fifteen members of the Security Council on board for one of the strongest resolutions I have seen the Security Council pass in relation to human rights.

Winny, 18 October 2011
Apart from establishing the broadest possible international consensus on R2P, shifting the decision-making power for intervention from ‘the people’ to ‘the international community’ also includes efforts to expand ‘international executive authority’ (Orford 2011: 137). Aspirations of establishing strengthened forms of international or world governance to deal with all ‘boundary problems’ in the world are expressed by Donald. Donald was one of the first scholars who coined the term ‘humanitarian intervention’ and has been an R2P-proponent ever since the doctrine was invented in 2001 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS - see chapter two). ‘Fifty years from now,’ I asked Donald, ‘where are we with mass atrocity interventions, what do you hope has been achieved?’

I guess if I were being forward looking, […] what I would hope is that, whether it's mass atrocities or a whole series of other issues - climate change, proliferation and a few other things […] finally one would have gotten beyond the notion that we can invest in common infrastructure, common thought, common laws, common currency and all this. Because that's the only way for me that most of these trends, boundary problems, are ever going to be solved. I like to think that […] fifty years from now, mass atrocities are almost a thing in the past. Obviously if China is getting involved in it, we still won't do anything. But you know that mass atrocities will be an old story. And that there would be other indications that certain kinds of common standards of behaviour and performance… It certainly won’t be a world government, but it might be something like an earlier version of the European Union in fifty or sixty years from now.

Likewise, Art, who has been instrumental in the establishment of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, strongly believes in the (need to) vest much more power in international institutions of ‘law, of regulations and justice’. Art is a long-time member of the World Federalist Movement (WFM) and is the director of the movement's institute for global policy. The WFM was established in 1947, in the wake of World War II, and argued that a world federalist government was the only way to guarantee world peace and prevent a third world war. Today, WFM continues to promote the strengthening of international structures and organizations for democracy, justice and law.235

To Art, the establishment of the International Criminal Court signified a hallmark in his effort to ‘strengthen law to deal with these global problems’.

I was convinced that where we were going to make the fundamental strengthening of the international legal order was on global environmental protection. […] So I was very surprised in the mid90s when the two big movements of strengthening international law and creating supra-national institutions was the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court […]. That knocked me off of my [feet]. No-one believed that they were going to create a court that could hold presidents, generals, defence ministers,

235 See the website of the World Federalist Movement’s Institute for Global Policy: http://www.wfm-igp.org/site/wfm-home (accessed on 7 January 2014).
rebels to an international court and hold them responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes. And we got that. […]

The Rome Statute is built upon [the premise that] the national legal systems remain primarily responsible to prosecute crimes against humanity and if the national legal systems are unable or unwilling, then the International Criminal Court has jurisdiction. So all of the language [of R2P] for an international legal expert comes pretty much from the Rome Statute - which was probably the most progressive, successful advance of international law in a hundred years. I mean certainly since the adoption of the UN Charter, the Rome Statute represents a tremendous advance. It creates a supranational court with automatic jurisdiction.

Art, 29 November 2011

Thus, instead of vesting their hopes on the will and liberating power of ‘the peoples’, R2P-advocates aspire to vesting increased power in supra-national bodies, be it in a supra-national legal body like the International Criminal Court, or in a form of world governance such as the United Nations (UN). As explained in chapter two, this strategy is not informed by idealist or utopian notions about the capacities and capabilities of the UN. Instead, it is based on the realistic and pragmatic deliberation that although the UN has shown many weaknesses in responding to mass atrocities it remains the only viable authority that can effectively enable the halting of mass atrocities. As one R2P-advocate explained, ‘Our prime focus is on states and the UN system. Because whether we like it or not, we live in world of states and that’s where decisions are made’.

In the next and final section before this chapter’s conclusion, I will discuss what theories of change are proposed by both groups to achieve their protection and liberation mission on the long run. How to change the course of history and ‘end mass atrocities once and for all’? What strategy will ultimately bring salvation to humanity?

V. Strategies of salvation

If both groups of advocates agree about one thing, then it is that change is possible. Human beings can be protected from mass atrocities and liberated from state oppression, but this requires hard work, perseverance and determination, and will result in change only in the long run. The advocates do not expect immediate results from or praise for their efforts, as Portuguese East Timor activist Elisa explained:

You don’t expect results, short term results, you don’t expect “thank yous”. You do it because you believe in it. If you believe in it, you keep doing it.

Interview with Pete, 29 November 2011.

Both groups of advocates share a strong sense of history, and - implicitly or explicitly - regard their work as contributing to a historical mission. For the Portuguese East Timor activists, this historical mission was strongly informed by the sense that Portugal, as its former colonial power, had historical responsibilities for East Timor. ‘Portugal has a special responsibility towards East Timor,’ Elisa said, ‘because there is this historical connection, there is this historical international recognized responsibility’. For Afonso who explicitly and repeatedly talked about ‘a sense of history’, the historical mission of Portugal was not only related to its former position as a colonial power, but also lay in its special contribution to world history, to the spread of Catholicism in the world. In Afonso’s view, the Salazar dictatorship and colonial suppression conflicted with the duties of a Catholic sovereign ruler. The Catholic ruler should build strong relations of friendship and solidarity with Catholic peoples around the world, instead of exploiting them to make economic profit and suppressing them ‘like enemies’.

R2P-advocates mostly use the history of the United Nations and human rights as a frame of reference to measure the progress of their mission. Donald, who was a long-time UN employee before he dedicated himself to a full-time academic career, gave the following comment.

If you’re looking at R2P and say ‘what’s happened in the last five years?’ it’s kind of an unfair comparison. One of the things I have been trying to force myself to do was to become less of the last five minutes, or five weeks or five months and more of the last fifty years. […] In some ways the vision - certainly the ones [of world leaders] that were [active] in the 30s, but even in the 40s during the war - about what was necessary [in world politics] were so much more forward looking and imaginative than what we have today. […] A political scientist whom I admire [talks about] ‘presentism’. It is a good notion [meaning] that we are too focused on here and now with too little thoughts about where we’ve been and where we’re heading.

Donald, 1 November 2011

Steve talked in a similar way about the need to judge the value of R2P over a much longer period.

There’s so many of related initiatives that kind of come and go. It is really important to try to set up for the long term. In a sense, R2P is not about the next crisis, or one after that. It is about one [crisis] in ten years time, or one in twenty years time. We’re like the ICC, who hang so much on ‘is this dictator today deterred or not’, but it’s not about this dictator today; it’s about this dictator in twenty or thirty years’ time when some of the others before them have been prosecuted and have ended up in prison, or certainly have not ended up being president. It is then when you start to see the big changes.

Steve, 19 October 2012
Although the R2P-advocates and East Timor activists are alike in viewing their mission as (contributing to) a long road to change, the road to change and salvation they suggest differs.

At the end of the previous section, I have already stated that East Timor activists tend to vest hope in the human capacity for change through peoples’ mobilization, while R2P advocates tend to vest their hope in institutions instead of peoples. However, institutional change is not only about strengthening international frameworks of law and world governance, as suggested in the previous section. It is also about changing norms of human behaviour, as Steve suggested in an interview fragment from which I also quoted in chapter four:

For [the] real change [that] you can make is at [the] front end. If you can change the way how governments relate to populations and populations relate to each other, you can reduce the number of times it gets so bad.

Steve, 19 October 2012

According to Donald, one way to influence human behaviour is by increasing the level of embarrassment over certain acts:

How do you raise the costs of non-compliance? How do you expose people and make them feel uncomfortable - diplomatically, or in the community or wherever - with behaving in a way that is just…wrong? So that’s, I guess, more or less what I work on [laughs]. […] the idea is to make it awkward to support something that is not supportable.

Donald, 17 October 2011

At the same time, behavioural change will not last if you do not have the right international legal institutions and frameworks to keep people in check, Art argues:

I don’t think the human race is going to survive in any tolerable condition until it outlaws war. And part of war are mass atrocity crimes. So my number one political motivation has been anti-war. To outlaw war head on is an almost impossible goal. […] If you want to really get down to my view, [it] is that the human race needs to make peace with itself. Then the human race needs to make peace with the rest of life on this planet […], and then the human race needs to make peace with the planet itself [laughs]. Mass atrocity crimes are a particularly vicious example of the defects of human society. If you can solve that one, you’re going to a root cause of behaviour of the species, that, if you can fix that, you might have much better chance. Because the same institutions that allow you to outlaw war – or outlaw war crimes - are institutions that would allow you to protect the oceans, protect the air, protect the sea life. It’s all going to have to be done by institutions of law, and regulations and justice, because people are not going to do it.

Art, 29 November 2011
The answer to curing the human propensity for violence and suffering - of salvation for humanity - of course is closely related to what one regards as the source or origin of human violence and suffering. In chapter four, I have already shown that while R2P-advocates tend to refer to the ‘inherent evil’ of human nature - to a capacity for murder and mass murder that potentially resides in every human being - East Timor activists tend to seek the source of human suffering in political oppression. Humans are by nature good, so they argue, but it are the political leaders who indoctrinate people and make them treat others as inhuman and harm or slaughter them who are ‘wrong’.

Suffering is not ‘embedded in human nature’ or part of some universal human essence, but results from political oppression, Jorge argued. He does not regard international solidarity as the expression of empathy for ‘an abstract [thing] like human condition or essence or human soul or something’, but as an expression of sympathy towards people who are suffering from similar forms of political oppression.

If human suffering results from a concrete political situation, as Jorge and most other Portuguese East Timor activists believe, then the road to salvation is to be found in political mobilization, in a revolt and liberation of the oppressed people. The key to long-term change is in political activism, Jorge explained, ‘activism is the basic attitude that allows the impossible to be realized, to come true’.

If you believe that human suffering results from an essential flaw in human nature, if ‘anger and violence and hatred and racism are deeply embedded in human nature’, as Art and many other R2P-advocates argue, then salvation is to be found in building much stronger institutions to control human behaviour. That is why R2P-advocates do not want to give ‘more power to the people’ by embedding sovereignty in the principle of self-determination, but instead seek to confer more power on the international community as represented by the UN, by advocating a notion of (state) sovereignty as a responsibility to protect.

This reservation in conferring ‘more power to the people’ and to promoting self-determination, has an important historical precursor. In contemporary global politics the notion of self-determination is practically ‘dead’ now, East Timor activist and scholar in international law Jorge affirmed when I suggested that it might have been a bit old fashioned in the 1990s:

Yeah sure, sure. In fact, it is one of the major elements of the contemporary situation. The expression, the word of self-determination has fallen into sort of a complete silence. No-one speaks about self-determination now. Happily we have been able to use it quite strongly at the end of the 1990s for East Timor. But after that, when have you heard about it? I mean, Kosovo…?

Jorge, 13 November 2013

The popularity and validation of the notion of ‘self-determination’ went through quite a number of tides in history. It enjoyed great popularity in the post-war (WWII) decolonization period, but became suspect during the Cold War when the United States and its allies viewed
it as an excuse of liberation movements that wanted to move over to the Communist bloc. The notion shortly gained respect again when a wave of revolutions spread across Eastern Europe signalling the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, but became tainted (beyond repair?) again when nationalism rose in that same region and was followed by ethnic cleansings in the 1990s.

Consequently, the majority of R2P-advocates that I interviewed are convinced of the risks of promoting self-determination based on ethno-national or religious-national grounds. They attest to a suspicion against the principle of self-determination that has become ‘common sense’ in today’s global political discourse on human security. A view and sensibility that is well explained by Abulof:

While the Third Reich tarnished the ethno-national path to self-determination in the first half of the twentieth century, Afrikanerdom carried the task in the second half. (…) German Nazism and Afrikaner Apartheid do not, of course, exhaust the plethora of political violence linked to ethno-nationalism. The 1990s Yugoslav Wars are but the most recent European example of the phenomenon. In almost all cases the relevant rulers misused and abused self-determination, undermining the concept’s two ethical pillars. Since they speak in the language of ethnic (volk) nationalism, the conclusion seemed evident to many: self-determination, at least to the extent of secession or annexation (mainly irredentism), must not be based on an ethno-national call, which has come to be seen as a euphemism or a prelude for oppression, violence, and racism.


This contemporary distrust of self-determination is strongly influenced by the changing nature of armed conflicts after the Cold War. Ever since Mary Kaldor (1999) famously coined the term ‘new wars’, an abundance of academic literature has confirmed the general view so well captured in the following synthesis paper, that:

the majority of today’s armed conflicts are internal, do not entail state armies directly fighting one another, and are funded by illicit trade, banditry and international terrorist networks. Civilians are actively targeted. Today’s conflicts often have a strong ideological component, and ethnic and sectarian divisions are critical to driving and/or enabling violence. 238

Protecting people from these kinds of violence has become increasingly problematic, as the protective international systems depend on the cooperation of nation-states in an era that has seen the ‘implosions of the state’ (Kaldor 2000: 2; cf. Kaldor 1999).

In this context, we may view the missions of East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates as attempts to find new ways to protect the right to life at a time in which the nature

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of violent conflict is changing, yet the mechanisms to protect civilians from these new forms of violence are lacking. In the concluding section of this chapter, I return to the notion of *homo sacer* (Agamben 1998), as presented in the introduction, to examine what further light this notion can shed on the findings of the intervening sections.

**VI. Conclusion**

In many ways the missions of R2P-advocates and East Timor solidarity activists to protect human life are informed by similar notions and convictions. Both groups struggle against dictatorship and mass atrocities; both groups believe that there are limits to the power of the sovereign ruler or state and that there exists a right or responsibility to intervene if the sovereign fails in its duty to protect. Both R2P-advocates and East Timor solidarity activists regard their mission as a long road to change - one needing hard work and perseverance - and both view the principle for which they are fighting - self-determination and sovereignty as responsibility - as a primary step towards the full realization of human rights. Yet there are differences in the meaning that both groups attach to the principle of sovereignty and in the authority that they appoint as the legitimate guardian of that sovereignty. These differences seem to stem from different views on human life as either 'bare life' or 'qualified life'.

In the introduction to this chapter, I already mentioned that Agamben refers to the life of *homo sacer* as 'bare' life. He does so building on the Greek distinction between *zoe*, which refers to the mere biological life of any living being or animal ('bare' or 'naked' life), and *bios*, which refers to 'the additional capacity for political existence' that Agamben calls 'qualified life' - life endowed with rights. To some extent, it can be argued that East Timor solidarity activists sought to turn the bare lives of the East Timorese (back) into political or qualified lives.

To East Timor solidarity activists, a human being is only fully human if she enjoys political rights, if she can enjoy freedom of expression, can exercise control over her own life and chose her own government in free and fair elections. Life that is not free in this sense is not 'acceptable', 'does not make sense' - Afonso and Inês said. East Timor activists define (political) self-determination as the essence of human life: what makes the human truly human is freedom 'to take decisions about their own life,' as Afonso said. Self-determination is about freedom, autonomy and political agency and stands in principal opposition to any form of outside domination. Consequently, East Timor activists grounded sovereignty in the people. The people can confer power on a sovereign ruler to guide and protect them, but the ruler remains accountable to the people. If the sovereign falls short, fails in its duties, it are

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240 Here I divert from/simplify Agamben who argues that when the right to self-determination in claimed to free oneself from subjection to a sovereign power, one does in fact affirm the system of nation-states – and thus implicitly the sovereign power that one seeks to defer - because the claim is grounded in the same principle that founds nation-states, that is, sovereignty and citizenship as a birth 'nation' -right.
the people who have the right to resist and revolt against the sovereign state or ruler, and who have the first and last say about the political destiny of their people and nation.

The struggle of East Timor solidarity activists is principally political: the mission is to secure and save people from political oppression. Thus, the road to salvation is to be found in peoples’ liberation and in the realization of peoples’ right to self-determination so that they can fully enjoy their civil and political rights. Paternalism, domination and imperialism are taboo in this context, because they are fundamentally opposed to the principles of autonomy, political agency and self-determination.

R2P-advocates do not aim primarily to bestow self-determination and political agency upon populations at risk. Their number one priority is to save (biological) lives, as so clearly stipulated in the UN report on the implementation of the responsibility to protect (United Nations 2009: paragraph 67): ‘the ultimate purpose of the responsibility to protect [is] to save lives by preventing the most egregious mass violations of human rights’. To R2P-advocates, human life is life that cannot be killed or massacred: it approaches the much more biopolitical notion of life as ‘bare’ life. Empathy with others is grounded in sharing the same vulnerability to life: ‘vulnerability of human beings as embodied agents’ (Turner 2006: 25, my italics). In ‘the politicization of life’ (Agamben 1998: 119-125) and the subsequent chapter ‘biopolitics’, Agamben (1998: 126-135) builds amongst others on Foucault to argue that the governance of mere biological, ‘bare’ life has become the focus of governance in humanitarianism. ‘Humanitarian organizations,’ Agamben writes (1998: 133) ‘can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life […] only as such is it made into the object of aid and protection.’ This indeed seems to be the case with the conception of (sacred) human life as held by R2P-advocates, even if they are no ‘pure’ humanitarians (see chapter two). To be fair, it has to be noted that this conception of life as embodied life should not be mistaken for an entire reduction of the human being to mere biological ‘bare’ life. As we saw in chapter four, R2P-advocates are horrified by bodily violations and mutilations, because they are ‘experienced as a violation of the autonomy and agency of the self-conscious individual’, yet the emphasis of the responsibility to protect remains on first saving the biological lives of populations threatened by mass atrocities.

The question of the humanitarian governance of lives at peril brings us to a last issue addressed in this chapter. Both East Timor activists and R2P-advocates struggle with the question what to do with the sovereign ruler that falls short, who abandons or even harms the lives of its own people. If the sovereign ruler fails in its protection duties, then to whom should the sovereignty fall? Who has the legitimacy to decide on a mass atrocity intervention? Whereas East Timor solidarity activists firmly placed the power to decide on international mass atrocity interventions in the hands of the people affected by those atrocities, R2P-advocates opt for a model that confers the sovereignty to decide on mass atrocity interventions to the ‘international community’ of humanity as represented by the United Nations. Removing the decision-making power from the people affected by mass atrocities to the international community of the UN, implies a shift in the locus of sovereignty.
If we regard the integral human body as the ‘locus for moral sovereignty’ in human rights - as Asad (2003: 84) does - and regard the inviolability and integrity of the human body as something sacred - as both East Timor activists and R2P-advocates do, then it follows that the shift of the locus of moral sovereignty implies a shift of the locus of the sacred. The integral human body seems no longer sacred in and of itself. The power to decide on one's own destiny is replaced from the very bodies at stake in mass atrocities, to the external body politic of the international community of ‘humanity’.

If the findings of this dissertation indeed point to the emergence of a ‘new’ moral sensibility in humanitarianism and human rights, one that supports the sanctioning of mass atrocity interventions by the international community, then what does this imply for the validation of the will and agency of the people? If the power to decide on interventions no longer rests with the people but with the international community, then what does this mean for future moral judgments on human suffering and violence? These and other important questions related to the ‘sacralization of humanity’ will be further discussed in the Conclusion.
CONCLUSION
The sacralization of humanity

But the truly modern sacralization, which constitutes the global civic religion in Durkheim’s terms, is […] the sacralization of humanity through the globalization of human rights.

-José Casanova, Religion, Secularization, and Sacralization, 2012

Do we need a notion of the sacred to understand the worldviews and beliefs of anti-genocide activists? Do we need a notion of the sacred to unravel the ideological conceptions and assumptions through which anti-genocide activists view the world and humanity and make moral judgments on human suffering and violence? I started this research assuming that we do. That the urge to respond to horrific scenes of ethnic cleansing, genocide and other mass atrocities cannot be explained solely as an act of altruism or by the geopolitical need for international stability and security. That it is also an essentially existential mission to preserve Humanity at large, not just to save the lives of those threatened by mass atrocities, but also and simply to preserve and perpetuate the life of the group, that is, the global community of humanity.

I did not stand alone in this assumption. Various scholars of anthropology and sociology of religions made suggestions along the same lines. José Casanova calls ‘the sacralization of humanity through the globalization of human rights’ ‘the truly modern sacralization, which constitutes the global civic religion in Durkheim’s terms’ (Casanova 2012: 460). In a similar vein, Bryan Turner (2011) writes that the notion of ‘crimes against humanity’, that is, ‘the idea that heads of state can be held personally responsible for crimes against their own people before an international court’ is ‘an example of the creation of a global religious consciousness’ (Turner 2011: xx).

Following Asad (2003) and Casanova (2012), in the Introduction I argued that conceptions of the sacred function in both religious and secular worldviews. I suggested that there exists something like the ‘sacred in the secular’ that might help us to better understand the views and practices of anti-genocide activists. I then postulated as my first proposition that although humanitarianism and human rights are secular worldviews, notions of the sacred resonate in the call for mass atrocity interventions. With this proposition, I established the anti-genocide activists whom I studied as a particular sub-group within the broader international human rights and humanitarian community.

Having reached the conclusion of my research project and dissertation, the question is whether or not my empirical findings support this proposition. Does my notion of ‘the sacred in the secular’ indeed help to (better) unravel and understand the ideological conceptions and assumptions through which anti-genocide activists view the world and humanity and make moral judgments on human suffering and violence?

What constitutes the ‘sacred’ in the view of anti-genocide activists? I opened chapter three by reiterating that I regard humanitarianism and human rights as secular worldviews that postulate ‘the human’ as something ‘sacred’. What all humanitarian and human rights activists
have in common, despite their wide variety, is that they all seek to preserve the inviolability and integrity of human life. I then posed the question, what constitutes ‘the human’ in the view of the East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates that I studied? Whose lives should be preserved in their view, and are the subject of their compassion and empathy? I found that whereas the East Timor solidarity activists still define ‘the human’ in essentially secular-political terms - calling for the protection of the ‘people’ based on an ideal of (people-to-people) solidarity, Responsibility to Protect-advocates view and describe the ‘human’ in existential terms, referring to the need to preserve a much more transcendent notion of ‘humanity’ that I have called ‘Humanity writ large’. The ‘transcendent’ in this notion of humanity as held by R2P-advocates is threefold. It refers to a humanity ‘beyond’, as in (1) an indivisible ‘we’ that emerges from the essential precariousness of human life, the given that ‘that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other’ (Butler 2010: 14), (2) a human civilization or ‘human ways of life’ (Asad 2008: 68) that spans not only this but also future generations and (3) a reciprocal and universal obligation imposed on all members of the global human community to protect each other from mass atrocities, sanctioned by the need to preserve and perpetuate the life of the group (Sharpe 1994), that is the global community of ‘humanity’. Other than the East Timor solidarity activists who concentrate their actions on preserving one distinct ‘people’, R2P-advocates embark on an existential mission to secure not just one’s own life and that of one’s peers, but also, and purely, that of human civilization and identity, or ‘human ways of life’ (Asad 2008: 68).

What constitutes the gravest violation or threat to the ‘sacred’ - to the ‘people’, respectively ‘humanity’ - in the worldview of anti-genocide activists, and why? In chapter four I found that mass atrocities constitute the greatest threat to the ‘sacred’ in the view of anti-genocide activists, precisely because they (are perceived to) aim for the extinction of a whole group and to ‘human ways of life’ (Asad 2008: 68) owned and lived by that whole group. For East Timor solidarity activists, the fear was for the loss of a distinct way of life as belonging to a people with their own social-cultural and ‘national’ identity. This was counter to their conception of the human as something essentially defined by self-determination and free political agency. R2P-advocates fear the erasure of human ways of life as belonging to the whole of human civilization or ‘Humanity’. The idea that the obligation to protect each other from mass atrocities can be broken and replaced by a ‘norm’ of bestial slaughtering can evoke deep feelings of horror or ‘anomic terror’ among R2P-advocates; sensations and realizations that nothing is what it seems, that the veneer of civilization can evaporate overnight.

I brought up Asad’s (2008: 68; 81) notion of horror as ‘a state of being that is felt’ and that ‘explodes the imaginary’ (Asad 2008: 81). Horror arouses sensations of a ‘total loss of practical and mental control’ (Asad 2008: 78). Asad, building on Douglas’ notion of the sacred as protected by purification rituals that ‘punish’ the violator and restore the sacred bond of the community, argues that, in the case of suicide attacks means of reparation - means to repair the harm done to sacred community boundaries - cease to exist as there are no bodies to bury and no perpetrators to punish: ‘it is the absence of rituals for dealing with transgression, not the fact of ‘matter out of place,’ that generates horror’ (Asad 2008: 76). I argued in chapter four
that the violence involved in mass atrocities arouses similar feelings of losing any means to repair and redeem the violations because the bodies are lost, hacked into pieces, decomposed and moreover, the perpetrators are one of us. In the case of East Timor, the perpetrators can still be clearly identified - so the East Timor activists hold - in the figure of the state and its accomplices, that is, the Indonesian military and pro-Indonesia militia. East Timor solidarity activists do not regard these perpetrators and accomplices as ‘guilty’ per se or ‘evil’ by nature, but as indoctrinated, drugged and coerced into acts of violence by powerful political and military leaders. These leaders in theory can be prosecuted and punished by law, and as such, the community can be purified by removing and punishing some of its members that have violated the norms of society. In the case of the genocide in Rwanda and the Holocaust - the cases referred to most by R2P-advocates - identifying and separating the perpetrators from the victims becomes much more complicated in the view of R2P-advocates. They are our neighbours, sisters and brothers, are victim and perpetrator at the same time. What is more, this experience carries the horrific truth that every human being can become a mass killer. In mass atrocities, R2P-advocates (implicitly) argue, the ‘Human’ becomes ‘the Inhuman’ (Rancière 2004: 308) that is amongst and within us. In such violations of order the pure can no longer be separated from the polluted (Douglas 1970, 1966); the sacred community boundaries of humanity can no longer be restored.

How do anti-genocide activists produce and reproduce the ‘sacred’? Declaring or sanctifying something as sacred involves the production and reproduction of a certain discourse and ritual practice. In chapter five I examined how anti-genocide activists produce, present and sanction evidence to advocate a particular truth claim. I studied two cases: the first of these concerned the occupation of the office of the then governing Dutch political party Democrats ’66 (D66) by Dutch East Timor activists in December 1995. In this activity the activists ‘speak truth to power’ by clearly and firmly placing themselves outside the governmental power that they criticize. The second activity concerned a four-day conference on the responsibility to protect and international law in June 2010. This was performed in an attempt to ‘talk R2P into existence’. The conference sought to contribute to the establishment of R2P as a universal norm. Unlike the East Timor activists, R2P-advocates do not so much place themselves outside (governmental) power but engage in ‘providing the expert voice of power itself, deployed for humanitarian ends’ (Kennedy 2005: xvii).

The difference between advocating by giving voice to the victims, or people - as East Timor solidarity activists did - or advocating by speaking ‘the expert voice of power itself’ - as R2P-advocates did - was also reflected in the kind of evidence that each of the groups used to build their case. Testimonial evidence was highly valued by the solidarity activists as representing the voice and will of the East Timorese people, which epitomized the highest moral authority in this discourse of civil and political (human) rights. R2P-advocates seemed much more wary about the ‘truth’ of testimonial evidence and instead used factual and forensic evidence as provided by independent experts to build their case. For the R2P-advocates, it is no longer the will of the people that has primacy, but the will or judgment of the international community that they regard as the highest moral authority. This change in
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The sacralization of humanity might point to an altered conception of ‘the sacred’ in human rights and humanitarianism. From ‘sacred human life’ as embodied by actual victims of mass atrocities, grounded in the moral authority of the (sovereign) people, to ‘sacred human life’ as ‘embodied’ by a much more abstract and transcendent ‘humanity’ grounded in the moral authority of the ‘international community’.

This brings us to the last question on the ‘sacred’ that was addressed in chapter six: who can be identified as the guardian of the sacred in the worldview of anti-genocide activists? I approached this question by applying Giorgio Agamben’s (1998) notion of sacred life as ‘bare life’. Both East Timor activists and R2P-advocates struggle with the question what to do with the sovereign ruler who fails in its duty, who abandons and even harms the lives of its own people. In what situations does the state or ruler fail in its performance duties and what should be the course of action to halt or change that according to the activists? To determine when both groups of activists consider the sovereign ruler to be failing, I needed to pose an altered version of the question in chapter three. Where chapter three sought to understand the sacred in the life of the group, chapter six examines what constitutes the sacred in human life, according to the activists. Or, to speak with Agamben, what qualifies as human life?

To East Timor solidarity activists, a human being is only fully human if she enjoys political rights: if she can enjoy freedom of expression, can exercise control over her own life and chose her own government in free and fair elections. Consequently, East Timor activists ground sovereignty in the people. If the sovereign falls short, fails in its duties, it is the people who have the right to resist and revolt against the sovereign state or ruler, and who have the first and last say about the political destiny of their people and nation. To R2P-advocates, human life is life that cannot be killed or massacred: it approaches the much more biopolitical notion of life as ‘bare’ life. Empathy with others is grounded in sharing the same vulnerability to life: ‘vulnerability of human beings as embodied agents’ (Turner 2006: 25, my italics). Whereas East Timor solidarity activists firmly placed the power to decide on international mass atrocity interventions in the hands of the people affected by those atrocities, R2P-advocates opt for a model that confers the sovereignty to decide on mass atrocity interventions to the ‘international community’ of humanity as represented by the United Nations. Transferring the decision-making power from the people affected by mass atrocities to the international community of the UN, implies a shift in the locus of sovereignty, so I contended. The power to decide on one’s own destiny is removed from the very bodies at stake in mass atrocities to the external body politic of the international community.

The second proposition examined in this research initially arose from my puzzlement and (moral) confusion with what I perceived as an increased readiness amongst my colleagues in human rights and humanitarian activism to support humanitarian military interventions (see Preface). How could it be that a movement that had its roots in non-violence, anti-imperialism and anti-militarism gradually - if not suddenly - began to accept the use of military force? What was left of the humanitarian credo that every single human life was sacred, entitled to protection, if humanitarian and human rights activists began to advocate...
military interventions that would undoubtedly cause ‘civilian casualties’ and might even exacerbate the violence? When did this shift from prioritizing the life and rights of every single individual, to preserving the life of the group - if need be through sacrificing individual lives - begin to emerge? These questions resulted in my second proposition: the call for mass atrocity interventions (also) reflects a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence from an emphasis on safeguarding the life and rights of individuals, to a concern with sustaining the life of the group, of the whole of human kind through the preservation of ‘humanity’. In my empirical chapters, I found the following in support of this proposition.

In chapter three I observed a difference in the making of the subject by East Timor activists and R2P-advocates. The life of the group that the East Timor solidarity activists aimed to protect was that of a ‘people’, defined in essentially political terms as ‘the people as sovereign; peoples as nations, and the people as opposed to the ruling elite’ (Canovan 2005: 2). R2P-advocates on the other hand strive to protect the more depoliticized life of ‘populations’ - of groups void of any political or identifiable characteristics. Other than East Timor activists who struggle on behalf of the ‘people’, R2P-advocates call for the protection of populations in the name of ‘humanity’. This shift in subject making - from a political notion of ‘people’, to a depoliticized notion of ‘populations’, to a transcendent notion of ‘humanity’ - is illustrated by a gradual effacing of identifying qualifications and political references in visual representations of ‘populations at risk’, so I argued. Furthermore I stated that this shift could be perceived in the altered articulation of empathic relations between the anti-genocide activist and the victim of mass atrocities. Whereas East Timor activists explained their empathy as an expression of international solidarity with the suffering other, R2P-advocates explained their empathy referring to the reciprocal obligation or ‘responsibility’ to protect each other from mass atrocities.

In chapter four, I examined the fear and anxiety that informed the relatively ‘novel’ preoccupation with mass violence in the humanitarian and human rights community. I argued that this preoccupation might be informed by an altered view of human nature and the human propensity for violence and social change. Whereas East Timor activists mostly continued to believe in the innate good of human beings and argued that those engaging in acts of mass violence did so because they were indoctrinated or forced to do so by political leaders, R2P-advocates had a rather more bleak view of human nature. Being convinced that every human being - every ‘ordinary’ citizen, neighbour or peasant - can turn into a mass killer overnight; R2P-advocates are much more critical about ideologies that believe in the makeover of human beings through social change. This change in the view of mankind was significantly affected by the ethnic cleansings in former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda that occurred in the 1990s. It could signal a decreased belief among humanitarian and human rights activists in the possibility to liberate and relieve oppressed and suffering people through political systems and ideologies, that is through peoples’ revolutions and the international system of human rights. This loss of hope for finding solutions for human tragedies in the secular political realm might evoke an urge to find ‘salvation’ in the more transcendent realm of a sacred ‘Humanity’.
An important finding in support of above proposition in chapter five was the shift in preference for forensic over testimonial evidence in truth claims of East Timor activists and R2P-advocates respectively. Testimonial evidence was highly valued by East Timor activists as representing the voice and will of the (East Timorese) people, which constituted the highest possible moral authority in their view. R2P-advocates on the other hand, preferred factual and forensic evidence to show allegiance to the more (politically) ‘neutral’ supra-national body of the ‘international community’: ‘a normative sphere [that is] somehow beyond politics, with all its conflicts of interest and identity’ (Hopgood (2006: 206). As already explained in some detail above, the most important finding in chapter six supporting the second proposition was the shift in decision-making authority on mass atrocity interventions from the very bodies at stake in mass atrocities, to the external body politic of the international community.

Based on the findings emerging from the separate chapters, the following can be concluded with regards to the postulated notion of ‘the sacred in the secular’. In the secular worldview of humanitarianism and human rights it is human life that is sacred. For the first generations of human rights and humanitarian activists, the life of the individual constituted the locus of the sacred. In the struggle to halt and prevent genocide the life of the group became the locus of the sacred. The sacred community can be identified in both movements that I studied, but is attached to different entities - people in the case of East Timor activists and humanity in the case of R2P-advocates.

The shift in moral sensibilities that I sensed appears to be closely related to this shift of the sacred. A shift that, other than I assumed at the onset of my research, appears to be twofold: there is a shift of the sacred from individual to collective life, and also from a sacred community constituted by a sovereign people to a sacred community constituted by a transcendent Humanity. That is why the book title mentions ‘the sacralization of Humanity’ as the apotheosis of that shift of ‘the sacred in the secular’. One that began with the ‘globalization of human rights’ (Casanova 2012: 460) but transpired and became manifest in the call to end mass atrocities for the preservation of Humanity.

With regards to my working definition of the sacred, it can be concluded that the first half still stands. Both ‘people’ and ‘humanity’ emerged as a ‘transcendent quality of existence’. Although ‘people’ is largely understood in political terms, romantic notions of nation and peoples power lift it into the transcendent. As concluded in chapter three, the notion of ‘humanity’ can only emerge if thought of as transcendent.

Applying the second half of the definition - of the sacred as something ‘that, according to its adherents, should be protected and purified with might and main’ - to both ‘people’ and ‘humanity’ is more problematic. It does subscribe to the conception of a sacred ‘people’: the East Timorese are willing to fight and die for their people and (aspired) nation. The East Timor solidarity activists believed that perpetrators of genocide and mass atrocity could clearly be separated from the victims and prosecuted and punished by law. As such, violations of the sacred could be redeemed and the sacred community of people could be purified.

This becomes much harder in the case of R2P-advocates. R2P-advocates can protect populations from mass atrocities and do so with might and main, but once a genocide occurs
and humanity has been violated, purification is practically impossible. If we define rituals as serving to avoid, punish, and purify the sacred ‘by systematic distancing, expulsion, and punishment’ Asad (2008: 76; 77), it has to be concluded that there are no purification rituals to deal with sacrilege to humanity following a genocide as the perpetrator can no longer be distinguished from the victim. An indivisible humanity that appears to be perpetrator and victim in one cannot be purified.

If we define sacralization as ‘what people have at their disposal to believe’ (Van de Port 2004: 10), it has to be further concluded that following a genocide R2P-advocates have nothing at their disposal to sustain their belief in humanity. That is where the horror lies. That is why R2P-advocates want to prevent mass atrocities with might and main, for once they occur there is no return: there is no more purification of and believing in humanity. That is the first tragedy of R2P.

When I first heard of the R2P-movement and other anti-genocide movements such as the Save Darfur movement, when I read their pamphlets, heard their cries of ‘never again!’ ‘don’t let us be bystanders!’ and observed their tenacious efforts to get the UN to approve of a doctrine that would potentially open the way for more, and not less, humanitarian military interventions, I thought I was dealing with fanatics, with a group of fundamentalist human rights believers who felt it was their holy duty to spread the responsibility to protect across the globe with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in one hand and a sword in the other. I thought these were perhaps the last remnants of the Western human rights movement, a group of people who refused to accept that the world no longer gravitated towards ‘the West’ and that other powers, cultures and moral codes marched to the fore and might replace the UDHR as the single universal moral text for the globe. I thought that these people held on to a naïve notion of human progress, that they repeated the mistakes made by so many other secular ideologists and revolutionaries who felt that violence could legitimately be used for the makeover of humanity, that they were blinded by a utopian believe that mass atrocities could be ‘ended once and for all’ (Evans 2008). I have never been more wrong.

Opposite the dream that inspired human rights stands the unspeakable and undeniable truth of genocide. To R2P-advocates who are deeply aware of the innate human capacity to commit mass killings, human rights seem a far-fetched ideology. As reads one of the quotes appearing on the homepage of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect:

It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say.
It can happen and it can happen everywhere.241

This awareness gives rise to what R2P-advocates regard as a rather limited ideological agenda. The responsibility to protect is presented as a minimum standard: if we cannot realistically guarantee the implementation of the whole range of human rights to each and every individual on the globe, then let us at least halt mass atrocities. As R2P-advocate Donald stated in an interview:

The idea that [laughs] human beings have a right to life, that you should not get involved with ethnic cleansing, mass murder… It is not exactly a high bar that we are setting. This is really about as low as you can go!

Donald, 17 October 2011

Or, as R2P-advocate Rosa said, when talking about social-economic rights:

If we can’t do this, because this seems to be too impossible, to divide, to share the richness [wealth]. If that’s too impossible, [then] at least let’s […] help the ones that are suffering what they are suffering now in Nigeria [referring to the ethnic killings of early March 2010].

Rosa, 8 March 2010

Thus, contrary to my initial characterization of them as utopians, R2P-advocates show themselves to be realists, or, to paraphrase R2P-advocate Lisa, as ‘reluctant realists who hold hope’.242 This again brings to mind Peter Redfield’s characterization of the moral stance of humanitarian activists as an ethic of refusal, ‘a position that advances no universal or utopian solution but consistently rejects the apparent futility of the way the world is’ (Redfield 2006: 7; Redfield 2013: 101). To R2P-advocates, that world includes human beings endowed with the capacity to kill fellow human beings en masse.

In this light, the sacralization of Humanity paradoxically could be seen as an attempt to find a new moral anchor for a human rights and humanitarian community that struggles with its belief in humanity and in human rights as an effective guardian of that humanity. Durkheim wrote about the need for a higher authority to sanction, or sanctify, prohibitions and rules imposed by society. The sacralization of Humanity may be regarded as an attempt to establish a new ‘higher authority’ as the guardian of humanity in a world that is perceived as increasingly hostile to human rights, one in which the international community as a whole is in treacherous waters, as Gareth Evans reportedly said, ‘whatever we screwed up in the past, let’s not screw this [R2P] up, for then we destroy all that’s left of the international community’.243 It is a perception of the ‘international community’ as one falling apart, or as human rights being on ‘the way down’. As the former director of the GCR2P said:

And if you have a situation in which more and more [states] withdraw from human rights as we see in Geneva, then R2P may be a way to create, to reenergize that commitment, to create a platform bringing together [activists to protests against] these crimes. I think R2P can create a very powerful platform for activism, to recreate a moment like in the 60s and 70s.

Former director GCR2P, 4 March 2010

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242 Interview with Lisa, 19 October 2012. Actual words, ‘So maybe I am a reluctant realist [laughs]. I am a realist who holds hope’.

243 According to an R2P-advocate who participated in the meeting where Gareth Evans reportedly said this (Field Notes, November 2010). See first two paragraphs Chapter One: Introduction.
If we consider, as I do in this dissertation, the R2P-advocates as the representatives of a new strand in humanitarianism and human rights, and if, as Michael Barnett suggests, ‘humanitarianism’s history is modern international history - and its future’ (Barnett 2011: 18), then what does the sacralization of humanity imply for future dealings with human suffering and violence?

Here we encounter two intertwined problems related to the depoliticized notion of ‘humanity’. In order to gain support for their mission from a unified, undivided international community, the R2P-advocates have to postulate a notion with which all nations and peoples can identify, and which therefore transcends group denomination of any kind - be it political, geographical, religious or anything else. Consequently, this transcendent notion of humanity has to be sanctioned by a supra-national authority. Although the notion of Humanity does evoke imaginations and aspirations of universal brotherhood - at least much better than the colourless operational term ‘populations’- its weakness resides in the credibility and legitimacy of the authority that is supposed to represent the sacred community of humanity.

In Durkheim’s definition, the sacred community emerges because of a collectively imagined sacred. ‘We, the people’, is a one-on-one projection of the community itself as sacred, a credo that at once sanctifies the people as sacred and legitimizes the authority that represents the people on earth, the democratically elected parliament, government or president. ‘We humanity’, as yet, has far too few believers and adherents. It is not just the R2P critics who raise serious doubts about the legitimacy of the UN Security Council to speak, judge and act ‘in the name of humanity’. R2P-advocates themselves talk about the UN as a flawed institution, one they engage with through showing their ‘love and hate’.

It is this handicap of R2P, its feeble anchoring in a legitimate and viable representation of humanity, that explains the lack of massive support for this in itself morally sound principle - the idea that there exists an obligation on the part of the bystander to act to halt or prevent mass atrocities whenever and wherever they occur. R2P-advocates acknowledge these problems and seek to overcome them, but have not yet succeeded in doing so. As yet, there exists no legitimate, credible enough representative of the sacred community of humanity. The UN Security Council is stained and divided. The UN Secretary General lacks executive power and will probably never be granted such powers. That, as well as the painful truth that there are no real rituals to purify humanity following genocide, is the second tragedy of R2P.

The second problem related to the depoliticized notion of humanity is that of its derivative - the depoliticized notion of human life. The responsibility to protect removes the power to decide on mass atrocity interventions from the people threatened by atrocities to the United Nations Security Council. Here we encounter the ‘clash’ in worldviews between East Timor activists and R2P-advocates that was discussed in chapter six. The will of the people, East Timor-activist Jorge said, ‘is something that most of the time when we talk about responsibility to protect, is not tested’. East Timor activists would not have invoked R2P had it existed at the time of their solidarity actions, because ‘it does not propose to vest

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244 Interview with R2P-advocate Srilatha, March 11, 2010.
245 Interview, 13 November 2013.
power wrested from the [genocidal] state in the people’ (Orford 2011: 134). In the eyes of East Timor-activists, R2P deprives people from their political agency. Or, to use Agamben’s (1998) concepts of life: the R2P-approach does, at least temporarily, reduce people threatened by mass atrocities from qualified to bare lives.

According to anthropologist Miriam Ticktin whom I quoted in the Introduction, the conception of human life as essentially defined by its biological vulnerability might produce ‘a limited version of what means to be human’ (Ticktin 2006: 34). The conception of human life as essentially defined by its vulnerability, or precariousness, does indeed deprive people of their political agency, that is, an agency obtained through national citizenship, but it does not necessarily deprive people from any (moral) agency altogether.

If we regard ‘humanity’ as an indivisible ‘we’, as do R2P-advocates, then it should follow logically that every single life is our concern. Acknowledging the essential precariousness of human life means, as Butler states, that ‘we have to honor those obligations to preserve the lives of those we may not love, we may never love, we do not know, and did not choose’ (Butler 2011b: 24). We have to do so, Butler continues, because ‘we are [also] bound to one another, in passionate and fearful alliance, often in spite of ourselves, but ultimately for ourselves, for a “we” who is constantly in the making’ (Ibid.). That is why the opening phrase in the title of this dissertation, addresses the ‘us’ of ‘ourselves’.

In this conception, being the bystander comes down to being the perpetrator, perhaps not in the sense of committing the actual act of killing or mass slaughter, but in the sense of violating the universal reciprocal obligation to protect each other from mass atrocities. For it is not the actual killing - it is not the actual millions of deaths in Rwanda, Srebrenica, Syria, Eastern Congo and other parts of the globe, however gruesome, grievable and tragic these are - that destroys humanity: it is the passive bystander who allows mass killing to continue unhindered who deals the final blow, who effaces whatever was left of humanity. In the view of R2P-advocates, the danger of mass atrocity prevention lies not so much in action, as opponents argue who fear that R2P might unleash an endless series of humanitarian military interventions, but in inaction. If R2P-advocates identify inaction as the main obstruction to halting mass atrocities, the passive bystander as the physical manifestation of that inaction thereby becomes their main opponent. That is why the opening phrase of this book title appeals to the bystanders of mass atrocities and calls them to action.

Although the responsibility to protect has severe institutional and operational weaknesses, the idea that there is an obligation on the part of the bystander to act to halt or prevent mass atrocities whenever and wherever they occur remains morally sound, so I believe. Although personally I continue to have serious doubts about the effectiveness of international military interventions, I do see a need to invest in the credo ‘we, humanity’. I believe that despite the small chance of success, we have to try and create that wider conception of the ‘we’, to move beyond the ‘us’ and ‘them’. I agree with Butler (2011b) that we are morally obliged to build a greater awareness of the essential precariousness and interdependency of human life. Moreover, the credo ‘we, humanity’ might be much better suited to confront the transnational challenges with which humankind sees itself confronted today.
According to Ulrich Beck, we currently experience a process of ‘cosmopolitanisation,’ a process that ‘unfolds unwanted, unseen - powerful and confrontational beneath the surface or behind the façade of persisting national spaces, jurisdictions and labels’ (Beck 2011: 4). It evolves within what Beck identifies as the third phase of globalization, a phase that introduces ‘the end of the “global other”’; for ‘the global other is here in our midst’ (Ibid.). In other words, cosmopolitanisation creates new relations between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ The notion of humanity as an ‘indivisible we’ that emphasizes the reciprocal and obligatory character of the responsibility to protect does - at least in theory – attempt to erase the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them.’

From Ulrich Beck’s ‘global other in our midst’, we are only one step removed from the ‘global other in our self’. To truly embrace and internalize the ‘other’ who resides in our ‘self’, we need to face her full front. This involves meeting Rancière’s “Inhuman”, ‘otherness as such [ ] the part in us that we do not control’ (Rancière 2004: 308). This again implies letting go of our so securely constructed identities and notions of self. Undergoing such an experience - letting go of our positive self-image and facing the Inhuman in us - will not be painless. It will be greatly upsetting and could evoke mixed feelings of ‘horror-and-delight’ (Asad 2003: 122) in the full realization of our hitherto unknown capacity and power to destroy. In a secular realm the encounter with mass atrocities - with this capacity of the human to kill, destroy and maim with unexpected ferocity, vigour, power and desire - might even ‘open the way to a modern understanding of the sacred’ (Asad 2003: 122). It is an experience of the sacred that borders on Rudolf Otto’s (1923) description of the ‘numinous’, a ‘feeling of personal nothingness and submergence’ before an ‘awe-inspiring’ overwhelming power, as a sensation of a force that is both mysterium because it is ‘absolutely […] beyond our understanding’, and is tremendum because inspiring both awe and dread (Otto 1923: 28;16). In Otto’s time and understanding, experiences of the numinous could (only) be aroused by (mystic) encounters with God. In a secular age, experiences of the numinous - of an overwhelming force that is both horrific and beyond comprehension - might well be aroused by intimate encounters with the (in)human engaged in mass killings.

Personally, I tend to believe that ‘the sacred in the secular’ could consist of the human’s innate godlike power to create and destroy. I have had my experience of war and armed violence when working in Indonesia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, yet I have never had to witness any massacres nor visited any ‘fresh’ mass graves. The glimpses that I had of the cruelties that people are capable of inflicting on each other however, and of the hatred of ‘perpetrators’ that I encountered in myself, makes me dread the day that I will - not only because of the slaughter that I would then have to witness around me, but first and foremost because of the horrors that might then be unfolded in and by myself.
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Research venues and informants

Concretely, spread over the period from January 2010 to November 2012 I conducted five months of field research in New York, five months in the Asia-Pacific region and one month in Europe (the Netherlands and Portugal). For the Responsibility to Protect-case research was conducted in the USA, Canada, Sweden and Australia: for the East-Timor case research was conducted in the USA, Indonesia, Australia, East Timor, Portugal and the Netherlands. I have already given my reasons for the selection of countries for the East Timor case in the Introduction (see ‘the challenges of multi-sited ethnography’). The research venues for the responsibility to protect-case were selected for the following reasons.

New York was selected because it is the venue of the two global organisations established to promote the responsibility to protect - the Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, and the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect. The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, houses the only Regional Center for the Responsibility to Protect, called the Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and hence became another research location. As Canada hosted the international commission (ICISS) that invented the responsibility to protect, I interviewed one of these Canadian founding fathers and attended and observed a 2-day conference in Montreal, Canada, that celebrated the 10th anniversary of the responsibility to protect. In addition, I closely observed participants at a 4-day academic conference on R2P and international law in Sweden, attended a 2-day consultative meeting organized by the ICRtoP and Oxfam in Paris in 2010 and a one day conference in Amsterdam in 2009, where Gareth Evans spoke about the responsibility to protect.

The selection of informants for both movements was based on the following criteria:

- all selected informants are key figures in their respective movement or coalition;
- informants were representative of the different factions within their respective movement or coalition;
- informants were representative of the gender balance of the larger movement or coalition.
- informants were representative of the different backgrounds of the members of the movement, for example ‘the student activists’; ‘the journalists’; ‘the academics’; ‘the policy makers’; the (former) ‘diplomats’, etcetera.

The last criteria, to some extent, was inspired by the article ‘Figures of Indonesian Modernity’ (Barker and Lindquist 2009) in which anthropologists describe a ‘series of figures […] [that] are not particular individuals but rather figures whose significance can be understood against the changing social, political, and cultural life’ (Barker and Lindquist 2009: 35). These figures
are ‘creatively constituted subject positions that embody, manifest, and, to some degree, comment upon a particular historical moment in the complex articulation of large-scale processes that are not always easy to grasp in concrete terms - processes of commodification, class formation, globalization, religious change, and political conflict’ (Barker and Lindquist 2009: 37). In chapter five, I used a similar approach to describe three figures at an R2P-conference, that is ‘the lawyers’, ‘the R2P experts’, and ‘the UN representatives’ (see chapter five, ‘making sense of the participants’).

Data collection

For data collection, I applied the methodologies and techniques that are generally used for ethnographic fieldwork, that is, participant observation, interviews and collection of documents.

Participant observation:
Both Centres for the Responsibility to Protect in New York and Brisbane were willing to host me as an intern-cum PhD researcher. I conducted a number of assignments and engaged with the other staff members to learn about the work and mission of the Centres. This put me in the unique position of being able to observe the everyday life and work of R2P-advocates. Likewise, I observed a number of conferences in Europe and Canada. Detailed field reports were made of each of these participant observations, describing the observations per day or - in the case of conferences - per session; my own initial reflections on these observations (empirical, theoretical and subjective) and possible next steps for the field research.

Except for one year that I spent on full-time dissertation writing, I continued to work as an independent humanitarian policy adviser during my PhD research, conducting assignments for various Dutch INGOs. I avoided conflicts of interest and never conducted a paid assignment for any of the organizations studied for my PhD research. At the same time, switching between my role as advisor and anthropologist benefited my research. I experimented with these insider and outsider roles on purpose to learn how this impacted on my data collection. For example, I participated in a R2P-conference where I did not fully convey my ‘true’ purpose as an anthropologist and merely presented myself as a humanitarian advocacy advisor doing research on R2P.

Interviews
Interviews have been conducted to collect two kinds of data, (1) personal experiences and ideological convictions that motivated activists to advocate for mass atrocity interventions and (2) data on the organizational histories, vision and mission, activities, and decision-making processes of both groups of activists. Interviews generally lasted between 2-3 hours and were all recorded with a digital voice recorder. Interviews were conducted on the base of informed consent and were semi-structured.
**Data collection and analysis**

Documents were collected to gather two different kinds of data, (1) organizational documents of both groups, such as pamphlets, meeting notes, action plans, reports, photo’s, video’s on (salient/relevant) activities and (2) newspaper clippings, photographs and documentaries on the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991 and the post-referendum violence in 1999 (both in East Timor), and on mass atrocities that especially appeared to inform and influence R2P-advocates (for example the Holocaust, Rwanda and Libya). The first set of data facilitated analysis of the narratives, notions and persuasive arguments used by activists as a way to advocate particular truth claims (also see chapter five). The second set of data helped to analyze the moral sensibilities of activists to particular mass atrocities. Much of this data was collected with the aid of informants, who either mentioned or handed me documents and other materials. Internet proved to be another major research site. Almost all material on the R2P-coalition - articles, documentaries, speeches or even video recordings of recent events - could be found on the internet: but even in the case of the East Timor solidarity movement that had pioneered with internet activism, valuable archives could be found on the net, like the *Apakabar* newslst of John MacDougall that is now maintained by the University of Ohio (http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/) and the ETAN archive that continues to be updated by John Miller up to this very day (www.etan.org). In addition, I conducted archive research in the Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor, in Melbourne, and paid several visits to the permanent exhibition of the Timor Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) in Dili and to the Museum of East Timorese Resistance, also in Dili, East Timor.

**Data analysis**

For data analysis, I generally built on Miles and Huberman's (1994) sourcebook for qualitative data analysis. I designed my initial list of codes and families based on Ninian Smart’s seven dimensional framework. In his book *The World’s Religions* (1993: 12-21), Smart who was a scholar in the history of religions, subsequently introduces seven dimensions of religions and worldviews that together form a framework for analysis, namely (1) the practical and ritual dimension, (2) the experiential and emotional dimension, (3) the narrative or mythic dimension, (4) the doctrinal and philosophical dimension, (5) the ethical and legal dimension, (6) the social and institutional dimension and (7) the material dimension. The quality of this framework or umbrella definition is that it does not exclude secular worldviews, as Smart explains:

> We should not define religion too narrowly. It is important for us to recognize secular ideologies as part of the story of human worldviews. It is artificial to divide them too sharply from religions, partly because they sometimes function in society like religion, and partly because the distinction between religious and secular beliefs and practices
is a modern Western one and does not represent the way in which other cultures categorize human values. (Smart 1993: 9)

Smart’s framework moreover appealed to me because I did not want to begin my ethnographic research based on fixed definitions of religions and worldviews. In my view, ethnographies should aim ‘to find out how the members of the group being studied understand things, the meanings they attach to happenings, the way they perceive their reality’ (Denscombe 2003: 85). At the same time, I did not want to provide ‘blank’ ethnographic descriptions only, but also aimed to derive ‘partial or intermediate explanations’ that clarify why this worldview has the particular shape and function in society in the time and place in which it is studied (Platvoet 1996). In particular, I wanted to examine the use of concepts of ‘the sacred’ for understanding and explaining the worldviews of anti-genocide activists. To enhance this ‘cross-fertilization’ between theory and empirical data, I built on the grounded theory approach as initially developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), in particular on the more flexible grounded theory approach as developed by Layder (1993).

I used ATLAS.ti, a software program for qualitative data analysis, to support analysis of interviews, speeches, newspaper articles, ego documents and images. I found that this software program greatly helped to look beyond eventual assumptions I may have had regarding the research outcome, and to identify new themes that I might otherwise have missed.

Figure 23. Example screen page ATLAS.ti program
This dissertation studies the worldviews and beliefs that motivate activists to advocate mass atrocity interventions. It unravels the ideological conceptions and assumptions through which anti-genocide activists view the world and humanity and make moral judgments on human suffering and violence. It does so by studying two anti-genocide movements: the international solidarity movement for East Timor (1975 - 1999) and the Responsibility to Protect-coalition (2001 - now). I regard anti-genocide activists as a sub-group in the broader humanitarian and human rights community, one that has particular affinity with human rights activism.

The international solidarity movement for East Timor was selected as an early example of anti-genocide activism. The first solidarity organizations were already established in the late 1970s, but the movement became most active in the 1990s. Although East Timor-activists advocated for East Timorese self-determination, they were motivated by the conviction that a ‘silent’ genocide was occurring on this Southeast Asian island. In 1975 the Indonesian military invaded East Timor shortly after it had declared independence from its former colonial administration Portugal. Indonesia occupied East Timor until 1999. Many East Timor-activists believed that near to 200.000 Timorese were killed by Indonesians during this period, either through bombing campaigns and massacres, or through starvation.

The Responsibility to Protect-advocates (‘R2P-advocates’) have been selected as a contemporary example of anti-genocide activism. R2P-advocates strive to halt mass atrocities anywhere on the globe through the building of a new international norm. The ‘responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity’, shortened as R2P, is a new international norm that was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2005. R2P stipulates that if a state is unwilling or unable to protect its populations from mass atrocities, the responsibility to protect falls on the international community who should intervene - if need be - by the use of force.

The study builds on the view that the urge to respond to horrific scenes of ethnic cleansing cannot be explained solely as an act of altruism or merely by the need to protect international stability. Mass atrocity interventions are also a response to an image of human cruelty that is so appalling to those who cherish a worldview of human rights and humanitarian values that they feel they must resist it, if need be by violent means. The communal killings in Rwanda, Srebrenica and Darfur are experienced as a direct attack on core beliefs of what it means to be human - beliefs and values that have become so central to the meaning of life of many activists that the mere thought of giving up their struggle evokes questions of an almost existential nature. As one anti-genocide activist exclaimed during an interview, ‘if we cannot end or prevent these atrocities, then what’s it all for?’

This existential nature of the call for mass atrocity interventions constitutes the first theme of enquiry in this research. I contend that the existential and ideological undercurrent that I observe in the call for mass atrocity interventions can better be grasped, examined and explained with the aid of concepts from anthropology and science of religions - such as the ‘sacred’. Consequently, I postulate the proposition that although humanitarianism and human...
rights are secular worldviews, notions of the sacred inform that worldview and resonate in the call for mass atrocity interventions. I thus build on the view that conceptions of the sacred are not exclusive to religions but also function in secular worldviews. I examine whether there exists a notion of a 'sacred in the secular' that informs the call for mass atrocity interventions, and if so, of what it consists.

The second theme of enquiry in this dissertation concerns a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence that I contend can be observed in the world of humanitarianism and human rights. As noted above, genocide- and mass atrocity prevention are recently new phenomena and only began to emerge as a topic on the human rights agenda in the 1990s in response to the mass atrocities in Rwanda, Srebrenica, East Timor and Darfur. This historical development contributed to a shift in moral sensibilities that, so I hold, can be observed in an increased susceptibility amongst (human rights) activists to military interventions, and an increased focus on sustaining collective instead of individual life. I thus postulate as the second proposition of this dissertation that the call for mass atrocity interventions (also) reflects a shift in moral sensibilities to human suffering and violence from an emphasis on safeguarding the life and rights of individuals to a concern with sustaining the life of the group, of the whole of humankind through the preservation of 'humanity'.

The study is based on participant observation, archive research and in-depth interviews with a total of 71 anti-genocide activists. Spread over the period of January 2010 to November 2012, I conducted five months of field research in New York, five months in the Asia-Pacific region and one month in Europe (the Netherlands and Portugal). For the Responsibility to Protect-case, research was conducted in the USA, Canada, Sweden and Australia. For the East-Timor case, research was conducted in the USA, Indonesia, Australia, East Timor, Portugal and the Netherlands.

Chapter One introduces the themes of enquiry and case studies, and describes the methodology and theory that underpin this study. Based on scholarly discussions on 'the secular' and 'the religious', I propose to examine whether there exists a notion of 'the sacred in the secular' and suggest a working definition of the sacred to facilitate that examination. To study the increased concern with the preservation of collective life, I propose to analyse altered understandings of human life in human rights and humanitarianism building on Foucault’s notion of biopolitics and Agamben's notion of bare life.

Chapter two describes the historical backdrop of the evolving interest in mass atrocity intervention. It identifies the major developments that altered the nature and orientation of humanitarian and human rights activism from roughly 1975 (Indonesian occupation of East Timor and emergence of solidarity activism) to 2011 (UN sanctioned ‘R2P’ intervention in Libya), focusing on the histories of the two movements that are the case studies of this research. In addition, chapter two provides a profile of the people and organizations that make up both movements, describing commonalities in background and motivation of both groups of activists and the strategies they employ to influence international politics. I identify the shock over the genocide in Rwanda and the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia as historical events that drastically changed the mood in humanitarian and human rights
activism. I observe that the idealism of the East Timor solidarity activists has been replaced by the realism of R2P-advocates. I argue that professionalization changed the nature of activism from a calling into a career.

Chapter three studies the specifics of the concern for the preservation of collective life amongst anti-genocide activists. It asks: who do the East Timor solidarity activists and Responsibility to Protect-advocates seek to protect, who(m) are their objects of compassion and empathy? The chapter uncovers the main characteristics and assumptions behind notions of ‘people’ and ‘populations’ that both groups of activists seek to protect. The life of the group that the East Timor solidarity activists aimed to protect was that of a ‘people’, defined in essentially political terms. R2P-advocates on the other hand strive to protect the more depoliticized life of ‘populations’ - of groups void of any political or identifiable characteristics. Secondly, the chapter examines the nature of the compassionate relation between the anti-genocide activists and their objects of compassion. Whereas East Timor activists explained their empathy as an expression of international solidarity with the suffering other, R2P-advocates explained their empathy referring to the reciprocal obligation or ‘responsibility’ to protect each other from mass atrocities.

Chapter four seeks to trace the ideological assumptions that make anti-genocide activists respond with horror to what they regard as the most brutal violations of (sacred) ‘human life’. When is ‘the human’ or ‘humanity’ felt to be violated or under threat in the eyes of anti-genocide activists? I observe that mass atrocities constitute the greatest threat to ‘human life’ in the view of anti-genocide activists, precisely because they aim for the extinction of a whole group and to ways of life specific to that group. For East Timor solidarity activists, the fear was for the loss of a distinct way of life as belonging to a people with their own social-cultural and ‘national’ identity. This is counter to their conception of the human as something essentially defined by self-determination and free political agency. R2P-advocates fear the erasure of human ways of life as belonging to the whole of human civilization or ‘Humanity’. The idea that the obligation to protect each other from mass atrocities can be broken and replaced by a ‘norm’ of bestial slaughtering can evoke deep feelings of horror or ‘anomic terror’ among R2P-advocates.

Chapter five studies how both groups of anti-genocide activists produce, present and sanction evidence to gain public and political support for their moral truth claim. It asks: how do East Timor solidarity activists and R2P-advocates convince society of what they hold to be true? What evidence and proof do they produce to support their truth claim? I study two cases: the first of these concerns the occupation of the then governing Dutch political party Democrats ’66 (D66) by Dutch East Timor activists in December 1995. In this activity the activists ‘speak truth to power’ by clearly and firmly placing themselves outside the governmental power that they criticize. The second activity concerns a four-day conference on the responsibility to protect and international law in June 2010. Unlike the East Timor activists, R2P-advocates do not so much place themselves outside (governmental) power but speak the voice of expertise and professionalism. I also observe a difference in the kind of evidence that each of the groups use to build their case. Testimonial evidence is
highly valued by the solidarity activists as representing the voice and will of the East Timorese people. R2P-advocates instead used factual and forensic evidence as provided by independent experts to build their case.

Chapter six studies the views of both groups of anti-genocide activists on the principle of sovereignty, and on the related duties of the sovereign state or ruler. In what situations does the state or ruler fail in his duty to protect the population and what should be the course of action to halt or change that according to the activists? Two cases are presented to address this question. The first discusses the responsibility of the Portuguese government for the plight of East Timorese under Indonesian occupation. The second concerns the international military intervention in Libya (2011) that was sanctioned by the UN under explicit reference to the responsibility to protect. East Timor activists ground sovereignty in the people. If the sovereign fails in its protection duties, it is the people who have the right to resist and revolt against the sovereign state or ruler, and who have the first and last say about the political destiny of their people and nation. R2P-advocates opt for a model that confers the sovereignty to decide on mass atrocity interventions to the 'international community' of humanity as represented by the United Nations. Transferring the decision-making power from the people affected by mass atrocities to the international community of the UN, implies a shift in the locus of sovereignty, so I contend. The power to decide on one's own destiny is removed from the very bodies at stake in mass atrocities to the external body politic of the international community.

Based on the findings emerging from the separate chapters, I conclude the following. In the secular worldview of humanitarianism and human rights it is human life that is sacred. For the first two generations of human rights and humanitarian activists, the life of the individual constituted the locus of the sacred. In the struggle to halt and prevent genocide the life of the group became the locus of the sacred. The sacred community can be identified in both movements that I studied, but is attached to different entities - 'people' in the case of East Timor activists and 'humanity' in the case of R2P-advocates.

The shift in moral sensibilities that I sensed appears to be closely related to this shift of the sacred. A shift that, other than I assumed at the onset of my research, appears to be twofold: there is a shift of the sacred from individual to collective life, and also from a sacred community constituted by a sovereign people to a sacred community enveloping all human beings in the global community of humanity. This 'humanity' is postulated outside the political realm of 'peoples power', and legitimated by a universal notion of an 'indivisible we'. It thereby becomes transcendent; Humanity is sacralized. In this light, the sacralization of humanity paradoxically could be seen as an attempt to find a new moral anchor for a human rights and humanitarian community that struggles with its belief in humanity and in human rights as an effective guardian of that humanity.
Nederlandse samenvatting


De pleitbezorgers van de Responsibility to Protect (afgekort tot ’R2P’) vertegenwoordigen een hedendaagse vorm van antigenocide activisme. R2P-lobbyisten streven ernaar massale wreedheden waar dan ook ter wereld te voorkomen of beëindigen door de implementatie van een nieuwe internationale norm. Deze norm, die in 2005 door de Algemene Vergadering van de Verenigde Naties werd bekrachtigd, stelt dat ‘iedere staat de verantwoordelijkheid heeft zijn bevolking te beschermen tegen genocide, oorlogsmisdaden, etnische zuivering en misdaden tegen de menselijkheid’. R2P bedingt verder dat, wanneer een staat niet wil ingrijpen bij massale wreedheden of niet bij machte is zijn bevolking daartegen te beschermen, de internationale gemeenschap de verantwoordelijkheid heeft om die bevolking te beschermen, zo nodig door inzet van militaire troepen.

Deze existentiële lading is het eerste thema van mijn onderzoek. Ik stel dat deze lading het best kan worden bestudeerd en verklaard met behulp van begrippen uit de antropologie van religie en de godsdienstwetenschappen, zoals het begrip van ‘het heilige’. Ik vermoed dat ook als het wereldbeeld van mensenrechtenactivisten seculier is, het gevoed wordt door voorstellingen en ideeën van ‘het heilige’. Ik bouw daarmee voort op andere wetenschappers die ook stellen dat het heilige niet alleen een rol speelt in religieuze, maar ook in seculiere levensbeschouwingen.

Het tweede thema dat ik onderzoek betreft een verandering in de morele gevoeligheid ten aanzien van menselijk lijden en geweld in de gemeenschap van mensenrechten- en humanitair activisten. Genocidepreventie is een relatief nieuw beleidsthema dat pas in de jaren '90 op de mensenrechtenagenda werd gezet, in reactie op de bloedbaden in Rwanda, Srebrenica, Oost-Timor en Darfur. Sindsdien lijken mensenrechten- en humanitair activisten meer dan voorheen ontvankelijk voor militair ingrijpen en lijken ze vaker te pleiten voor de bescherming van een groep of bevolking, terwijl ze vroeger vooral gericht waren op bescherming van het individu. Deze nieuwe gevoeligheid voor de kwetsbaarheid van de groep lijkt zich bij uitstek te manifesteren in de opkomst van antigenocide activisten: een relatief nieuwe groep binnen de humanitaire gemeenschap die pleit voor het behoud van de mens(e)lijkheid.


Hoofdstuk één beschrijft de methodologie en theorie die de basis voor deze studie vormen. Voortbouwend op academische discussies over het seculiere en religieuze wil ik gaan onderzoeken of er zoiets als een notie van ‘het heilige in het seculiere’ bestaat. Om de nieuwe morele gevoeligheid voor de kwetsbaarheid van het collectieve leven te onderzoeken wil ik verander(en)de definities van menselijk leven bestuderen aan de hand van het begrip ‘biopolitiek’ van de Franse filosoof Michel Foucault en ‘het naakte leven’ van de Italiaanse filosoof Giorgio Agamben.

Hoofdstuk drie bestudeert de specifieke gerichtheid van antigenocide activisten op de bescherming van groepen. Het hoofdstuk analyseert de voorstellingen en betekenissen die activisten verbinden aan de begrippen ‘mensen’ en ‘bevolkingsgroepen’ - begrippen die veel voorkomen in hun campagne materiaal. De groep die Oost-Timor activisten proberen te beschermen wordt aangeduid met het politieke begrip ‘volk’. R2P-lobbyisten daarentegen pleiten voor de bescherming van het meer gedepolitiseerde begrip ‘bevolking’ of ‘populatie’. Ook bestudeer ik de aard van de empathische relatie tussen de antigenocide activisten en de mensen die ze willen beschermen. Oost-Timor activisten beschouwen die relatie als een uiting van internationale solidariteit met de lijdende ander. R2P-lobbyisten zien die relatie als een morele verplichting en wijzen op de verantwoordelijkheid elkaar tegen massale wreedheden te beschermen.

Hoofdstuk vier onderzoekt waarom antigenocide activisten met sterke gevoelens van afschuw reageren op (beelden van) genocide. Ik betoog dat antigenocide activisten massale wreedheden als de grootste bedreiging van menselijk leven zien, juist omdat deze gericht zijn op de uitroeiing van de gehele groep én haar cultuur. Oost-Timor activisten vreesden de opzettelijke vernietiging van een volk met een eigen sociaal-culturele en etnische identiteit. Dit stond haaks op hun begrip van (waardig) menselijk leven als iets dat in essentie wordt bepaald door zelfbeschikking en politieke autonomie. R2P-lobbyisten creëren het wegvagen van de gehele menselijke beschaving, ofwel de ‘Mensheid’. Het idee dat de morele verplichting om elkaar tegen massale wreedheden te beschermen wordt veronachtzaamd en dat dergelijke slachtpartijen ‘normaal’ worden, vervult hen met gevoelens van afschuw en existentiële angst.


Hoofdstuk zes onderzoekt de visies van beide groepen activisten op het soevereiniteitsbeginsel en de daaraan gerelateerde vraag wie er bij massale wreedheden moet en mag ingrijpen. In welke gevallen verzaakt de staat of heerser in zijn verplichting om de bevolking te beschermen en hoe moet daarop worden gereageerd? Twee casussen worden

Op basis van de bevindingen in de afzonderlijke hoofdstukken concludeer ik het volgende. In de gemeenschap van mensenrechten- en humanitair activisten is het menselijk leven heilig. Voor de eerste generaties activisten had het individuele leven de status van het heilige. In de strijd tegen genocide kreeg het collectieve leven de status van het heilige. Beide groepen antigenocide activisten die ik onderzocht beschouwen de menselijke gemeenschap als heilig, zij het dat die heiligheid verbonden is aan een andere entiteit: het volk in het geval van Oost-Timor activisten; de mensheid in het geval van R2P-lobbyisten.

Anders dan het politieke begrip volk verwijst het begrip mensheid van de R2P-lobbyisten naar een bovenwereldelijk domein. Het verwijst naar een universeel en ondeelbaar ‘wij’ dat méér is dan een concrete groep mensen alleen en uitstijgt boven het hier en nu. Daardoor en daarmee wordt het begrip mensheid transcendent: de mensheid wordt tot het heilige verheven. Deze heiliging van de mensheid kan worden gezien als de paradoxale poging om een nieuw moreel anker te vinden voor een gemeenschap die worstelt met haar geloof in de mensheid én in de mensenrechten als effectieve bescherming van die mensheid.