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populations. The starting point for thinking about methodological approaches here is to consider the nature of the field that is being researched — what are the historical, social, and political characteristics of the conflict settings? How are conflict-affected populations situated within this overarching field? What are the implications of the way that the field is conceptualized for advocating for the agency, protection, and human rights of the affected populations?

This chapter is therefore concerned with two sets of developments in international politics and academic practice that are important for considering approaches to research on the humanitarian impact of armed conflict. The first set of developments is in global politics where we find, on the one hand, the strengthening of international norms and rules to regulate armed conflict that are increasingly geared towards the protection of individuals in war. On the other hand, the fragmentation and internalization of armed violence within the state creates ambiguity in the international legal and regulatory space, and challenges international efforts to protect populations affected by conflict. The international politics of protection is therefore contested in a domain that is far removed from local experiences and strategies of participation, protection, and survival.

The second set of developments is found in the divergent approaches to the study of armed conflict in international relations and political science. Alongside the long-standing research focus on systemic and state-level understandings of the nature and causes of war in international relations, there is a growing scholarly interest in the micro-sociological dynamics of armed conflict that incorporates individual and group level perspectives more commonly associated with the traditional peace research agenda. I argue that, rather than seeing these developments as distinct research agendas, it is the interaction between the micro- and macrodynamics of armed conflict that is of significance for understanding the nature of armed conflict today, and for carving out a research agenda to advocate improvements in both international and state level protection of conflict-affected populations that is attuned to these internal dynamics.

This chapter then sets out a case for a conceptual reorientation to the field to account for these overarching developments by employing a relational ontology. The chapter engages with the “practice turn” in international relations, arguing that a relational ontology makes sense of the complex dynamics and range of actors shaping contemporary armed conflicts, and contributes significantly to the way that we see civilians in

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## 4

# HUMAN CONSIDERATIONS IN CONFLICTED SOCIETIES

Cecilia Jacob

## INTRODUCTION

War is a complex and deeply social process that reaches lives far beyond soldiers on the battlefield. The first department of international relations was founded in Aberystwyth in 1919 following the horrors of the First World War, and as a discipline, it has always been captivated by the central problem of preventing the devastation of war on human populations, even if scholars disagree on how this can be achieved. Although war is an enduring feature of global politics, the character of war itself has changed significantly over the past century (Strachan and Scheipers 2011). We are fortunate not to have experienced another major world war despite the creation of 142 new nation states since 1945, yet war itself has become much more fragmented and internalized within this period. The rapid changes in the mode and characteristics of today's conflicts challenge the way that scholars consider their methodological approaches to studying the impact of armed conflict on societies.

This chapter focuses on methodological considerations for researching populations impacted by armed conflict in the Asia-Pacific, a region that experienced major conflicts in the Cold War period, has the potential for major interstate conflicts, and continues to be confronted by a range of diverse internal conflicts that threaten the security of domestic

conflict zones by situating them in the broader social context of conflict analysis. I draw briefly on my own work in the region to demonstrate the potential of this approach for expanding the conceptualization of concepts such as civilian protection, and to consider tangible sites for promoting international norms of protection in social contexts of armed conflict. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the ethical considerations of a sociological approach to researching the humanitarian impact of conflict in the Asia-Pacific.

### THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF PROTECTION

A number of significant trends have occurred in international politics following the end of the Cold War that have generated momentum for the creation of more robust international norms and laws to protect individuals affected by armed conflict. At the normative level, as well as the strategic level, the post-Cold War period has been marked by the willingness of the international community to reconsider their national security imperatives and responsibilities in relation to the internal mass atrocities taking place in parts of the world that had experienced decades of civil war. Despite significant mass atrocities that took place during the Cold War period, such as in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Nigeria, it was only in the early 1990s that failures by United Nations (UN) peacekeepers in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia-Herzegovina catalysed significant international legal and institutional reforms to protect civilians.

The emergence of critical theoretical approaches to security and the language of Human Security (UNDP 1994) assisted to a large extent in influencing international debates about who the referent of security should be — states or people — and how policy agendas in the areas of security and development could be increasingly coordinated to achieve the goals of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” through a security-development nexus (Stern and Öjendal 2010). The tendency by scholars to pit human security in opposition to state security has diminished many of the possibilities of employing a human security lens to improve the protection of populations within conflict-affected states through the contestation of state security practices detrimental to domestic populations (Jacob 2014b). Nonetheless, the idea that sovereignty entails responsibility by states towards populations within their borders (Annan 1999; Deng et al. 1996; ICISS 2001) built on this conceptual reorientation in

international norms and institutional arrangements for the protection of civilians.

Some of the trends that point towards the “individualization” of armed conflict (Welsh 2014) today include the extensive development of the international refugee protection regime and the creation of international guidelines on the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Berts 2010; Milner 2014). During the mid-1990s there was also an increased focus in the UN on issues such as children affected by armed conflict, women, peace, and security, and the protection of civilians that expanded traditional conceptions of civilian protection embedded in international humanitarian law. Each of these are now thematic issues that are debated annually in the UN Security Council (UNSC), and the subject of numerous UN Security Council Resolutions. There are now also special representatives of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) on children and armed conflict, sexual violence in conflict, the human rights of IDPs, the prevention of genocide, and the responsibility to protect. The mandate of these offices is to promote these human protection agendas within the UN and across member states, and has brought many states and non-state actors into formal agreements on issues such as the demobilization of child soldiers in conflict zones, and the creation of institutional protection mechanisms for particularly vulnerable populations.

Other areas of international normative progress on human protection issues include the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, on which there is now wide international consensus. R2P is the clearest articulation of the principle of “sovereign responsibility” that emerged out of the conceptual debates of the 1990s. At their heart, these debates grappled with the tension between state sovereignty (the right of states to non-interference in domestic affairs) and the protection of human rights. The failure of the international community to protect hundreds of thousands of civilians in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the controversial use of air strikes by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) without UNSC approval in Kosovo were significant events in the 1990s that compelled the Canadian government to establish the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) to consider the ethics and legality of humanitarian intervention in such urgent circumstances. R2P, originally introduced at length in the report by ICISS (2001), argued that the international community had an imperative to intervene to protect populations from mass atrocity crimes

the parameters for the circumstances in which such interventions would be warranted.

R2P was endorsed unanimously by the 150 heads of state that attended the 2005 UN World Summit in a condensed version from the original report (paragraphs 38–39 of the World Summit Outcome Document). R2P is not legally binding on states (Welsh and Banda 2010; Rosenberg 2009; Stahn 2007; Strauss 2009), rather it brings together the range of obligations on states that exist in international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law, international criminal law, and international refugee law into a coherent framework for the prevention and protection of populations from mass atrocity crimes (Welsh and Banda 2010). In terms of normative developments, Pillars One and Two of R2P (UN 2009) that pertain to state responsibility towards their own populations have received the most attention in UN debates in recent years, promoting prevention and international cooperation with states on institutional, legal, security sector, and social justice reform (UN 2013; UN 2014). Pillar Three of R2P on international intervention, including military intervention as a last resort, has been highly contentious among many states that are wary of international intervention into their internal security issues. However, there is much more consensus among states on the elements of R2P that promote state sovereign responsibility to prevent and protect populations from atrocity crimes within their own jurisdiction, reflecting a high level of normative commitment within foreign policy circles on the core tenets of R2P as a preventative doctrine. This normative consensus therefore creates space for leveraging prevention efforts geared towards the enhanced protection populations from internal conflict and political violence that create a high level of risk for atrocity crimes (Jacob 2015a; 2015c).

Alongside increased international protections for individuals that have been made over the past two decades is the increased accountability of individuals for the commissions of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity through the International Criminal Court (ICC) that came into force in 2002. The role of the ICC is to deter individuals at the highest levels of responsibility from committing mass atrocity crimes, whether they be conducted in peacetime or wartime. It has also served to expand the scope of human protection issues that can be classified as a war crime, with the use of widespread sexual violence one notable area where international protection efforts have been directed in recent years. The articulation and classification of the protection needs of particularly vulnerable groups —

such as children, women and the elderly — in conflict settings within both the UNSC and ICC has created legitimacy around these groups and spurred greater international advocacy, research, and protection programmes directed towards their needs that is further evidence of the extent to which international norms have evolved.

Finally, efforts are underway within the UN to streamline human rights accountability in all of its operations through the “Rights Up Front” initiative launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2013. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure that the UN operates as a robust organization for meeting human protection needs. It calls for a deep cultural change across the entire UN system, to be able to effectively respond to early warning signs of conflict, to prevent mass atrocities and protect populations affected by armed conflict, correcting its “systematic failure” as an organization to prevent human suffering (Ban 2013).

The normative developments at the international level are therefore unprecedented, and have been matched by the creation of new principles, laws, and institutional reform that were not conceivable during the Cold War period. The international context is therefore a crucial starting point for considering approaches to researching questions related to human protection in areas affected by armed conflict. It provides the normative, legal, and institutional backdrop for considering the extent to which state and non-state actors responsible for widespread human rights violations can and should be regulated, and for considering the points at which international intervention into the domestic affairs of states for the purpose of human protection is now conceivable and legitimate.

## SITUATING HUMAN PROTECTION IN ACCOUNTS OF ARMED CONFLICT

The previous section emphasized the rapid progress towards international consensus on norms of human protection. Yet, despite this emergent consensus, internal armed conflicts proliferate across the world, including those that have been internationalized. The numbers of people being displaced by armed violence today is unprecedented, and internal conflicts themselves are increasingly fragmented, with multiple conflict dyads present in most of today’s internal conflicts (Pettersson and Wallensteen 2015). According to 2014 data from the Uppsala Conflict Database, thirty-nine of the forty armed conflicts currently active around the world

are internal, thirteen of these are internationalized (such as those in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, and Yemen) and the only international conflict is the low-intensity conflict (less than fifty deaths per year) between India and Pakistan over its disputed territories.

There are also still many gaps and inconsistencies in the definition, classification, and application of international law as it applies to contemporary internal conflicts (Wilmshurst 2012). These conflicts involve increasing numbers of non-state actors, often fall below — or evade — international legal thresholds for the definition of armed conflict in which international humanitarian law (IHL) applies (ICRC 2011; Mundy 2011) or lack sufficient momentum and strategic significance to garner international intervention (military or non-military) given the low-intensity and protracted nature of political violence that we find throughout the world, including the Asia-Pacific region (Jacob 2015*b*, 2015*c*).

As a result of the contemporary nature of political violence and armed conflict, the connection between international legal, normative, and institutional developments that promote improved protection for populations caught up in conflict are much more difficult to apply in practice. How international normative and regulatory developments pertain to state and sub-state actors largely outside the purview of international oversight, such as through peacekeeping operations, is a particularly challenging area given the resistance that states in Asia have to interference in their domestic affairs. Here, for example, we can think of protracted conflicts in Mindanao in the Philippines, ethnic minority states in Myanmar, insurgency in southern Thailand, the Chitragong Hill tracts in Bangladesh, the separatist movements in Jammu and Kashmir and Northeast India, and the Naxalite insurgency across India's central and eastern states, or the former civil war in Sri Lanka. Nonetheless, this is the area that has now gained the international community's attention in the re-conceptualized UN peacekeeping and peace-building efforts, and the women, peace, and security agenda in which the protection of civilians (POC) and R2P are increasingly integrated (see for example the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations 2015).

Explanations for the nature of armed conflict in the post-Cold War era diverge in a number of areas, yet do agree on many fundamental features of contemporary armed conflicts that are useful for considering developments in both warfare and international norms on civilian protection. Some scholars have argued that the 1990s ushered in a new

paradigm of war, the so-called “New Wars” (Duffield 2001; Kaldor 2006; see also van Crevelde 1991, 2008), defined by identity rather than ideology, and indeterminacy of military objectives due to sustained access to global black economies rather than being tempered by finite military objectives with limited resourcing. Yet the civil wars of the 1990s were more of a continuation of the post-colonial wars that had defined the post-World War Two era, and the “newness” of today's armed conflicts as a radical rupture from the past is a tenuous claim (Haines 2012; Malešević 2010; Melander, Öberg, and Hall et al. 2009; Newman 2004; Strachan and Scheipers 2011). Nonetheless, both the geostrategic changes at the systemic level and technological advances have undoubtedly transformed the character of war that we see today. Among these changes are a notable move away from conventional and irregular guerrilla warfare towards symmetric non-conventional warfare that engages state actors in more direct confrontation with non-state belligerents than the protracted guerrilla insurgencies of the Cold War period (Kalyvas 2012).

According to macro-accounts of armed conflict, war is shaped by the international system, and interactions between state units (Waltz 1979). The international legal and institutional developments discussed in the first half of this chapter reinforce the understanding that war, and the regulation of war, is a state affair. The international institutions that states have created to facilitate interstate cooperation and mitigate interstate conflicts work to maintain order and stability within this system and have been successful in their central purpose of preventing a major interstate war, and responding — with mixed success — to significant internal conflicts in which large numbers of civilians are killed, harmed, and displaced. Parallel to these systemic and macro-level explanations is a growing body of literature in political science and international relations that is concerned primarily with the micro-dynamics of armed conflict for understanding how to prevent and solve contemporary internal conflicts.

Micro-accounts include in-depth studies of the local social and political dynamics of armed conflicts, political violence, and mass atrocities. These include research on areas such as the divergent motives and cleavages among different actors using violence that shape civil conflict (Kalyvas 2003), the organizational dynamics (Christia 2012; Staniland 2014; Weinstein 2007) and ideology (Sanin and Wood 2014) of insurgent groups, and the local social and political dynamics of genocide (Lemarchand 2009; Straus 2008). These accounts are far removed from the systemic and macro levels of analysis in detailing the central workings

of significant civil conflicts and mass atrocities that feature today, yet have profound insights for improving international efforts to enhance human protection through interventions in internal conflicts.

One of the seminal works in this field provides a devastating critique of the top-down nature of the UN peace-building intervention in the Congo, which was structured to address state and international level conflict (Auteursse 2010, pp. 120–25). By feeding into simplistic accounts of the situation that bypassed local sources of conflict, namely rivalries over land, access to resources and political power, UN peace-building activities in the Congo systematically failed to achieve their broader objectives related to human protection and conflict cessation. Nuanced accounts of the local dynamics of political violence and armed conflict in unstable regions strengthen understanding of the contexts to which broader trends being observed at the international level correspond, and pinpoints areas of fruitful engagement where the normative and regulatory developments at the international level need to be much more effectively and strategically interpreted into local practice.

One of these sites includes a re-conceptualization of state understandings of “sovereign responsibility” as articulated in the R2P doctrine. States have unanimously endorsed R2P in principle through the UN, and many have demonstrated a preference for the first Pillar of sovereign responsibility for population protection and prevention of atrocity crimes within state borders, over the third Pillar of international intervention for protection purposes when states fail in this responsibility.<sup>1</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, however, the repeated reference to genocides, such as those in Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, have reinforced the misconception that the levels of political violence or low intensity conflicts within their own borders do not equate to the types of scenarios where R2P applies (Jacob 2015b). While genocides may be rare events, atrocity crimes are not (Karstedt 2013). Further, effective Pillar One responsibilities of states are much more ubiquitous than current UN prevention frameworks suggest, given that the effective protection of populations by states with high levels of existing risk of atrocity crimes corresponds with lengthy historical trajectories of violence, and often decades of military encounters with the civilian population (Jacob 2015b).

One of the implications of the research on the micro-dynamics of armed conflicts is that there is a pressing need to develop a stronger understanding of how international human protection norms, law, and institutions are mediated by state and sub-state level actors, and implemented on the ground. In the next section, I outline an approach to research

in this area that emphasizes the importance of understanding historical trajectories of political violence and armed conflict, and identifying routine practices of key security and protection actors that have developed over time. It is argued that this broader sociological and historical context of contemporary conflict-affected societies give meaning to the contemporary practices of security actors within the research site, and situate international efforts to promote what are — in cases such as R2P, POC, Children and Armed Conflict, and Women, Peace, and Security, for example — quite recent norms and standards of human rights and protection.

## INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

The chapter so far has described the broad international context of contemporary armed conflicts, and situated populations affected by armed conflict at the intersection of international politics of protection and micro-sociological dynamics of armed conflict. This final section introduces the practice turn in international relations, arguing for a conceptual reorientation towards the field of armed conflicts in which populations are present. The practice turn in international relations is inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu,<sup>2</sup> and challenges conventional international relations theory by employing a relational ontology towards the field of research.

International relations theory has traditionally focused on the state, and relations between states, as its object of analysis to explain the causes and dynamics of armed conflict. The study of practice, however, includes an emphasis on the sites of *habitus* and *field* to explain social action and uncover relations of power (Pouliot and Mérand 2013) that is a pertinent framework for the analysis of political violence and armed conflict within, between, and across state borders. The notion of *habitus* in Bourdieu’s work refers to the subjective disposition (*dispositif*) of actors that is constructed through a culmination and internalization of life experiences and reiterated patterns of behaviour; that is, “history turned into nature” (Bourdieu 1977, p. 78). *Habitus* inclines actors towards certain actions in relation to the *field*, with the unconscious, socialized *disposition* of individuals shaping their interactions within a given social context. In the context of international relations, scholars have been interested in the disposition and reiterated practices of actors such as diplomats (Pouliot 2010), security professionals and bureaucrats (Bigo 2006), and refugee

activists (Nyers 2003); those actors whose daily actions constitute the substance of international politics. Given that significant actors in today's conflict include not just soldiers in uniform, but non-state (or pro-state) militia, terrorists, insurgents — some of whom may be children, female, local supporters, resisters, and so on — analyses of armed conflict that take the disposition of these actors into account provide a more nuanced account of the dynamics of conflict processes taking place within (or across) the state border.

Actors are positioned within a *field*, that is “a social space structured along three principal dimensions: power relations, objects of struggle, and rules taken for granted within the field” (Pouliot and Mérand 2013, p. 30). A field is shaped around a specific site of struggle, where certain rules of the “game” (Bourdieu 1977, p. 40) operate and are known by social actors, and power is unequal. Operating in the field requires a certain tacit, practical knowledge that is acquired through being situated within a given social context. Bourdieu's relational ontology asserts that the interface between habitus and field — or disposition and position — is the site of social practice and action, a conclusion that offers practical implications for research methodology and analysis of security in international relations (Côte-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter 2014; Salter 2013, pp. 85–90). More precisely, the interface between social disposition and position is an important site for understanding political violence contextually (Bakonyi and De Guevara 2009) and is therefore of crucial importance for formulating successful protection efforts.

In international relations specifically, a field can be understood as a globalized space as long as the same sociological principles defined above are operating (Pouliot and Mérand 2013, p. 32). This approach has enabled international relations scholars to go beyond levels-of-analysis visions of the international system in the identification of specific fields of politics that transcend state-international distinctions (Bigo 2011, p. 226), ask new questions related to international politics, and offer original analyses through empirically rigorous and sociological grounded methodologies (noteworthy examples being Bigo 2006 and Pouliot 2010). Importantly, taking a particular field, or site of struggle, as an alternative starting point for theory (Adler-Nissen 2013, pp. 1–2), facilitates analysis of the social space surrounding a specific issue in international relations as opposed to a pre-given and bounded subject, such as the

A relational ontology is important, given that analyses of human protection within security studies have, for far too long, been hindered by the debate between “state-centric” and “human-centric” definitions of security, rather than concerned with the overarching objective of transforming the security politics in which civilians are rendered insecure (Jacob 2014b). Debates over “centricity” are also redundant; theoretically speaking, it does not make sense to try to replace one central referent of security analysis with another as this approach merely serves to rely on an alternative (arbitrary) threat construction rather than change the ontological underpinning of the approach to security on which methodological choices are built (Jacob 2015a). Rather, by focusing on the politics of security and protection, the state comes into full purview given its relations with societies, and a deeper understanding of the extent to which the state exercises both sovereign authority and legitimacy within its territory, and to which competing claims for jurisdiction and the monopoly of violence are made.

Given the emphasis in practice theory on the actors that operate within a given field and identifying the patterned logics that shape their interactions, a practice approach to the study of populations in armed conflicts must start with an empirical investigation of the field in which one is researching. My own research on the protection of children affected by armed conflict in Southeast Asia,<sup>3</sup> for example, took me to the field in 2008–9, where I conducted interviews with a range of professionals whose work constituted the field of protection for the children affected by violence that were identified in the research. The fieldwork included workshops with over seventy children affected by armed conflict, displacement, trafficking, or exploitation for hazardous labour.

The methodology for this research was shaped by an interest in a particular site of struggle — that of routine violations of rights of children impacted by armed conflict in the region. The two research groups I selected were children living within the remaining conflict zones in the ethnic minority states in Myanmar, zones renowned for the widespread use of child soldiers and conflict-induced displacement, and children exposed to trafficking and sexual exploitation in post-conflict Cambodia. By honing in on a specific protection issue, it was possible to identify the wide range of actors whose work was associated with the increased protection of this particular population group. These actors included

the International Labour Organization or ILO, the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking or UNIAH, and the United Nations Development Programme or UNDP), government ministries with delegated responsibilities for child protection (such as ministries of interior, social affairs, and women's affairs), international non-government organizations (NGOs) and local NGOs, and the child protection workers themselves in IDP camps and safe houses.

In taking this approach I was able to map out the "field" of protection that spanned from Myanmar's capital city, Yangon, to an IDP camp in Karen state on the Myanmar border, UN agency headquarters in Bangkok, and Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh. The picture that emerged was a complex array of definitions, practices, and legal, institutional, and political approaches around the issue of child protection in conflict-affected societies. The politics that shaped this field included UN-government relations, donor-government relations, hierarchical relations between government ministries themselves (the military and home affairs sectors, for example, were significantly privileged over social welfare and justice ministries in both states), patronage relations between government elites and lower-level officials, and contending visions of rights and protection between NGOs operating in the field. Each of these relations came with their own power relations and hierarchies, and perpetuated differentiated visions of "protection", such as those between the security sector and social welfare and development oriented agencies. Actors pursued different logics and outcomes in their work, outcomes that in some instances created an evident "protection gap" for the most vulnerable children in these countries.

It was also clear that significant change in the understanding, priorities, and response of domestic actors to child protection issues in these states had occurred from a range of sites. These include the advocacy, advice, and capacity support by international agencies in the field, and donor government pressures on domestic actors to meet benchmarks on areas of governance and rule of law that exposed actors to the standards and expectations of the international community on their domestic reform process. However, unlike much of the literature on norm diffusion that considers the diffusion of norms as a linear (or spiral) process, progress on human protection at the domestic level is far more uneven, both in terms of geographical reach and in various levels and domains of governance.

*In Cambodia, for example, the police, with generous government and international funding and capacity support, have had the most*

success in addressing issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in urban hubs, but much less success in marginal rural areas where most of the trafficked children were from. The social welfare sector looks after all of the children who are delivered to them by the police after successful raids. Yet, at the time of my research, this sector received no additional funding from the central government. This was despite the fact that the government enjoyed recognition for its policing successes from the international community, through ongoing increases in donor funding, and being dropped from a Tier 3 to a Tier 2 country in the annual US Trafficking in Persons report.

Many of these children return to cycles of poverty and violence due to inadequate resourcing and a lack of creative options for the livelihoods of the country's most vulnerable children. Here the politics within the state, that privileges the security sector over the social welfare approaches to protection, have resulted in the irregular and short-lived protection of the country's most vulnerable children. The level of awareness of human rights norms and international protection standards within the special anti-human trafficking and juvenile justice unit were far more advanced than in both the severely underfunded social welfare sector, or regular policing units, given the sustained engagement of the international community with this unit, and the willingness of the central government to maintain a significant budget for the security sector. Yet, a failure to take into account the relational dynamics between the various sectors and the importance accorded to them at the elite level, as well as their routine interactions through the child-referral system, significantly undermines this laudable progress.

Given the complexity, and very political nature of protection agendas, approaches to research on human protection therefore requires an engagement with the field being studied, and an identification of how international norms and expectations are mediated on the ground by domestic actors. Local understanding and practices of protection interact with international norms because of the presence of international, donor government, and civil society actors in humanitarian spaces of conflict and post-conflict societies. But these are translated through local practices and repertoires of the professionals responsible for their implementation, and the power relations between these actors play a significant role in carving out the space in which they define protection issues and operate in the field.



## CONCLUSION

The promises of the study of practice for the human protection agenda is that it is able to define a field that is not necessarily bound by state borders, and permits transnational conflict issues to be analysed across predetermined political boundaries. In doing so, scholars engaging a practice methodology are able to provide practical insight into the relationship between the two overarching trends discussed in the first half of the chapter. These two trends included the strengthened international human protection norms and the increasingly fragmented and internalized fields of armed conflict that contour the contemporary global security landscape.

At an empirical level, this approach facilitates the identification of routine and patterned behaviour — the “stuff” that constitutes security practice — for a nuanced understanding of the micro-dynamics of conflict-affected society. Yet, in terms of the ethical implications, practice-based research reveals oppressive and unjust power relations, and is therefore also a site for political contestation and social transformation.

A brief final note is then warranted in the conclusion on the ethics of engaging practice theory in research on human protection, given its salience to the core theme of this chapter. Much of the ethical thrust of engaging with practice theory is in the choice of case studies selected, and the decision by the researcher to shed light on practices by state or other elite actors whose routine and seemingly mundane practices could, or should, be the subject of rigorous scrutiny and critique. Indeed the methodological choice, including one's mode of analysis, is largely an ethical choice that the researcher should be cognisant of, and perhaps even deliberative of, from the outset. A commitment to international human protection norms and their advocacy is likewise an ethical decision that is reflected in the tone and mode of analysis.

All theories contain normative judgement (Reus-Smit and Snidal 2008), and the sphere of human protection in conflicted societies is one domain in which the implications of one's research are potentially deeply significant for individual lives. So, while practice theory, like most of the social constructivist research with which it shares close affinities, does not offer a moral philosophy or ethical framework given its rejection of such foundational truths, the subject matter of human protection in conflicted societies is an inherently deeply ethical concern. This is the reason why consensus on the principles underpinning new developments in international civilian protection norms is nearly unanimous among

the UN's member states, even if certain states have reservations on their technical aspects. Researchers are therefore encouraged to be both clear and consistent in their ethical approaches to researching human protection in conflict affected societies and in thinking through the practical implications of their research.

## Notes

1. For perspectives of individual states, see statements given at the Annual UN General Assembly Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect <<http://www.globat2p.org/>>.
2. Bourdieu is not the only inspiration of the practice turn in international relations. However it is the most clearly articulated approach by international relations scholars — for example, Adler and Pouliot 2011; Adler-Nissen 2013; and Bigo 2011.
3. This section is based on Jacob 2014a.