

CARNEGIE COUNCIL *for Ethics in International Affairs*

A Conversation with Lieutenant-General Roméo A. Dallaire

Ethics Matter, Global Ethics Forum TV Series

Roméo A. Dallaire, James Traub

Transcript

Introduction

JAMES TRAUB: Good evening, I'm Jim Traub, and welcome to Ethics Matter. Our guest this evening is General Roméo Dallaire. General Dallaire is renowned as the UN force commander in Rwanda in 1994, who desperately urged the UN and its member states to intervene to stop the [genocide](#) there, and when that failed, did whatever he could himself with a tiny contingent of peacekeepers, saving thousands of lives from the genocide that ultimately took 800,000 lives. His book about that searing moment, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, was also made into a very well-known [documentary](#) of the same name. [For more on this, check out Dallaire's 2003 [talk](#) on this subject.]

General Dallaire has drawn on his experience, to create [The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative](#), which seeks to train police and soldiers to prevent the use and recruitment of child soldiers, and to advocate on behalf of the issue.

General Dallaire, thank you so much for being here this evening.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Thank you, very kind.

Remarks

JAMES TRAUB: I wanted to ask you first—it's now the 20th anniversary of the genocide. I'm wondering, from what you know about how the world has or hasn't changed, if this happened again today, what's your sense of how, if at all, the world's response would be different from what it was then?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: I fear that I'm not convinced that the world response would be different, particularly when we're looking at sub-Saharan Africa. I think what, however, is worse about today is that when we stumbled into this new era, after the [Cold War](#), and there were all these failing states and imploding nations and civil wars, we were on a very steep learning curve, in the different disciplines, be it diplomatic, political, military, security, and so on. We were trying to figure out what to do. So we have been nearly 25 years doing lessons learned in all these conflicts.

Yet, we still see a fear of using [responsibility to protect](#) (R2P), which was one of the great innovations of our time, which had made now, sovereignty no more an absolute, which I think is extraordinary. But applying it is another story. Now, we've had all the experience. We've seen it all, yet we don't seem to be able to get ahead of the game. We're still reacting to conflicts. We're still trying to pick up the pieces, or deciding to throw some cash at it afterwards.

I think it's worse now, because we do have tools, but we just don't have the political elites, the

statesmanship, to want to apply it.

JAMES TRAUB: If you think about the institutions that failed to act then, which is, the UN Security Council, and the major member states, would you say that any of them, in your mind, have really internalized that failure, in a way that would make them different, whether it's the UN or the United States, or other major Western powers? Or is your sense that they haven't? It sounds to me in your answer, you think that maybe they haven't.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: There's been gestures. There's been reforms, like the [Brahimi reform](#), but nowhere near enough, in the late '90's. There's been the introduction of the [optional protocol on child rights](#), which makes it a crime against humanity to recruit child soldiers. It became a primary weapon system in the '90's and still is today.

The United States has [Samantha Power](#), in particular, when she was there as the security advisor, who brought in the [Mass Atrocities Prevention Board](#), to prepare a multidisciplinary government construct on how to handle these crises, and hopefully, the desire to handle them. [Kofi Annan](#) did bring in, to which I was a member, the [Genocide Prevention Advisory Board](#), and Genocide Prevention Undersecretary, linked in with R2P. They've been working at trying to prevent this from happening.

But that level is still nowhere near the political capital that politicians are prepared to invest. It's hard enough to get them to get engaged when the thing has gone catastrophic, and has gotten out of control, like [Syria](#), as an example. But imagine getting them to go in to prevent something. How do you defend the prevention? How do you defend the use of the resources? How do you identify that you're actually in a process of preventing something?

The work we're doing with child soldiers is articulating that in fact one of the tools of operationalizing our responsibility to protect and prevent mass atrocities, is identifying if there is recruitment of child soldiers, if they're actually going down that road of using that extreme capability, and if they are, that means there is certainly an extension that they will be quite ruthless in going all the way.

JAMES TRAUB: On this question of prevention—because obviously, the best solution to this problem is to be able, first, to see the kind of hallmarks of coming genocide, as you described it, and act preventively. So if you ask people, I think, in the UN world, they'll say to you, "Well, look at how we reacted quickly when there was fear of genocide in [Kenya](#) in the aftermath of elections. Look at [Cote D'Ivoire](#)."

So they would say, I think, that at least on a prevention side, there is a greater recognition of the need to act, and a somewhat greater willingness to act diplomatically. I don't know about militarily. But do you see that?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: I will not negate at all that. In fact, [Kofi Annan](#)—at that election, where within days, they had four genocide radio stations; where in [Rwanda](#), we only had one—that the swift reaction there precluded that going catastrophic. [Cote D'Ivoire](#)—it depends a lot on how the ex-colonial power really played in there, and to what extent that really influenced. Was it R2P? Was it their pull?

I would argue that there is not a desire to try to get ahead of the threat that is festering within the nation, of trying to prevent things from going catastrophic. Like preventing a zone, like when I was in [Darfur](#) in 2005—that zone from going catastrophic, because of its abandonment in policies by the Sudanese government. Well, we really didn't go in there and take a look early on, to try to see that that might be something that might create enormous problems with the tribes in the north, and the camels and the agrarians.

Look at [Central African Republic](#). We have seen many years of recruitment of child soldiers. We've

seen this place going down that road. There was a [UN mission](#) there, very limited in what it could do, but there was no effort in trying to get ahead of that game.

So now we are trying to deploy forces from all these different resources, the European Union, and these hodgepodge sort of organizations, and try to pick up where the catastrophe has left off, or is just barely in abeyance, until it goes worse.

JAMES TRAUB: I wonder if the UN is just not capable of acting preventively, because in order to act preventively, you have to act before there's a crisis. In order to act before there's a crisis, you have to be able to say to people, "Invest resources now, even though people aren't slaughtering each other." The Secretariat has an enormous amount of difficulty getting the member states to act in a timely way, before it's exploded all over CNN.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: That brings you to an interesting point. How much does, really, the Security Council grasp of the scenarios out there? I mean, what assets does it really have, in order to be able to go into the field—the bringing together of the information, the analysis of it, the dissemination of the intelligence information—to give them a sense of, to what extent it's happening?

One of the reasons why you created the Genocide Prevention Office and the R2P Office, was to garner all the different agencies and departments, who have massive amounts of information, but are not feeding it to each other. So even within the Secretariat, they're not pulling all that data together. But the Security Council has no strategic planning, has no strategic command control, has no strategic options into the future. It's got itself.

In terms of the Secretariat, that depends on what the secretary-general is willing to do. Some isolate the Secretariat from the Security Council, others are more willing. I think that, first of all, the Security Council does not have the tools. The reforms that Kofi Annan was trying to bring in got shot down, and so nobody's picked up the ball on that.

The second thing is, many of those countries don't necessarily see that it's in their personal self-interest. As long as humanity continues to be dominated by self-interest, well, you're going ongoing to keep this whole exercise of all humans not necessarily being on the same playing field.

It is, in my opinion, in our self-interest that children are not recruited in countries like Central African Republic, that you create catastrophic failures. That means that there's going to be a longevity to the conflict, and that means there are going to be massive movements of people, pandemics, extremism that can turn into terrorism, availability of resources that are going to be limited, because it's a conflict zone, and god knows the impact that it may have on the diasporas in our own country.

So we have an interest in all those conflicts, but we don't seem to be able to grasp it.

JAMES TRAUB: We repeat the idea that it is in our interest, and not just a moral proposition. But the fact is, states don't really feel that. They feel like it may be the right thing to do, but it's not a matter of national interest.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: It's absolutely wonderful you raised this point about moral reference because, we don't like wars using—look at what happened with chemical weapons, and so on. How come we can tolerate wars where the primary weapon systems are children? Children are massively used, and yet, we don't seem to be wanting to engage, certainly not even in preventing, let alone trying to stop them.

What tools do we have to stop that recruitment, and to divert that youth into another arena than simply going to forced recruitment, because there's no voluntarism in recruitment of child soldiers? A country

that's in a state of conflict, there's no such thing as volunteering. I mean, you're doing it because you're seeking safety, or whatever, but it's not because you really want to go and fight.

We're in an era where the moral reference—I mean children—doesn't carry the weight. So, that's where, when I started to look at that dimension of genocide prevention, mass atrocities, the R2P, the operation, I started to see that the child soldier side of it, which was a forerunner of many of the conflicts, like in Rwanda. Why isn't there a reaction to the use of children?

If we're not reacting on a moral side, then maybe we've got to start reacting on a security side because child soldiers is a security problem. So it's an extension of the security scenario. It's got to be raised to that level, and then reactions should be according to that level of insecurity. Only when you do bring security back will those child soldiers not be required, of course.

JAMES TRAUB: Let me ask you about the transition in your own life, from this searing period in Rwanda, until you created The Child Soldiers Initiative. You've been very open about the immense trauma that you went through, including thoughts of suicide, and so forth—

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Attempts.

JAMES TRAUB: Attempts, that's much stronger than thoughts.

It really strikes me in reading about your story that the people who have a conscience wind up suffering in a way that the people who may have been the cause of this, of so much suffering, but don't have the conscience, they actually wind up not suffering. Whereas you, who was actually one of the great heroes of this story, wound up suffering enormously for it. I'm sure that irony must have struck you at times.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: I get a certain solace from the fact that we've introduced instruments to try and fight impunity so that people simply won't be able to walk away from it, as they have. I think they introduced these, in introductions through the [Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court](#), to operationalize it, to give it more legs. It is an important factor in making people realize that you can be held accountable, sooner or later, for the actions you take.

In regards to those of us who have been into it, Rwanda was a genocide, it was a civil war. But the killing was done, and maiming was done by youths in a militia: the young wing of a political party that was slowly converted in a militia, and indoctrinated into hate. They're the ones who did it.

JAMES TRAUB: In this case, the average age would be 15, 16, something like that?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: In the case of Rwanda, yes, but the recruitment in a number of other countries was eight or nine. But in that country, they were youths. They were underage, and they're the ones that were used to do it—as we're starting to see, and notice now in Burundi, which is of grave concern. So the fact that young people now are being recruited because they're young, versus historically, from the moral sense—"We were recruiting young only because *in extremis* ('in extreme circumstances'), that's what was left."

This change, and all the paperwork, and all the legislation, and all the laws that are out there, still haven't been able to break the code on how to prevent that from continuing to be a preferred weapons system in our era.

JAMES TRAUB: I want to come back to it, but I still don't quite want to leave this question of its effect on you.

Of the people who you may feel, really were in some way, culpable for failing to act—whether it's

Boutros-Ghali, or Kofi Annan, or senior American officials—I'm wondering if there have been times when you personally have actually sat down with them and gotten a sense of whether or not they were fully penetrated by this, at all, in the sense that you were?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Well, I was able to feel that with the bad guys, because I testified in the international tribunal, and would have loved to put a few more in jail, but—

JAMES TRAUB: They were only penetrated by the recognition that they were about to go to jail.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Yes, and going to jail in the countries that don't really have the best of conditions. That side.

The other side is that it was only last spring that the Holocaust Museum in Washington, and The Hague Institute for Global Justice got together and had a meeting in The Hague, where 54 of the players who were there in Rwanda at the time actually met, from Iqbal Riza through to the ambassadors who were sitting on the Security Council, to ambassadors in the field; military; the politicians back in our country, who were part of the administrations; the journalists who were on the ground and around. It's the first time that actually, in an open forum, we brought it home.

I've never been able to meet President Clinton. No matter what he's written in his book, I think that one day, I think it's important that he tell me—as many members of the administration have said—that they, yes, they, undermined the mission. They didn't want to get back in there. They had Somalia and Mogadishu and Black Hawk Down. The last thing, militarily and politically, they wanted to do was get in there.

JAMES TRAUB: Samantha Power's book makes that utterly clear.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Yes, but they never even tried to.

I hold Boutros-Ghali in high contempt of emasculating the Secretariat, from being able to give the Security Council what it needed to—

JAMES TRAUB: He's never taken any responsibility for this, that I know of. Kofi, to some extent, has. Boutros-Ghali has not.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Yes, and Kofi has written in his book too. But I've never met Boutros-Ghali. Ever, even when I was in command. So there's been a number of them. I contend that as much the ones who tried to undermine the mission, to those who really didn't get engaged, to those who even indirectly aided and abetted the civil war-cum-genocide, most of them never have attempted to bring that argument forward and face some of us who were on the ground.

I think that in itself is a sign that they either are trying to avoid it, or they're trying to rewrite history—as we've seen a few, and been held accountable for that, thank god. I still wait for the day to meet President Clinton. We don't need a long conversation, just a short one. It would go a long way in assuaging my personal guilt of failure of command in the field, because the mission ultimately failed.

JAMES TRAUB: It would be good if the people that actually were responsible for that failure, unlike you, who clearly was not, was the opposite, could actually say, "I cannot escape." You, who have suffered from this so much, and maybe some small amount of suffering on their part, would also, as you say, would make your life easier.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: One must remember that the UN is us. So the national capitals decided not to give the UN the assets at that time. It's still the same today. When the UN went to NATO to go into Libya, look at the fiddling that went around in NATO. It nearly split NATO in engagement, and then,

even at that, we didn't even put troops on the ground, which then created all the massive problems of the rebels having to [fight](#), and bleed, and now look at the [catastrophic failure](#)—

JAMES TRAUB: Yet the consequence of Libya is you have all these Security Council countries and non-Security Council countries, who say, "We're never going to get fooled again, like we did in Libya. We're never going to approve any action like this again."

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: But see that's where I find it's rather interesting, is that they can say that, when in fact they gave the mission to NATO, never got NATO to brief them on what was going on—I spoke to the commanders. NATO never talked to the Security Council. They expected the big boys to talk to Security Council. So, the U.N. never had control, and NATO was limited by what the member countries were willing to provide, and they weren't willing to provide troops on the ground.

When [Gaddafi](#) said, "I'm going to crush these cockroaches," was when we should have put an intervention force, protection force, to protect the civilians, and keep the other forces separate, and work out a deal. Work out whatever you want to do. But not permit them to reinforce, get all kinds of mercenaries and weapons, and destabilize the whole region, and bleed the way they have, to the extent where nobody controlled the situation, you've got a change of regime, and now the mess.

It wasn't R2P that failed. We failed to implement R2P.

JAMES TRAUB: And yet I fear it may have been the high-water mark of the attempt to implement R2P. That's the horrible thought about it.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: I'm in for a long haul, and I think we should be. I think the R2P, and that whole construct of sovereignty not being an absolute is a critical element in our global environment, in regards to threats and populations at risk, and mass atrocities, and, in fact, the spread of extremism that we're seeing.

JAMES TRAUB: I hope it is so.

Let's talk in more detail about the child soldier initiative that you've created. Maybe first you can just explain what the scope of the initiative is, that you've authored.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: What we've garnered by being an intellectually rigorous body, because it's based at Dalhousie University—Dr. [Whitman](#) who is here, is our executive director. It's a research-based training and advocacy body, and ultimately the mission is to eradicate the use of children as weapons of war. Eradicate means getting it out of the minds of adults that they actually can turn to kids to do this.

In so doing, the application of it is by preventing the recruitment, and introducing methodologies in that, including even—in school programs, and when they are so recruited—preparing military and police forces, security forces, to be able to handle these child soldiers without letting it escalate to force on force, or without simply treating them as combatants and destroying them, as we are still seeing. Discovering that no military in the world, except the Marine Corps—I'm a graduate from the U.S. Marine Corps Staff College, and they had in their doctrine, "Avoid confrontation." That was the only thing they had. Well, that gets a little difficult at times. Although it may not be a bad idea, if the only solution is to start destroying them.

So we build these training capabilities of both contingents and national capabilities of nations in order for them to comprehend that children, young people, can be prevented from being recruited, and also can be neutralized as a weapon system, without necessarily the use of force.

JAMES TRAUB: Let's talk separately about these two very difficult parts, the prevention part, and then

what you do when you're confronted with child soldiers because you said, in the end, prevention means persuading the insurgents and others, national armies, who would be using child soldiers that they couldn't.

I have to say, that seems implausible to me. That is, given how, what a cheap and expendable resource children are, from the point of view of the people who are going to be doing this, how do you persuade them that it's not in their interest to take some 10-year-old and give him a gun?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: And the demographics would go along with that, too, of how many of those countries have such large portions of their population under 15, let alone under 18.

One of the things we do, we're now, in fact, building a national capability in Sierra Leone. The [president](#) of Sierra Leone has mandated us, and we've been training trainers now, who have been communicating with us through the [Ebola](#) scenario on what's been going on. We've participated with the British, to train a contingent going into Somalia. We are into the exercise with them, of the attempts at bringing the child soldier dimension of training to the military and police, to an extent where we can convince them that they are a disadvantage rather than an advantage.

One of the small exercises that we do is we bring them in and we say, "Okay, what are all the advantages?" Then we say, "Okay, write up all the disadvantages." When you start looking at, well—

JAMES TRAUB: Are the "they" who are making these lists—these are military officials?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: It can be. We've trained military, we've trained police, we've trained prison guards.

JAMES TRAUB: You're not talking to would-be insurgents, or the people who are going to be using child soldiers?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: We've done that too. The insurgents are the non-state actors, as the UN likes to use the term. It is an arena that is of interest to us because there are a lot of them who are using child soldiers, as well as the state actors who are still recruiting them. In fact, nine countries or so are still involved. Last week we were at NATO, because NATO has realized that Afghanistan is still on the list of countries that are using child soldiers. They want to solve that problem and they don't have the necessary tools. So we went and briefed them on what we can bring to the table, to help their forces to alleviate that problem.

You can have the spectrum, from the literate soldiers, all the way up to force commanders. So you walk them through these exercises—

JAMES TRAUB: What are the negatives? We can understand the positives, alas, all too well. What are the negatives that you try and persuade them of?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Well, children only can carry so much ammunition and weapons. The training has got to be very focused and very limited, so your maneuver capabilities are extremely limited. They are prone to sickness and disease, so you lose a lot of your rotation. They are also very truthful, so if they ever got caught, you know, the whole beans will be spilled. They are working essentially under duress all the time. So unless you've got an ability to really maintain control of them, you're going to be continuously rebuilding your forces, because they're escaping the minute the shooting starts, and so on.

You're going to be wasting a lot of assets, because they're not very skilled at the use of force. You start going down this panoply of points, and then you say, "Well, what was your aim? What do you want to

achieve with this conflict?" They start realizing maybe they're not going to achieve it because the scale of the capabilities of their force simply won't achieve that.

JAMES TRAUB: Is there any sign, from your point of view, that you've actually succeeded with anybody in this act of persuasion? Is there a situation where you might have expected child soldiers to be recruited, but they haven't been, because of the role that your organization has had?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: We have been now in the field since 2012.

JAMES TRAUB: So it's early days.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: In training, we've trained from West Africa, using Sierra Leone as our base. Central African Republic, Rwanda, Uganda, Botswana—we've trained well over 600, now going on 700 officers, NCOs (non-commissioned officers), we've trained a contingent with the British.

One of the interesting angles, if I may just say, is that when we were doing the training with the Sierra Leone forces, the British who were running the overall training, some of their officers and NCOs sat in on our training. After a couple hours of that, they came to us and they said, "You know, if we would have had that training before we went to [Afghanistan](#), we would have been able to act differently."

So even our own forces are not necessarily skilled at meeting that requirement, and the impact of that in the United States is PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). Well, how many kids can you kill before you start being worried about it?

Yes, we're seeing nations wanting that training and wanting to get off the [child protection watchlist](#), and are interested in how to do that, and what means we can offer them in re-training their forces, police and military, to not go that route.

It's rather interesting, Sierra Leone, which was an 11-year [war](#) of children, is one of the countries that is keen on not wanting to go back down that route, if it goes catastrophic, should it ever go catastrophic.

JAMES TRAUB: Let's talk about the other side of this—the question of what you're training the security personnel to do in a situation where they're confronted by a child holding a gun, facing them. I would think they might say to you, "These kids are nuts. They're too young to have a conscience yet. So I can't afford to do things that might spare their lives. I've just got to shoot first, and ask questions later."

What do you tell them that they can do, and should do?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: One of the interesting things is that they don't shoot first. When they're facing a child, they back off. In the training we've been doing, we've been seeing more peacekeepers saying, "Oh, well, they're kids, and we're not too sure how they're going to react, so we'll back off, and we'll send in some child protection people," or "We'll see how we can maybe get around the problem." Giving credence to those who are using—

JAMES TRAUB: Which of course makes them a tremendously effective platform.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Absolutely. The other thing is that there's a spectrum of things you can do before you actually end up with a force on force, gun to gun scenario, in the different situations, because it's not that often that you actually have the outright fighting. It's the maneuvering, it's the checkpoints, it's how to prevent them from being able to be used effectively. In so doing, we're discovering that the forces are just not wanting to look at those options, except finding themselves in either catastrophic scenarios of force on force. We're not negating that there may be circumstances where, yes, you may

end up killing children, *in extremis*.

But that doesn't necessarily have to be the doctrine. We believe that you can build a doctrine from which you get your training, your tactics, your equipment, including nonlethal weapons, if necessary, organizations to face child soldiers. We are very convinced, and so as we see them, that there are ways of de-escalating scenarios, in order to not give ground, but also to not necessarily destroy the children.

One of the angles that we're hoping to get funding, because we're always on the scrounge, of course, is to have women in the forces, police and military, being more on the front lines in conflicts where child soldiers are there. The children are linking much easier to the presence of women, than they are to men—particularly the girls, because up to 40 percent of child soldiers are girls.

JAMES TRAUB: It's interesting. I think it's maybe just me, when you imagine child soldiers, you think "boy." So it's striking for you to actually saying 40 percent are women.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Because the child soldier is not necessarily the AK47 boy, 13, blowing away everybody around them. In fact, a child soldier is any youth engaged or caught up into a force that is employing them in a conflict.

JAMES TRAUB: So they could be carrying weapons back and forth to the front.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Water, running the bivouacs—in male-dominated societies, the girls in fact build the bivouacs, do all the logistics—and also even being used as sex slaves and bush wives. All that is a child soldier, not just the one out front. So how to get at them, not only when they're used up front, but in the other arenas, is part of the training assets and the tactics that we're working on.

Questions

QUESTION: My name is Ashley Martinez. I'm a student at Hunter College. I'm here with our class, with Professor [Falk](#), on international humanitarian law and practice.

We talked about the lack of tools that the Security Council has, and I'm wondering if it stems from the fact that international humanitarian law only deals with states against states?

There's no doctrine at all to deal with armed conflict that involves non-state actors. I'm wondering if, in your opinion, if we were to come together and write a doctrine about dealing with non-state actors, and then in that, also include how to deal with children within those conflicts, would that be another route to go, to make another overarching rule that the Security Council can follow? It seems like they always go into IHL (international humanitarian law), but IHL has nothing to do with child soldiers.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: You're touching on so sensitive a point, that in fact, gives an out often to politicians from getting engaged in the problem; or even wanting to think of moving legislation to implement some of the conventions that even our side, in regards to children to start with, but then with non-state actors, the complexity thereof. I am very conscious of the fact that the International Criminal Court, in its ability to handle non-state actors, state actors, and the responsibilities that each of the countries has, the signing countries, and non-signing countries, and their ability to impose that or not—they're not insignificant problems.

But we're not getting at the non-state actors, because people don't want us to go there. So it's pretty hard to try to find the solutions to not only criminalize them, but also to try to defeat them, or to neutralize them, or prevent them from being effective, when nobody wants you to talk to them.

JAMES TRAUB: Why is that? Why does nobody want you to talk to them?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Well, as an example, you can't get funding for us to go in and try to re-educate a non-state actor. You can get funding for state actors, and people say, "Well, we're bringing this military into the realm of human rights, and rule of law," and so on. But when you're getting into people, and the non-state actor side of the house, is it banditry, or is it just extremism; and what are their ambitions; and why should we be engaged in something that the nation should be grasping themselves?

It doesn't have boundaries, as we see right now, so I feel one of the big problems is that nearly nobody is working on how to break the code of the non-state actors, and right now, there are over 51 of them around the world, and they've often got the initiative. So if we don't have the laws, that's one thing. But we don't have the will to go into that, is the other aspect. I think that's terrible.

We're looking at that right now with [Mali](#). Mali, they've got a comprehensive [peace agreement](#). We had [one](#) in Darfur also. But that broke down. The rebels split up and it broke down. But in Mali, they seem to have non-state actors joining into the comprehensive peace agreement. So maybe we'll be able to get into more and more of that, through the training, and also through the education side of it.

JAMES TRAUB: I assume, by the way, that—I think we sort of started to get at this a little bit before—that the calculus for the non-state actor is that he's got even a lower threshold for using child soldiers. Your state army—well they don't want to wind up on the list of bad guys who are using child soldiers. Whereas, obviously, if you take an extreme example, ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria), or take a less extreme example, the folks in Mali, whether they were the [Islamists](#) or the [nationalists](#)—they're not going to be deterred, are they, by the thought that they can hurt their reputations if they're seen as using child soldiers?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: That's exactly what we're trying to get at. We're trying to bring not just a technical solution, not just the tactics and so on; we're actually trying to change the philosophy, the culture, the premises that people are using, in regards to children, and conflict, and weapons. And in so doing, unless we can get at these people, and work on that dimension, with keeping in the background, yes you've got security forces there to protect people, yes you've got the International Criminal Court, and god knows whether we can pull this off—

But if we can't get into the heart of those things, or those bodies, and start influencing them right there, that recruitment, yes, will continue, because they feel impunity. Who's going to take them on? But it's interesting, when we were in the [Eastern Congo](#), the [Mai-Mai](#) commander came to us and asked us to help him in re-training and understanding the parameters of using of children in his force.

JAMES TRAUB: Was that sincere?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: It was sincere. In fact, we couldn't get there because of the security problem, which is part of the problem, isn't it? How many UN people are going to go, or how many NGOs, or people like us are going to go into the risk areas to do that? So we've got to find an option there, to get into that threat, and to redefine it.

QUESTION: My name is Gregor Hofmann. I'm from the Peace Research Institute in Frankfurt in Germany.

I have two questions, one related to the implementation of R2P, and one to your project on child soldiers.

You said that there's still the lack of political will, even though there are tools to prevent conflict. Do you think that initiatives like the [R2P Focal Points initiative](#), or the [Latin American Network on Genocide Prevention](#), or the [Global Action Against Mass Atrocities](#)—will these initiatives outside the UN, may they help something for the agenda? Do they change something, or is it just another commitment, and

a vocal commitment, without really a political commitment to change something?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: I really do believe it is a commitment, because even trying to get that going in my own country, where I've been working on the [Will to Intervene](#) with the [Montreal Institute of Genocide Studies](#), and we're able to influence the Americans to build that capacity—in fact, it's sitting in at meetings, and it's preparing, and that's why the United States has been so able to respond to this. Prevention is another exercise, but at least they're still working on a response.

So, I believe the Focal Points are fine, and I believe the international gathering of—outside of the UN, absolutely. However, one of the things about Boutros-Ghali I do have a lot of respect for is his '92-'93 paper, where he said, "We've got to build up regional capabilities." I think that we can build regional capabilities that are not UN. They may be regional, they may be sub-regional, where we can do prevention, and hold each other accountable.

It's not camouflage. It's true. The proof is that when I tried to get that implemented in my country, they backed off. Yet they know that the only way they can respond to these complex and ambiguous scenarios is by the whole of government involvement, all the different disciplines, being able to pull it together in a timely fashion, and ultimately, maybe even be deployed in a preventive mode.

So, no, it's an absolute requirement.

QUESTION: Second one, very quick.

You said that it's difficult to get in touch with rebel groups, or non-state actors. Do you cooperate with other organizations? I'm thinking, for example, of [Geneva Call](#), which aims to get non-state armed groups to commit to international humanitarian law, which has shown some success in the field of the use of landmines. So they seem to be able to approach those groups. Just wondering—how do you cooperate?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: I love this man. I sit as a member of the UN Training and Research Institute that sits in Geneva. We have been talking with Geneva Call. It's one of the rare, rare NGOs that actually does work with the non-state actors and has had certain successes. So they do want to work with us, and we are interested in working with them and we can work with them. But if we have no resources, we can't get to first base.

Geneva Call's got the same problem. It's got a real problem trying to get people to say that it's worth going inside those threats and start reducing the rage inside those threats, that ultimately may prevent them from going catastrophic, and, by the by, recruit children. It's an excellent example.

QUESTION: [Ian Fishback](#). I'm on the faculty at West Point.

I've encountered children on the battlefield. It's a pressing issue. Most of the things you were talking about struck me as things that might affect a tactical decision by an individual soldier, but they didn't strike me as game-changers that would really change the strategic dynamic on the battlefield. So as I think of what might tip the balance and deter otherwise immoral, or at least, amoral, commanders from using child soldiers, and recruiting them, one would be overwhelming force. You could bring a lot of force to bear, probably at relatively low cost. But you'd kill a lot of children. I think that's ethically wrong.

But the other way I think you could do it is try to crack the code on what keeps the children from surrendering because it's probably different in significant ways than what keeps adults from surrendering. Or it might not be. I don't know. But it's a question worth pursuing. I wonder if you've pursued it, if you've found anything out, and what your ideas would be?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: You're right, that at times, you may think that we're nickel and diming the tactical

scenario, by training these soldiers. However, in a mission area, or when you look at places like, in fact, the Congo, or Central African Republic, when the South Africans lost 16 guys to child soldiers, it became a massive problem. I mean, the nation backed off. Those tactical engagements by the military, working with the police—also interesting, we're opening the debate in discussions with the NGO world because they've got all kinds of information that's available, if they trust the military.

I've got real problems with the humanitarian space, and neutrality, and the NGO that won't use the military, but is going to hire a security company that is made up of all ex-military, and what are the rules of engagement those guys are using, and so on. I think there's some interesting ethical debates going on. But I believe that what we're doing, is making people trust each other, exchange intelligence information—police, military, and some of the NGOs—and in so doing, get ahead of the game, in regards to the use of force by, yes, overwhelming force in certain areas, or simply changing their tactics of how to handle the use of women, and the like.

The attrition of the use of children is not insignificant, because you don't need hundreds of thousands of them to scare the living daylights out of adults. Particularly, a 13-year-old with an AK47 is totally unpredictable. The kid who put that AK47 in my nostril in Rwanda at a checkpoint, and his eyeballs were that big, and his finger was on the trigger, and all the other kids are around screaming and yelling, and he's sweating, you absolutely have no idea what's going to make him pull that trigger. An adult you can get a better sense, but the kid—what saved me, I believe, was the chocolate bar in my hand, which just threw him off, and then we moved out. So the tactical dimension is crucial.

How to pull them out, how to extract them? I was in the Congo extracting some child soldiers:

- Use of radio stations—radio is extraordinary—informing them how to do that.
- Informing the troops how to extract them—as an example, the kids wanting to demobilize or, they come up to a UN force, and the guy says, "Well, the rules say that I have to hand you over to UNICEF, and the UNICEF guy is coming in tomorrow morning, so come back tomorrow." Just simplistic things like that.
- The use of indirect fire can also be of significance, without necessarily attacking them.
- But I think that your position, and what we are very much engaged in is the prevention of the recruitment. Once they're recruited, how do you pull them back out, is by indirect means. The radios, making forces amiable, bringing women more to the forward. They see them because they're all over the kids. They're doing reconnaissance, and so on. They will see that atmosphere has significantly changed.

But most of the forces don't even know that. Most of the forces don't even recognize that two 12- or 13-year-olds loitering around, or the 14-year-old that is doing their laundry, may be in fact, a rookie for the force that's the belligerent force there and that you don't use them. You've got to report them. Many don't even report the fact that they've seen child soldiers, they just say, "We faced so and so"—

JAMES TRAUB: Is that because they so take for granted the exploitation of children that way, that it doesn't strike them as a shocking thing to see, so not reportable, not worthy of being reported?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Well, you know that's interesting in that angle, but I think it's just that they are doing it as per the criteria that has been established so far, that we haven't pushed that to the extent of recognizing the difference of the use of child soldiers to adults. I mean, it took a long time for us to segregate when they were demobilizing them, the kids—well, men and women, to start with, then kids from adults. So this is still an element that often they don't realize that maybe they should be reporting, and that we can collate that data, and give us an opportunity of preventing future recruitment by

providing security, maybe, to villages or areas, without having to do the [gulu walks](#), but certainly do something of more significance than simply watching them be extracted, pulled out of their villages, and us watching it happen.

You're right into the heart of it. Well done, West Point.

QUESTION: Sir, my name is Theo Lipsky. I'm a cadet at West Point, an undergrad.

My question has to do with your understanding of R2P as it relates to Libya. You seem to make the point that R2P cannot be applied solely through air power, and that you do, indeed, need to commit ground troops in order for it to be applied as it is meant to be applied, and anything less is half-hearted, and will ultimately be ineffective, as we've seen in Libya, given the developments in recent months.

That said, does the commitment of group troops necessitate—well, it will always necessitate an exit strategy—but will that exit strategy always look like some form of peacebuilding or state-building? If so, do you think that makes R2P significantly harder to sell, given how difficult state-building has proven to be, in the past decade or so? How does that change the calculus of states that, in word, would like to support R2P, but, indeed, have trouble doing so?

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Very fine question, because it's interesting that the first tenet of R2P is prevention. So we're not very up on that side of the house to start with. The last one is the use of force, and there are six very significant criteria that have to be met in the use of force. We believe that preventing the recruitment of child soldiers in many of these conflicts is part of R2P. We're linking it into operationalizing R2P, by saying, "You go after those bad guys who want to recruit kids because that's going to prevent something going catastrophic."

Now, in regards to the use of the intervention forces, and your exit strategy, and the impact of how to hand it over, and when you have that sense of stability—I went in front of your senate committee on human rights and the law, when Darfur was in full swing. I was asked by a senator, he said, "What should we Americans do about Darfur?" I said, "The last thing I want is you guys to come in. The last thing we want is the world powers to be the first ones in. The last thing you want is what we can hold in reserve, *in extremis* maybe having to use overwhelming force, if things go catastrophic, is to put them up in the front end, get a bloody nose, and potentially even pull out."

Where are the middle powers that will not show that same sense of invasion, of occupation, that maybe world powers who have history might project, and getting them to be the first ones in? Although President [Obama](#) has been doing the best in building coalitions, I still see the world turning to world powers, or ex-colonial powers, to be the responsive elements that bring a whole raft of problems with the local populations.

"Oh, we know what they were like," as my Belgian colleague said. "We colonized this country, so you know exactly what's going on." Oh yeah?

I firmly believe that the application of R2P, which includes the protection of civilians, which means troops on the ground, so they don't have to fight—that's the aim of the exercise. To do that, I firmly believe that middle powers, not just developing countries—as you've seen now, there are 110,000 peacekeepers. Canada has 43 peacekeepers. So we've advocated peacekeeping to developing countries, who don't necessarily all have the training, the equipment, the ability to handle the complexity of these incredible mandates that are being produced.

So, a return of middle powers to be in the forefront, with UN oversight, will, I think, make operationalizing R2P more effective. That means—and I'll go here, my personal opinion—it means not

necessarily NATO. Regional powers, use a [Chapter VIII](#), not a [Chapter VII](#). Reinforce regional powers, and give that capability a better chance, I think will go a long way in making R2P palatable.

JAMES TRAUB: I would say that one problem with that is that, if you think about the middle powers that you might think about—Turkey, Brazil, India, South Africa—these are countries that have profound reservations about R2P. So the idea that you would be able to have a successful intervention because they would accept the need to put troops on the ground, might make it virtually impossible.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Look at Japan, look at Germany. I mean, Germany won't send troops where there are child soldiers, because their troops have never been trained to handle child soldiers. You're absolutely right, those middle powers—but that's the essence of the point. You've got a capability, you've got a doctrine, you've got a concept, you've got an instrument that's been made available, that we all agreed to, right, in 2005? But there are ramifications that mean that nation-states will commit themselves to humanity, beyond sovereignty.

That's why it's so revolutionary. I was the keynote speaker three years ago in Münster, at the annual Westphalia conference, where I argued that, thank god for R2P because sovereignty is no more absolute. That didn't make the day over there, but what did make the day was the fact that we can actually make that part of that global solutioning that we are looking for.

The countries that have capabilities, and are not committing to this doctrine that's been offered there, as an option, have got to start to be held accountable. You here in the United States should be holding some of these guys accountable for sitting on their butts and waiting for you to get a bloody nose, and then maybe consider.

So, when we sold R2P at the start, it was interesting. Yes, some of the developing countries who had a dictator, and so on, were saying, "Hey, the big boys are going to come in. Now this is their calling card to be able to come and take us out." No, no the biggest objection was coming from the big powers saying, "Well, isn't this going to drag me into something I don't want to do?"

Where were the middle powers in the debate? Sitting on the fence, and you're leaving them there to watch what you're going to do. Well, that's not operationalizing R2P, and it's not saying it's not effective. Even the Brazilian amendment can be worked on to meet the requirement.

JAMES TRAUB: General Dallaire, I have to say, I find it very inspiring that a person who's seen as much horror as you retains that hopefulness and idealism. Thank you so much for coming.

ROMÉO DALLAIRE: Thank you.

Audio

In this inspiring conversation, Dallaire talks about his faith in the principle of R2P—"one of the great innovations of our time"—and how to go about implementing it; the tragedy of Rwanda; and most of all, his work to prevent the use of child soldiers.

Video Clips

In this inspiring conversation, Dallaire talks about his faith in the principle of R2P—"one of the great innovations of our time"—and how to go about actually implementing it; the tragedy of Rwanda; and most of all, his work to prevent the use of child soldiers.

TV Show

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