

Confronting Evil. Engaging Our Responsibility to Protect. By James Waller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. 381. US\$39.95 cloth.

James Waller's *Confronting Evil* is a broad approach to the academic and legal discussion of what constitutes genocide and how it can be prevented. The book is systematic and provides a comprehensive but concise treatment of how genocide can be prevented before it starts, how to stop it once it has already begun, and how to prevent its reoccurrence. While some parts will not be new to genocide scholars, it is a very valuable synthesis of insight on the topics and its consistent focus on prevention is singular and important.

James Waller is Cohen Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College and, in his previous book, (*Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) he provided a comprehensive overview of the psychological and social-psychological factors that impact people's participation in genocide, a book that has become standard reading for anyone working on the topic of perpetrators and perpetration. With this new book *Confronting Evil*, Waller has again authored a book that approaches a seemingly impossibly broad subject and systematically breaks it down, analyses it and provides his readers with a comprehensive overview of what genocide is, explains that its occurrence is not a *fait accompli* and shows how we can indeed prevent it. It will likely become standard reading for students in classes on genocide prevention, as well as on genocide as a concept.

Part I of the book takes up the challenge to comprehensively, but engagingly present the definitional quagmire that surrounds the concept of genocide. Part II is structured along three phases of potential prevention of genocide, differentiating between upstream prevention strategies that aim to prevent genocide from occurring at all, midstream prevention strategies which focus on halting or slowing the violence once a genocide has already begun, as well as downstream prevention strategies that are applicable after the end of violence with a view to avoiding a recurrence of genocide in the future.

The book appropriately departs from a biographical glance at Raphael Lemkin, whose inspiring brainchild the concept of genocide is, giving a wealth of details about his crusade for the development of the legal framework and its international recognition. This discussion serves as a useful backdrop for the rest of the book: helping the reader to understand the genesis of the international legal framework, as well as the more political interests of various actors.

The next chapter presents, discusses and critiques the text of the United Nations 'Genocide Convention' and assesses the ramifications that these criticisms have for the Convention's empirical applicability. While most of this discussion will be familiar to genocide scholars, it is a welcome synthesis of the many arguments that have been put forth in the debate to date.

Chapter 3 rounds this definitional exploration by discussing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing as further related concepts of mass violence and differentiating these from the phenomenon of genocide. This chapter also succinctly introduces the concept of Responsibility to Protect (commonly known as R2P), detailing not only the genesis of the norm, but also the various levels of responsibility and the various pillars it includes and what this can mean for prevention.

Part II begins with chapter 4 on upstream prevention strategies: focusing on the genesis of genocide and early warning signs and discussing how these could inform prevention strategies before

genocide occurs. The chapter places identity centre-stage for looking at the subject (unsurprisingly given Waller's previous work), but gracefully and systematically engages with the entire breadth of the burgeoning literature that is emerging on this topic. Importantly, it makes suggestions for how each of these factors could be tackled to prevent genocide. Although the treatment of early warning signs is quite comprehensive, it is a shame that the chapter does not assess which of these factors have been found to be most important, as these would certainly be the most pressing to address from a prevention policy perspective.

Chapter 5 subsequently deals with midstream prevention strategies: possible responses to a genocide when it is already occurring. Waller emphasises that humanitarian military intervention is but one of many possible strategies. The chapter is premised on the necessity to understand the pressures of states' interests and is again systematically structured, dividing possible responses into political, economic, legal and military responses, which can each be cooperative or coercive.

The final substantive chapter approaches downstream prevention strategies by exploring how to deal with past genocidal violence with a view to preventing future violence. The chapter engages with the topics of justice, truth and memory, presenting and critically discussing an array of post-genocide responses. The chapter provides a well-structured and engaging overview of the 'toolbox' available within the realm of transitional justice and dealing with the past. However, it does not so rigorously tie these back to the question of genocide prevention as previous chapters, explicitly discussing this for only some factors.

The book concludes with a review of some contemporary genocides or potentially genocidal situations and makes a plea for engagement, discussing the continued use of the phrase 'Never Again', although genocide indeed continues happening again and again.

Confronting Evil is elegantly written and provides a helpful structure along a conceptual and temporal continuum (before, during and after genocide)—focussing all discussions towards the ramifications for genocide prevention. In each section there is an extremely systematic treatment of the topic of genocide prevention, approaching the topic from different angles. The book thus allows the reader to compare and contrast responses to different factors and show how a tailored solution to looming, extant or past violence should always be possible and that there will likely always be multiple tools at the disposal of policymakers. It is this systematic nature that made Waller's previous book *Becoming Evil* so widely received and useful, and this new book has similar potential as both a 'standard' reading and a useful departure point for research on the topic. While the first part of the book provides little in terms of new insight for the avid reader of genocide scholarship, it does lay a most thorough groundwork for the main part of the book and provides excellent chapters introducing these topics, which will be immensely helpful in teaching.

The greatest strength of this book is its broad treatment of the subject, introducing the broadest array of prevention possibilities, however, this broad nature is also its primary shortcoming as it does not home in on certain factors, but treats all as equal. This is most prominent in chapter 4 as the study of early warning signs has shown that not all factors are equally important and it would be more useful to policymakers to not just be presented the breadth of possible factors, but also zoom in on the most important ones.

Altogether, Waller has provided an interesting, concise, systematic and thought-provoking synthesis of many of the most important debates in genocide studies, as they are applicable to genocide

prevention. The book is an excellent departure point for anyone wanting to learn more about the broad array of possible responses policymakers have for preventing or stopping genocide.

TIMOTHY WILLIAMS

Centre for Conflict Studies, Marburg University