

# EVAP Ep. 6: Charles Petrie

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## SPEAKERS

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Charles Petrie

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Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 00:12

Welcome to Expert Voices on Atrocity Prevention by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. I'm Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall, Research Director at the Global Center. This podcast features one-on-one conversations with practitioners from the fields of human rights, conflict prevention, and atrocity prevention. These conversations will give us a glimpse of the personal and professional side of how practitioners approach human rights protection and atrocity prevention, allowing us to explore challenges, identify best practices, and share lessons learned on how we can protect populations more effectively. On today's episode, we're delighted to welcome Mr. Charles Petrie. Charles is a former senior UN Official, who over the course of two decades rose to the rank of Assistant-Secretary-General before resigning from the organization in 2010. During that time, he assumed senior level operational and policy roles in Afghanistan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gaza and the Palestinian Territories, Myanmar, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan. In March 2012, he was appointed by the UN Secretary-General to lead an internal review of the UN's actions in Sri Lanka during the last phase of the conflict. The report determined that the UN had systematically failed to protect populations from crimes against humanity and war crimes. The "Petrie Report" subsequently served as the basis for the creation of the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front policy. Since then, Charles has served on various UN commissions and been an international consultant on human security. Earlier this year, he published a book on his experience called the Triumph of Evil. Thank you for joining us today, Charles.



Charles Petrie 01:51

Thank you for having me.



Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 01:53

We typically start each episode by asking a little bit about your personal story beyond your vast expertise as a practitioner. You had what appeared to be a very different career trajectory prior to joining the UN. What initially drew you to working in this field?



Charles Petrie 02:10

Well, I guess I've always wanted to be part of something that was bigger than me. If I had the capacity, I would have

well, I guess I've always wanted to be part of something that was bigger than me. If I had the capacity, I would have loved to have been a painter or a sculptor, or a fiction writer. When I was very young, well, when I was an adolescent, I thought I was going to become a Franciscan missionary. But that didn't work out, so I guess it's basically what motivated me to join the UN: to be part of an organization that emerged from two world wars, that emerged from an understanding, a deep understanding, of enlightened leaders of the time, that you needed some sort of body that would bring countries together, that would bring people together, that you needed such a body, because allowing individual nations to regulate, or to allow a Darwinian form of world order to dominate was not going to bring peace to the world. So I was very much taken by that and the possibility of being part of something that was much bigger than me.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 03:31

And once you were within the UN, what was your path to appointment as Assistant Secretary-General, since you were there for so many years?

C

Charles Petrie 03:40

Well, I guess you could say that it had three different parts to it. So, I was incredibly lucky to join the UN in 1990. I was in the Sudan on World Bank project when there was the change in government, a little bit before, and the World Bank closed its project, and I wanted to stay on. And the head of the UN in Sudan needed a deputy to an emergency unit that was just being set up, and I found myself offered the position, with the support of the French Ambassador in Khartoum. And within a very short period, there was the Gulf War and within a very short period from being the deputy, I found myself as the head of the UN Emergency Unit in Khartoum. I think if anything, it demonstrated what little importance was attached to the emergency unit. But there was, in French we say *contre le du circonstance*, there was a favorable series of circumstances. So I found myself in Khartoum, head of an emergency unit, and as a result, I was involved in some very, I don't know if the word is crucial, but very tragic situations. So I was there when the government of Khartoum started to displace what turned into 1.7 million internally displaced from Khartoum to outside. I conducted the last evaluation or assessment mission into the Nuba Mountains when the government started its campaign against the Nuba people. And so as a result of these different efforts, working with the Resident Coordinator, the UN rep country, you know, we were able to raise the importance of these issues and the suffering that these gestures entailed in New York. So on the one hand, I guess the Sudan, thrust me in the middle of tragedy, but then I also in the Sudan, so how the UN basically was powerless in front of a government that refused to acknowledge what it was doing. There was a visit of a very senior UN official who came to Khartoum to try and plead for the government to change its approach to ease its actions and the mission failed. And to a certain extent, well, it failed. And, I remember at the end of the mission, asking this senior UN person, you know, what about the new world order? Because I think, you know, what was interesting, you know, having started in the emergency side in the UN, at the end of the Cold War, was this hope that seemed to have emerged that there will be a much more principled form of international engagement. And he told me that the only two places where such a possibility existed for the UN to confront sovereignty in a way were in countries where sovereignty didn't exist; so, former Yugoslavia and Somalia. So I asked to be transferred to Somalia. I was sent to Somalia a few weeks later. I arrived in Somalia just before, well, a few months, quite a few months before Operation Restore Hope, which was basically the first post-Cold War international intervention. You could argue that it was an intervention based on the commitment to apply universal principles to really address human suffering. I was heavily involved in that mission, having been one of the first people, you know, one of the few UN people to be in Somalia before the deployment of the mission. When the operation was deployed, I was very much at the center of it, or involved in the center of it. I wasn't at the center of it. I am not that pretentious, but I was involved in the workings of the mission. And saw it collapse. Yeah, I was in Mogadishu during the "Blackhawk Down" incident. I was there when the bodies were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. And it was very clear immediately afterwards that the US was going to withdraw and the UN, you know, that this mission had lost all of its impetus. And, at the time, you know, it was a stark reality, and I couldn't

help thinking that somebody was going to pay the price for this, you know, that this this was the death of a noble cause. It was the first and last real attempt to try and create a new world order in a way. I mean, of course, all of that sounded much more romantic then. But there was that impetus. And then, of course, Rwanda paid the price for Somalia, basically. And so I ended up again, long story, but I ended up in Rwanda as the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for the UN in Rwanda. And saw yeah, and so I arrived one month into the beginning of the genocide and saw much of what happened. I think what was interesting, for me, is when I was asked to go to Rwanda for a long while I refused. That's why it took almost a month for me to go there, because I really didn't want to go. I hadn't, and as a result, I read nothing about Rwanda. I knew nothing about Rwanda when I arrived, because I really didn't want to go, didn't want to be forced to witness the failure of Somalia. And as a result, I was really struck by the nature of the violence that I saw in Rwanda. The systematic nature of the killings, the sense of total despair, absolute despair, of those few Tutsis, one would encounter, you know, more than despair, it was sort of completely deflated. And just the way that this violence never stopped, it just went on and on and on. So I was in Rwanda. In a way Rwanda ushered in the second phase of my career in the UN. And it was a phase of sort of a conceptual metaphysical phase, which was trying to understand the nature of evil. And just those months in Rwanda, and the nature of the killings really, especially after having spent almost five years seeing other forms of violence and conflict. So after Rwanda, I went to New York for a year. I was the Head of the Section responsible for East, Central and Southern Africa within the newly created Department of Humanitarian Affairs. I realized very quickly that I wasn't the "headquarters person". So then I went back into the field, and became the Special Assistant of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. So for two years, I was involved in the Palestinian question and in supporting the Palestinian people. But I also arrived in Gaza, and we were based in Gaza, just at the time, sort of, at the end of the Oslo process. And at the beginning of the suicide bombers. And so while I was there, I think there were 37, I think, individual attacks. And that challenged me again, in trying to understand evil, you know, and trying because, of course, a lot of people were seeing the suicide bombers as acts of evil, and yet I couldn't. I had a really hard time trying to see if it was, you know, if that was the right to use. I mean, clearly, the the actions were horrendously violent, they were vile, they were extraordinarily destructive, but they weren't an attempt to eliminate the people. You know, there was an economic, there was a social, there were politics, there were many different dynamics behind it. And the outcome was a horrific outcome, but I couldn't, you know, I struggled to try and equate what the suicide bombers were doing with the Interahamwe, who were the killers, the the architects of the genocide in Rwanda. Because, again, since I was living in Gaza, I mean, most of the Palestinians in Gaza, did not necessarily see the suicide bombers as evil, they saw them as instruments of a just retribution to a certain extent. So that was, you know, I mean, in terms of the second phase of trying to understand evil, I mean, that was extremely challenging, emotionally challenging, because, you know, there is so much suffering that comes with the suicide bombers. But again, I think that what I came out of the Middle East is with the sense that what distinguishes evil, is its absoluteness, you know, the the Tutsis in Rwanda, were killed for this. Well, I remember Father Vieko, a priest, I knew in Rwanda, who and one day I asked him, you know, I'm having a hard time understanding this. And he said, you know, it's very simple. Hutus are killed, each Hutu is killed for a specific reason, either because of politics because somebody wants his or her cows, because, but a Tutsi is killed for the simple reason that they were born. And I think that's the nature of evil. And for me that distinguished a little bit, what I saw, you know, the the suicide bombings, the horror that was perpetrated against people in in Gaza with what had happened in Rwanda during the genocide. And then from there, well, I basically spent three years as the senior official responsible for initiating and maintaining contact with all of the Congolese rebels in the DRC. And I was very interested in going there because I wanted to see what had happened to the Interahamwe. What were these dynamics? I mean, for me, I saw Rwanda as having been a nuclear explosion, and the shock wave as it expanded triggered secondary explosions. So I was really wanted to understand what was happening in the DRC. And that's when the third phase of my career stepped in, and that's realizing that an individual who had been left Officer-in-Charge of UNDP, the development branch of the UN, during the genocide, who was alleged, you know, we heard stories about him having participated in the murder of 32 people, including at least three UN colleagues, having trained in Interahamwe militia, before the genocide, while working for the UN. When I discovered this, it was in '99, or when it was discovered, that he was continuing to work for the UN. And so that was sort of my third career or no, the third phase of my professional life in the UN, was trying to get the UN to investigate his case, and to get him to account for what he is alleged to have done, while at the same time honoring the memory of the colleagues that he is alleged to have participated in murdering. So that is the reason for the

book, so we'll get back to that. But then afterwards, you could say then I had sort of a parallel track career, I had the career that I did, so after the Congo, I was in Afghanistan for a year and a half, initially as the advisor to actually Ashraf Ghani, the the Afghan government, and then for a year direct policy planning, then I went off to Myanmar was the rep in Myanmar, you know, managed to get PNG-ed for taking a stance in favor, or in support of the message of the monks at the time. And then after that, I was the Deputy SRSG, the Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Somalia, and then was the Secretary-General's Representative in Burundi. So that was the the official career, all along, I was still trying to get the UN to investigate this guy to pursue him. I failed. The UN, at one point, a friend and I were able to get his contract terminated. He sued the UN. The UN refused to build its case. He won a two years salary for unjustified dismissal, which, you know, a number of us fought against, and then he became the leader of a hardcore militia in eastern Congo, the FDLR, was arrested, was sent to the ICC. But because the ICC did such a bad job, because the Prosecutor did such a bad job preparing the case, he is the first person to been released from from the ICC. It was on a majority decision, suggesting his release, one against, and the dissenting voice was the President of the Chamber, who then wrote a 65-page dissenting opinion, saying that she was going to accept the majority ruling because the case was so badly prepared. He was released, at the same time, more or less, that I was in Burundi and that's when I decided that I couldn't represent the UN anymore. That here I was, you know, as the senior UN official tasked with, you know, going to these rebel leaders in the Congo and elsewhere, telling them that it was their responsibility, their obligation to, you know, to respect and implement international humanitarian law, that they were bound by it. And yet I was working for an organization that wasn't willing to do what was necessary to bring justice to its own. And as you know, this is the UN the institution, that is the guarantor of the Genocide Convention, an it's not willing to investigate one of its own, who is alleged to have committed the crime. So that was a bit too much for me, and you could say I had a bit of a breakdown. It wasn't sort of this very rational, I'm moving on. It was a profoundly painful breakdown that made me decide I couldn't continue.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 20:00

Which is a really unfortunate way to end such a long career with an organization that you clearly thought very highly of when you first got into it.

C

Charles Petrie 20:12

I still do. And I mean, you're right, but in a way, yeah, you're right. But then at the same time, you know, because we'll get to Sri Lanka and the rest, I, you know, at the same time I did the work in Sri Lanka that was part of this commission to review, peacebuilding, and it was on the basis of the the former Secretary-General. So I still, you know, I'm fundamentally disappointed in those who lead the institution, but I fundamentally believe in the value and the principles of institution.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 20:52

Since you mentioned the Sri Lanka case, in 2012, you were named Head of the Secretary-General's internal review panel on the UN's actions in Sri Lanka. Why did this review need to take place? And what were your findings?

C

Charles Petrie 21:09

Well, it's interesting, because basically, the Secretary-General had set up an independent panel of experts at the end of the war in Sri Lanka, the Civil War, and had asked this independent very august body to review what could be done now, you know, how could Sri Lanka, sort of, deal with what had gone through? How could those who perpetrated the crimes be held accountable? And the panel did a fantastic job, of course. And they wrote a

confidential letter to the Secretary-General, it was a seven page letter. The first half page had to do with the fact that the panel was convinced that the Sri Lankan government would not accept the findings of the report, and so they encouraged the Secretary-General to stand firm and push through. And then the six and a half other pages was basically, the panel said that while they were investigating what had happened, they came upon such horrendous examples of UN failure, that they felt that the Secretary-General should take it seriously and should investigate the UN's performance. And they said that it was so bad that they had decided not to put it in the report, because they're feared it would have been a distraction for their peace. And so they, I think, they said, the way they phrased it is that they described it as "a low point in the organization's history", "the UN agencies and individuals had failed in their mandates and had not upheld the UN's founding principles." And that's Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General at the time, who set up this independent, this internal investigation. And I was asked to lead it. So we basically, there was a core team of three, Lena and Ben. And we had access to, you know, to all of the, I mean, fortunately, since there had been this independent Panel of Experts, they had, you know, a wealth of documents that we were able to go through. And then we interviewed a lot of people and what came out was, as described by you at the beginning, the conclusion was that Sri Lanka represented the systemic failure of the organization, that basically the organization had lost its sense of purpose, or no not sense "well, I would say that but had lost its understanding of how much protection and the people should be at the forefront of their actions. So it was felt that there wasn't that sense of individual responsibility, there was a lack of coherence in the overall UN approach, many people were involved, but there was no one strategy, you know, that really looked at putting protection at the forefront, because it was the issue, especially in the Vanni pocket, that the UN self-censored a lot of what they presented, it decided not to raise the casualty figures that some of its staff were collecting because they didn't want to embarrass, or didn't want to have difficulties with the government, it didn't raise them with the Security Council, so there was a massive self-censorship. So basically, you know, in a nutshell what the report said, is the Secretary-General needs to tell the organization that it's Charter that should guide their actions. And that in a way, I mean, it was a you know, of course, we wrote recommendations and the rest. But the one thing we felt was really important was for the the Secretary-General to reaffirm the primacy of the Charter. And what's amazing is he did it. I mean, he sort of did two things. The first thing is he set up an internal review, because there was a lot of pushback on the report. There were, you know, some people thought that it was a hatchet job, that I was spitting in the soup, I mean, yeah, which is the expression of but, I didn't anyway "well, I even had a confrontation with a senior UN official who said "look, even if we did what you said, we should have done in the report, it wouldn't have changed anything." And my response was "well, one, you don't know. If you haven't done it, you don't know if they would have. And secondly, that's not the issue. The issue is you didn't do it. And this was your, you know, that's fundamentally your mandate and fundamentally your responsibility, and you didn't live up to it." So there was so much pushback that the Secretary-General decided to set up a panel, or an internal task force, to review the recommendations and put in place an approach, and that's where Human Rights Up Front came out. And then he made a public statement in which he reaffirmed the principles, he said that this was one of the three most damning reviews of the UN, the UN that failed in Rwanda, failed in Srebrenica, and had failed in Sri Lanka, and that those who were suffering had a right to expect so much more of the UN. And he committed the UN to honoring and living up to its responsibility to the peoples of the world. I mean, I have tremendous respect for Ban Ki-moon. You know, I understand that when he grew up in Korea, it was during the Korean War, so he had the personal experience of the UN. But he really showed tremendous courage, he did not shy away from the recommendations of the report, and the report was very, very tough. I mean, as you can imagine, because I'd already left the UN, because of Rwanda, there were two things. One, I made sure that there was no reference to Rwanda in terms of describing the systemic failure. But you can imagine my anger, I mean, it was really clearly, through the lens of the UN's failure to take care of this case, this Rwandan case that I insured, and my two colleagues were fortunately, very supportive, that I ensured that we didn't pull any punches. So the report was voluntarily very hard hitting because, you know, I felt that it was, we were, talking about an organization failing rather than individuals failing. Actually, we were talking about an organization failing, that had allowed individuals to fail because individuals did fail in Sri Lanka.



Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 28:38



That's incredible to hear how well Ban Ki-moon received the report, in spite of incredible levels of pushback from the rest of the organization. And I imagined member states too.

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Charles Petrie 28:53

Yeah, no, but definitely from within. And yeah, it was extraordinary. And I think he deserves a lot of respect for that.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 29:02

I guess, shifting to the the current time period, you know, over the, I guess the few years right after the Human Rights Up Front initiative was laid out, we heard a lot about Human Rights Up Front, and it was sort of framed a lot around atrocity situations that were coming up in that time period. And now with the new Secretary-General I think throughout his first term, we've heard a lot about his prevention agenda and commitment to human rights. And last year, he announced the Call to Action for Human Rights and the Prevention of Mass Atrocities. Where do you see the implementation of Human Rights Up Front or these other sort of initiatives aimed at creating better human action right now?

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Charles Petrie 29:54

Well, in a way, I think there are two parts to the question. There's what is the place of Rights Up Front and R2P in today's world that I think has fundamentally changed, and then there's the UN action bit. I think the world is in a very, very bad place. You know, I think the respect and support for multilateralism I think has almost evaporated. I think, you know, in a way 9/11, you know, Afghanistan, Iraq was more of an instrumentalisation of the UN, in order to push, you know, national or coalition agendas. But since 2016, I think we've even seen an erosion of respect for international values and agreements. I mean, definitely Trump, sort of at the forefront of renegeing, but even in the UK, with Boris Johnson, and his willingness to go back on on agreements that were made within the context of Brexit. So I think we're seeing and now, you know, over the last few days, the unilateral withdrawal of the US and the inability of the rest of the West to come together. And we see Belarus, we see the powerlessness of the international community in Myanmar since the coup, so I think we've reached the period where, I mean, one has to acknowledge that the way that our R2P and Rights Up Front have been pushed, which is in a very assertive, proactive way, does not has not produced the results that it wants to produce, that one has to completely rethink the, the approach to addressing atrocities. I think like, you know, given that one can have an international platform where one is raising the issues and lamenting the suffering and the rest, actually, it's on the ground that the difference can be made. And that's where I think we need to refocus and to look a lot more at civil society and be a lot more humble. I mean, sort of step down from our pulpits in which we declare you know the inviolability of these principles. I mean, little parentheses, for me, one of the saddest, because I've been following very, very closely Myanmar since the coup, I've been in regular touch with some of the people involved. And one of the saddest images that came out of Myanmar at the beginning, were all of these people, all of these young protesters wearing R2P shirts. And then hearing these politicians, you know, most of them former politicians, even some government officials, mouthing the importance of R2P and how, you know... you know, after Libya, looking at Syria, it is so clear that these are false hopes that are being given to the people. So for me, many of the discussions I've had with ASEAN is to tell them you need to understand that there will not be an intervention, you know. So that's for me, one of the first things is we need to stop deluding those who are suffering that they will be supported with these instruments. And then we need to rethink how these instruments can work. I think one one of the most - well, fascinating as an abstract word - but one of the fascinating parts of the Rwanda genocide was the role the Muslim community played in protecting people. You know, they protected Tutsis in the mosque in Kigali for example. So you know, and all of these stories of Hutus who were protecting Tutsis, so you know and groups that were doing it. You have a similar, you know if you look at during the Second World War and the Holocaust and the arrest of the Jewish community - I mean these islands of

tranquility that existed also in France, these villages that refused to give up and became safe havens for fleeing Jews. So I think, you know, I think what we need to do -and that's happening also in Myanmar. You know, the international community is not able to function, but there is a lot going on. Civil society is setting up mechanisms, there's a lot of solidarity. And I think that's what we need to refocus R2P, Human Rights Up Front on: how do we support the civil society efforts? How do we support these local efforts? Which then, because yeah, as I said, your question has two parts to it, and the other part is the UN. And I think the UN is in a very, very, very bad place - and basically, I guess the big difference between, I mean, Sri Lanka was awful. You know, there were the recommendations made, the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon embraced them, I mean, more than accepted them, embraced them. But then 10 years later, you have the another internal investigation done by an incredible individual, Gert Rosenthal, on Myanmar with the Rohingya crisis. And his report, and he admits it, is nothing more than a repeat of the Sri Lanka report. And now you have, I mean, the UN failed the people of Myanmar, has been failing the people of Myanmar, today. There hasn't been a Resident Coordinator, there's no coherent approach. The only big difference between, let's say, Sri Lanka and Myanmar is that the UN failing today has no impact. It doesn't, it hasn't, you know, the absence of the UN is not felt in these situations anymore, because nobody expects anything from the UN. And that, for me, is a double tragedy. I mean, on the one hand, it's tragic that an organization that has so much authority should be so irrelevant, and that everybody should accept that it's totally irrelevant. But it's also tragic that an organization born from two world wars, from an understanding that you needed to approach international relations in a completely different way, should become irrelevant. In many ways, I think we're back to the 30s and the irrelevance of the League of Nations at the time. And I don't know if you remember, but I remember growing up with that picture of Haile Selassie pleading in the League of Nations, for the League of Nations to do something to stop the invasion of his country, Abyssinia, by the Italians. And I think this is the UN of today: the UN has been gutted of its essence. But one does not need to accept that. And there are many people within the UN who do not accept it. And that's one of the reasons why I wrote the book. One of the reasons I wrote the book, I mean, it's called the Triumph of Evil, but it's basically a call to arms. It's basically for those in the UN who still believe in its founding principles, for them to understand that they have - you know, it wants to be an act of solidarity, to tell them they're not alone, that I've been down a path, you know, and that, you know, if there's anything to draw from my experience, it's "Don't give up, you know, fight continue fighting to the very end". Even you know, as Father Byeko, this priest, told me, you know, if you believe in something, you believe in something to be fundamentally right, and yet, you feel you're not accomplishing your task, don't give up, you never know, you may be the person holding a torch in the middle of darkness in the desert, that will allow somebody else to accomplish what you wanted to accomplish.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 38:47

I know you've already touched a little bit on what inspired the book, but I was wondering if you wanted to share a little on the book's background and the story you're trying to tell.

C

Charles Petrie 39:00

Yeah, I mean, well, first, I think it's important to understand that the book is not an autobiography, because it's much more... because there are many parts of my career in the UN that don't appear in the book. The book is very much focused on this attempt to get the UN to investigate one of its own, who is alleged (because for defamation) who is alleged to have participated in the genocide in Rwanda. And so it sort of tracks this effort, and actually, I mean, basically it tracks the failure. That's why the triumph of evil. The essence of the book also is very much at the beginning in trying to explain that the reason evil triumphs, and that's a little bit you know, the whole thing - don't tell, show -and that's the book was trying to show that one of the reasons why evil triumphs is because people feel comfortable doing nothing. It's because people you know, first, evil over time is able to appear banal, you know, and as a result, it becomes very easy for people to feel comfortable in doing nothing and much more so within bureaucracies, where individuals actually hand over their sense of individual responsibility to the greater, to the good of the organization. And it's trying to get people, basically it's trying to get people to understand that organizations

are made up of individuals. And what I'm trying to show is that there are individuals - Gromo, I mean, for me, my best friend is very much at the forefront of this story - like Gromo, Tony Greig, who was the prosecutor, the investigator, I guess myself - you know, we are all individuals who till fundamentally believed and never gave up, and we are individuals who worked within the organization. So it's very much to push this message that you are individually responsible, no, you have to be conscious of the fact that you are individually responsible for what the organization does. And if its leadership doesn't provide the guidance you need, it does not detract your own individual responsibility.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 41:33

It's an incredible message. And it reminds me a little bit of what the unfortunately late Dr. Ed Luck who was the first Special Advisor on R2P was pursuing towards the end of his life looking at the idea of individual responsibility, obviously, with R2P in mind, but along similar lines. I think, you know, one thing that we've talked about a lot has been the UN failures you mentioned and the Sri Lanka report, but you made a conscious effort not to mention Rwanda, but obviously it was on your mind. And then similarly, Ambassador Rosenthal's report on Myanmar made very clear the parallels between that situation and Sri Lanka. And yet, despite all of that, despite being a UN official in a lot of different situations, where mass atrocity risks were present, you still seem to have a lot of hope. And so I'm wondering if you have any ideas for how to overcome these challenges that we see again and again in these situations?

C

Charles Petrie 42:46

I don't know if I'd have hope. I think that's a little bit too positive. I have commitment. And you know, I haven't lost sight to what I think is the ideal that the UN has tried to embody and the principles. I mean, in terms of the UN, I think the first is that the senior... I think the problem, you know, the senior leadership of the UN is very much in a real politik mode. So very much of what they do are based on political calculations. And whereas I think that, you know, could have worked in the past, I think what it does is it makes the UN increasingly irrelevant, because the UN, you know, when you look at issues like climate change, like social inequality, you know, these are issues that are fundamentally changing the world - the UN is a big player. I mean, the IMF is a much, much bigger player, the World Bank is a bigger player, the Bretton Woods Institute. So I think the the UN needs to understand that it's positioning, you know, on the Charter, that it needs to push the Charter very much to the forefront. And then, then I think, you know, that the UN needs to go.. I mean, the problem with the UN now is it's atrophying, that it's going through a slow death, and as a result, it's atrophying you know, it's not able to generate new dynamics inside, you know, it's got its staff that it needs to keep on, you know, the entitlements. It's shrinking. So, I mean, in the immediate, I think what's needed, one, is to finalize the reform of the UN presence in country, the Resident Coordinator, and the Resident Coordinators in most countries now continue to be undermined by individual UN agencies. I think the Resident Coordinator needs to be given direct authority in the management of other countries' response or the situation. And the right people need to be brought in. I think there needs to be a reform. I think, I mean, I would argue that you would, you know, this is pie in the sky stuff, but I think you should dramatically cut, rather than give more money to the UN, I think you should dramatically cut the money that goes to the UN in order for the UN to go through a fundamental structural rethinking. And I think the value of the UN in today's world is, it's normative. It's the principles, it's not the delivery. I mean, a lot of the delivery that the UN does, one, it's pretty expensive, international NGOs can do it even cheaper. And now on top of it, you have private companies who are doing it. So the UN's added-value in delivery, I think is much less than it was before and that's why I would I think the UN should dramatically refocus on the normative principles you know, and become the champion of that. And then all of a sudden it regains relevance. Because it all of a sudden, it becomes a different participant in the debate.

J

Jaclyn Streitfeld-Hall 46:00





Jaciyn Streitfeld-Hall 46:20

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