**Dan Bulley**

The EU’s politics of protecting refugees through deals such as that struck with Turkey in 2016 have been vilified by human rights campaigners. This article asks whether a full engagement with the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) could offer the EU a way out of its current ethical and political malaise. It argues against such a proposition for two reasons. First, the EU already proclaims a long list of values that it asserts both contributed to its founding and continues to guide its actions; the addition of RtoP, which contains no obligations to protect refugees in other territories, would add little. Second, when the logic underlying the EU and RtoP’s politics of protection are examined, a similarity emerges which would make such supplementation redundant. Both primarily entail a solidarity with, and a bolstering of, the sovereign capacity of the modern state. All that is offered to refugees, and other suffering populations, is a minimalist humanitarian solidarity through the “outsourcing” of protection. Neither the EU’s ethos nor RtoP can therefore provide the firm ethical grounds from which to build protection for the figure most clearly failed by modern states—the refugee.

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