

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE UN

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Introduction

Just as human beings have turned to war to achieve desired ends throughout history, so too have we turned to peace and cooperation to run its counter. Pursuits towards the attainment of international security and justice, as well as the proliferation of newfound humanitarian moral standards, have become beacons of hope against the backdrops of war. The United Nations has striven, from its genesis year in 1945, to remain at the helm of charting that course ahead, shaping and reshaping those standards, and positioning itself to enforce them throughout the international arena at large. Because the great world wars of the 20th Century scarred humanity in permanent and unforgettable ways, the United Nations set forth the goal of establishing the contours of the contemporary consensus on internationally recognized human rights.

Inextricably linked, human rights and the power and protection of the State have evolved, hand in hand, within the jurisdiction of the United Nations in the international arena. With international enforcement, and in many cases, peaceful or military intervention, comes the sacrifice of state sovereignty. The idea of the global responsibility to protect, brought into being in 2001 under the auspice of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, is an evolving humanitarian value, holding profound potential for the future protection of human rights. Standing in contrast to the former 'Westphalian' sanctity given to States within their protective boundaries, the Responsibility To Protect (RtoP) has come to dominate UN discourse during the 'reform era' negotiations from the early 2000s to the current day. Some argue that its implementation should become a moral imperative, and others remain leery of its dangerous interventionist potential at the hands of powerful, interest-seeking states. While the 'theory of universal human rights' has sifted into human consciousness since the UN Declaration, the issue of when to intervene, how, and with whom to do so, remains contested within the evolving international human rights dictum. Though significant strides have been made within

the context of reinterpreting the responsibilities that come with state sovereignty and the obligation to honor individual human rights, evidenced through the RtoP agreement, there remain significant setbacks to widespread implementation—mainly the view of state sovereignty taken by certain member states.

This paper will chart the evolution of sovereignty in the 21st Century in relation to international human rights, both as a blocking agent to political action and humanitarian intervention, and its contentious interpretations by various UN member states. This paper will further highlight the re-shaping and re-interpretation of sovereignty seen through the UN consensus on the RtoP doctrine and its emerging significance in international politics and practice from the 2000s to present day. Ultimately, though progress has been made to realign the United Nations with a trajectory of reformed and newly effective internal mechanisms, RtoP's successes in action, evidenced in several human rights cases, are selective. Oftentimes it is applied in line with the Security Council's veto-holding members' geo-political agendas. As such, the UN and its ability to intervene consistently and effectively in cases of human rights abuse remains a contentious topic in global affairs, undermining the institutions legitimate authority as both arbiter and executor of universal human rights theory and practice.

A Foundation for Universal Human Rights

Just over sixty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly officially adopted The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, enshrining that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (UNDHR: Preamble). Ever since their birth in a moment of post-Holocaust wisdom, “human rights embedded themselves slowly but steadily in human consciousness in what amounted to a revolution of moral concern”(Moyn 6). It was Eleanor Roosevelt who said the Declaration “set up a common standard of achievement for all people of all nations,” and “might well become an international Magna Carta of all mankind” (Kennedy 84). In many ways she was right, and it has.

Codified across a spectrum of legal instruments and evoked as ‘guiding principles’ for countless global institutions, regard for human rights has been made manifest through “peace-making, peace-keeping, peace-building, and humanitarian assistance and development processes”(Zifcak 160). The United Nations can be credited with positing human rights as universal entitlements, regardless of race, color, creed, or most importantly, national identity. Since those defining moments, there is little doubt that human rights have evolved into a powerful transnational ideal, “no longer rights articulated in relation to a citizenry within any given state” (Moyn 10), they have come to be seen through a far more expansive and universal lens. However, despite the work of the UN, social movements that emerged in the 1970s in order to advance human rights and expose state perpetrators through networks of monitoring, journalism and reporting, the implementation of such rights is still largely within the national, sovereign territorial domain of the state.

The United Nations has walked a fine line between asserting its dominance as a collective international organization and appealing to the spectrum of national interests that compose its member-state constituency. Thus, state sovereignty is given the utmost respect in the UN Charter, as it was a critical pre-condition to its signing members at UN’s formation in 1945. Chapter I Article 2(7) states that the United Nations “shall not intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state,” and indeed the idea that states still hold the keys to their own destiny is what has allowed the UN to continue and evolve. However, in recent years and in the name of enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights, “Chapter VII has been given significant interpretive leniency” (Bellamy 72). Chapter VII grants the Security Council the power to “determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression” and to take military and nonmilitary action to “restore international peace and security” (United Nations Charter: Chapter VII, Article 41-21). In line with the evolving moral standards of the 21st Century, these breaches of peace and acts of aggression are increasingly within the confines of nation states and perpetrated at the cost of human rights, and life, upon a states own citizenry.

In his 2001 Nobel Peace Price Lecture, Kofi Annan articulated the justification for the profound transition in the UN’s consideration of the

States once eminent domain:

In this new century, we must start from the understanding that peace belongs not only to states or peoples, but also to each and every member of those communities. The sovereignty of States must no longer be used as a shield for gross violations of human rights. (Annan 2001)

Kofi Annan has been instrumental in the advancement of international human rights within the United Nations. In September 2005, at the World Summit in New York, “Annan persuaded all the world leaders to agree that human rights constitutes one of the three pillars—along with peace and security and economic and social development—that form the base of all the UN’s work”(Terlinger 167), and that honoring human rights was integral to all. He simultaneously advanced the reform of the Commission on Human Rights to the newly strengthened Human Rights Council, the RtoP doctrine, and the establishment of a new Peacebuilding Commission to “advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery”(Terlinger 167) in his reform package. Arguably one of the most noteworthy heroes of the 21st Century international human rights movement, Annan did his job well in tying human rights to the international responsibility to protect, and as such was a critical figure in shifting the paradigm of state sovereignty to one of state responsibility. But this profound recognition would come in the aftermath of a war-torn decade, and one that tested the legitimate authority of the United Nations to respond to humanitarian crises.

21st Century: “Responsibility to Protect” & Sovereignty Redefined

A new vision for human rights was on the rise—the responsibility to protect—which took hold in the new millennium’s opening years. First conceptually introduced in 2001 in the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), and later endorsed by the High Level Panel Report (2004) authorized by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the idea was put to the negotiations table leading up to the 2005 World Summit. With the highest hopes that the

United Nations reform package would enable swifter, more effective response to humanitarian tragedy, the RtoP was one of its critical platforms for achieving those ends. This norm, which was eventually endorsed at the World Summit, though significantly watered down, and later solidified into official UN doctrine in 2006 (Resolution 1674), would guide the re-shaping of the meaning of sovereignty and the responsibilities of a state to its citizenry. As such, it was a groundbreaking benchmark for the United Nations. As Jack Donnelly, author of *Universal Rights In Theory And Practice* asserts:

Because human rights first emerged in an era of personal, and thus often arbitrary rule, an initial emphasis on individual liberty and state restraint was understandable. As the intrusive and coercive powers of the state have grown—steadily, and to now frightening dimensions—an emphasis on controlling the state continues to make immense political sense. The language of human rights abuses and violations continues, quiet properly, to focus our attention on combating active state threats to human rights. (Donnelly 37)

The RtoP aimed to do just that. Premised on the fact that sovereignty first entailed a responsibility to the individual sovereigns within each and every state, the right to sovereignty was laid out as resting on two foundational tenants: that individuals have unalienable human rights (Bellamy 10), and “that governments have the primary responsibility for protecting the rights of populations in their case and that when they abuse those rights or fail to protect them due to incapacity, the international community acquires a responsibility to step in, in a manner consistent with the UN Charter and authorized the Security Council” (Bellamy 10). The RtoP would be implemented “in response to four crimes perpetrated by the states: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing” (Bellamy 36). But RtoP but was also meant to entail a more proactive humanitarian response, including early warning and prevention of human rights abuse, assisting states on the brink of conflict, and post-conflict rebuilding. These accompanying assets to RtoP would be contested by UN member states in the name of preserving state sovereignty, and would therefore fail to become realized as part of the RtoP doctrine in the

Summit Outcome Document.

The Reform Era: Outcomes & Analysis; Consensus & Contestation

Much to the disappointment of Kofi Annan, who was, and remains, one of doctrine's greatest champions, the mechanisms to make RtoP more robust were thwarted by UN member states in 2005. Significant ideological divisions between the "Global North" and "Global South" UN member states contributed to the UN reform debate stalemate, as well as the subsequent "grand bargain" on RtoP and other key reforms aimed at the advancement of human rights protection. In interviews and discussions with more than 70 diplomats and UN officials from every region of the globe at UN Headquarters in New York in 2005, author Spencer Zifcak documented the North-South negotiations leading up to the 2005 World Summit.

In regards to ideological divisions regarding sovereignty and the responsibility to protect, the differences between North and South are substantial. "Two concepts are central here: sovereignty and multilateralism"(Zifcak 165). For the South, "National sovereignty is their overarching value"(Zifcak 167). Looking specifically at security, 'the South is resolutely opposed to UN legitimization of North military interventionism"(Zifcak 167). Therefore, in taking a literal interpretation of the UN Charter, the South's "insistence of the preservation of sovereignty holds fast even in the face of gross and systemic human rights abuse. Except in the most special circumstances, therefore, the sovereign rights of states must prevail over the human rights of people"(Zifcak 167). Vastly influenced by the colonial experience, weary of unregulated unilateral intervention, and the concentration of power within the hands of Security Council P5 membership, "the South provides a robust defense of multilateralism. On this view, it is not open for one bloc of nations to assert their unilateral or even hegemonic entitlement to do as they please in international affairs"(Zifcak 168). With this being said, RtoP still had strong support by key members of the South, including most notably the African Union, which "characterized the shift as one from non-intervention to non-indifference' that represented an embrace of

sovereignty as responsibility (Bellamy 13), and the post-genocide Rwandan government itself, which became “a committed advocate of the RtoP” (Bellamy 13).

In contrast to general views of the South nations, the North focused primarily on global security threats, civil war, ideological militancy and terrorism. “The North would like to see the UN priorities revolve around responding decisively and effectively on behalf of the international community” (Zifcak 166). To this end, sovereignty should not be used as a blocking agent for intervention. “The UN’s Chapter VI and VII powers must be interpreted liberally so as to provide the world organization with the legal authority and political legitimacy to respond effectively, and where necessary, militarily, to substantial threats” (Zifcak 166). The North’s position is similar with respect to humanitarian intervention. “Whether cast in security terms, or as the ‘responsibility to protect’, military intervention to prevent gross and systemic human rights abuse clearly constitutes an invasion of the target nation’s sovereignty” (Zifcak 166). This line of thinking can be hazardous, however, as it was used to legitimize the United State’s controversial ‘preemptive’ invasion of Iraq in 2003. In the absence of express Security Council authorization:

The war was a challenge not merely to multilateral institutions, but to the very idea of international order and collective security. The war split the Security Council, divided the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and prompted the creation of the high-level panel to rethink the idea of collective security in a world dominated by the US military power. The invasion shocked the United Nations and leading capitals around the world. Now visible to all was the tension between two competing visions of world order. (Danchin & Fischer 5)

Iraq represented a paradox, for even though the United States would like to see leniency regarding the sovereignty of other nations, it regards its own sovereignty with ardent exceptionalism. Unwilling to forsake much ground towards multilateral cooperation, the United States has single handedly rejected some of the most prominent human rights resolutions of the last decade. According to Human Rights Watch:

The US is the only country other than Somalia that has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the most widely and rapidly ratified human rights treaty in history. It is one of only seven countries-together with Iran, Nauru, Palau, Somalia, Sudan and Tonga- that has failed to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. (CEDAW)(Human Rights Watch Report:1)

Furthermore, the United States played a heavy role in undercutting Annan's reform package as well as the scope of RtoP in the lead up negotiations to the 2005 World Summit. Under the Bush Administration, newly appointed Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, intervened at the last moment, creating even greater contestation between the North and the South parties. "In a famed intervention, just days after his arrival and only five weeks before the World Summit was due to convene, Bolton proposed approximately 750 amendments to the draft Summit Outcome Document"(Zifcak 155), demanding all references to the MDG's (Millenium Development Goals) be removed, and no new aid commitment to developing countries be made unless they had been seen to use the resources wisely in the past. Further, all mention of the right to development was crossed out. "All references to nuclear disarmament were excised. A reference to the international community's 'shared responsibility' to act against crimes against humanity were replaced with a phrase proposing simply that the international community may 'decide' to act in a last resort"(Zifcak 155). The list went on.

The implications for RtoP were grave as a result of the U.S.'s non-support:

The nature and scope of RtoP was contested, negotiated, and ultimately revised through the process of norm contestation and diffusion that took place in the proceeding weeks. Key components of the RtoP concept proposed by the ICISS did not survive the process: the 'responsibility to rebuild' after an intervention was dropped in its entirety; proposed limits to the use of the veto by the UN Security Council were dropped; criteria to guide

decision-making about armed intervention was dropped; and the idea that absent of Security Council authorization, intervention for humanitarian purposes might be legitimized by the General Assembly or regional organizations was rejected. (Bellamy 9)

The notion that sovereignty was being re-shaped in the 21st Century in hopes of eliciting international calls to action in cases of human rights abuse was weakened substantially, and several early cases since RtoP's inception in 2005 also validate that claim.

From Words to Deeds

The RtoP, in norm and in principle, marked a victory for human rights and humanitarian intervention in spite of claims to state sovereignty. Its record of implementation, and success in certain regions and not others, is however, a mixed one. "Since 2005, the RtoP principle has been directly applied in Kenya, following the post-election violence in 2008, and more notably in Libya in 2011, following former leader Muammar al-Qaddafi's brutal crackdown on his people during the revolt against the regime"(Bajoria 3). Cases of human rights atrocity originating before the genesis of RtoP in 2005, though remaining ongoing sites of conflict such as in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Rwanda, have illuminated that RtoP was initially slow to become incorporated in the language and discourse of international human rights, but its underlying theme of international responsibility to protect is still expressed nonetheless through peacekeeping missions in those regions. The following cases demonstrate RtoP's evolution.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO & DARFUR

In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), civil war had raged since 1997 despite the 2003 peace settlement and MONUC peace operation. "Since then there have been recurrent outbreaks of violence in the country's east targeting mainly civilians and sexual violence against women and girls remains widespread"(Bellamy 52). There is broad agreement that all four crimes warranting RtoP action have been

committed, “yet RtoP has not generated additional support for the mission since 2005 despite its well-documented shortcomings”(Bellamy 52). The same is true in the case of Darfur, “which for many analysts and activists presents RtoP’s primary test case, a test which the principle is generally reckoned to have failed”(Bellamy 53). RtoP has not been referenced in the UN Security Council’s resolution for intervention. However, this does mean the Security Council has not acted with the responsibility to protect in mind.

The Security Council has, in fact, been consistently seized of the matter and has responded with a raft of relatively innovative measures including targeted sanctions, referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court (which led to the indictment of Sudan’s president), and the authorization (under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, Resolution 1969) of a large peace operation (UNAMID) with a clear civilian protection mandate. (Bellamy 54)

Though not explicitly evoked in these ongoing human rights cases, RtoP has slowly contested and broken down the idea that state sovereignty can act as a shield to international intervention in cases of human rights abuse.

KENYA (2008)

“The diplomatic response to the ethnic violence that erupted in the aftermath of the disputed 30 December 2007 elections in Kenya is widely trumpeted as the best example of RtoP in practice (Bellamy 54). With “systematic violence resulting in more than 1,000 deaths and the displacement of over 500,000 civilians“(ICRP Kenya: 1), paired with “Kenya’s role as a Western ally and regional business hub, external intervention was almost immediate”(ICRP Kenya: 1). In January 2008 the UN Security Council reacted “In the name of ‘the responsibility to protect’. Peace negotiations and mediation undertaken by Kofi Annan resulted in the ‘signing of a power-sharing agreement on 28 February 2008’”(ICRP Kenya: 2). This rapid and coordinated reaction by the international community was praised as “a model of diplomatic action directly under the Responsibility to Protect”(ICRP Kenya: 2). However,

the Kenya case raised criticism of the selectivity in which RtoP was being applied. First, there was the relatively small-scale nature of casualty count; as well the already withstanding relationship between Kenya and the West, and lastly, criticism concluded that the conflict was minor in comparison to other human rights atrocities. Jean Ping, the General Assembly President at the time, “questioned whether it was appropriate to apply RtoP in this case, suggesting that it raised serious questions as to the threshold of violence that constituted an RtoP situation and about the potential selectivity when the response to Kenya is compared with the lack of response to the much more serious situation in Somalia”(Bellamy 55). The case of Kenya also illuminated the flaw that the RtoP doctrine does not specify a human rights abuse “threshold,” leaving it up to the international community to intervene, selectively, when it sees fit. The issue of RtoP selectivity would be realized again that same year.

GAZA (2008-2009)

Shortly after a six-month ceasefire brokered by Egypt between Israel and Hamas, both Israel and Hamas launched extensive attacks that were widely agreed to have crossed the RtoP threshold:

Israel’s technological superiority and reliance on heavy armor and firepower contributed to a wide disparity in casualties—approximately 1,440 Palestinians have died (with some organizations estimating that at least half of the dead are civilians), compared with 13 dead (including four civilians) on the Israeli side. (Zanotti 1)

External observers generally agreed that both sides had committed war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity. “Israel used prohibited weapons against civilian areas, conducted indiscriminate attacks, often failed to exercise due care in distinguishing civilians from combatants, and attached the UN humanitarian personnel and the ICRC”(Bellamy 59). The UN Human Rights Council issued the incriminating ‘Goldstone Report’ that was “unsurprisingly criticized as biased by Israel and its allies, but remains the most balanced and comprehensive account of the war based

on a forensic examination and recounting of the conflict”(Bellamy 59). The question of whether RtoP should be applied was further raised in the General Assembly debate in 2009, and as Iran put it:

We have witnessed the repeated failure of the Security Council to leave [sic] up to its responsibility and to take appropriate action against Israeli regime’s continuous aggression and mass atrocities in the Palestinian occupied territories and in neighboring countries. (Bellamy 59)

Decisive action by the UN Security Council was not taken, nor was the RtoP embraced, despite the findings of the Goldstone Report. A lack of concrete international intervention and application of RtoP consistently across human rights cases proves legitimacy to the claims that RtoP has been selectively embraced based on cases of political, and indeed Western, interests and alliances. However, in more recent years, the use of RtoP has been numerous, either in official Security Council resolution or within the intention and scope of peacekeeping interventions.

LIBYA (2011)

On February 26, 2011, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1970, “making explicit reference to the responsibility to protect” and “deploring what it called ‘the gross and systemic violation of human rights’ in strife-torn Libya” (Department of Public Information, United Nations). Political protests beginning in the capital city of Tripoli broke out, “demanding an end to Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi’s 41-year reign, wherein Libyan civilians found themselves the target of mass atrocities at the hands of government armed forces”(ICRP Libya: 1). Gaddafi responded with severe brutality, dispatching the national army to quell opposition. Two months after the first warning Resolution, the Security Council acted again, passing Resolution 1973 “demanding an immediate ceasefire in Libya, including an end to current attacks against civilians, which it said might constitute ‘crimes against humanity’”(Department of Public Information, United Nations). Authorizing a multi-national effort to establish a no-fly zone, and

encouraging member states to take all necessary measures, including NATO, air strikes culminated in the successful capture and death of Qadhafi in October 2011.

In this case, the United Nations headed the quick international responses raised by individual states, “including the United Kingdom, United States, Switzerland, Australia, and Canada, and reacted quickly to the humanitarian crisis, freezing financial assets and imposing travel bans and sanctions”(ICRP Libya: 1). Explicitly evoking the RtoP, the United Nations was successful in bringing down the human-rights-abusing regime and galvanizing a far-reaching multilateral response. Though 2012 has brought instability again, the case in Libya reveals the importance of UN member-states raising calls for the implementation of an RtoP response, that the explicit reference to RtoP holds far reaching international persuasion, and the swift action of the Security Council to authorize multilateral action against human rights abuse is of critical importance.

Subsequent Cases Evoking RtoP

Again in 2011, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1975 “condemning the gross human rights violations committed by supporters of both ex-President Laurent Gbagbo and President Ouattara” (Department of Public Information, United Nations), in Côte d’Ivoire. The resolution cited “the primary responsibility of each State to protect civilians,” as well as authorized the UNOCI military operation, which swiftly ended President Gbagbo’s hold on power. In Yemen the Security Council passed Resolution 2014, which referenced RtoP in its condemnation of Yemeni authorities and their human rights violations. Again in 2011, the case of South Sudan followed suit, eliciting Security Council use of the RtoP, when “Resolution 1996 established a UN Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), to—among other things—advise and assist the government in fulfilling its responsibility to protect civilians”(Department of Public Information, United Nations). South Sudan officially became an independent country on June 9, 2011, and is now an official member of the United Nations and Africa Union (AU).

Though 2011 saw several cases of state-imposed human rights

abuse, it was also the year in which RtoP gained legitimacy under UN Security Council resolutions, either in reference or as the explicit reason for multilateral intervention. As an emerging norm from its genesis in 2005, it has already made a mark upon the international communities' standards for human rights action. However, RtoP can only be fully exercised when there is agreement among member-states of the Security Council, specifically the P5 veto-holding members. The case of Syria in 2012 points to this weakness, as well as its selectivity as the hands self-interested, sovereignty claiming Security Council P5 members.

In February 2012, "the Security Council voted on a draft resolution backed by an Arab League plan to resolve the crisis in the country, where UN officials estimated that security forces had killed well over 7,500 people since the popular uprisings in March 2011" (Department of Public Information, United Nations). Evidence of systematic acts of brutality, "including torture and arbitrary arrests, point to a clear policy by Syrian military and civilian leadership amounting to crimes against humanity"(ICRP Syria: 1). Though the draft resolution called for the Syrian government to withdraw its armed forces from civilian protests, and "thirteen of the Council's 15 members voted in favor of the text, China and Russia exercised their vetoes, double blocking the adoption of the resolution"(Department of Public Information, United Nations). Both countries claimed opposition to what they saw as a "potential violation of Syria's sovereignty"(Moscow et al). The General Assembly, Human Rights Council, the U.S. Obama Administration, and the international community at large adamantly condemned the human rights crimes committed by the Syrian authorities, but the Security Council was rendered forceless by the veto block. Finding some interventionist alternatives, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan led the UN-Arab League Joint Special Envoy to Syria in March 2012, with hopes of negotiating a ceasefire. However, later that month, Anna's efforts were to no avail, with conflict persisting and fostering increasing human rights implications for neighboring states:

Reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch highlighted ongoing rights abuses, from the arrest of minors to extrajudicial executions. The impact of the conflict began taking

its toll on the countries bordering Syria, with over 24,000 Syrians occupying the Turkish refugee camp of Kilis, which reportedly came under fire from government forces. (ICRP Syria: 1)

Crimes against humanity persist in Syria, marking perhaps the greatest failure of the United Nation's responsibility to protect since RtoP has been used to greater extent within the last few years. High Commissioner Navi Pillay summed up the failings of the Security Council well in her address to the 193 member-states of the General Assembly:

At their 2005 Summit, World leaders unanimously agreed that each individual State has the responsibility to protect its population from crimes against humanity and other international crimes... They also agreed that when a State is manifestly failing to protect its population from serious international crimes, the international community as a whole has the responsibility to step in by taking protective action in a collective, timely and decisive manner... The virtual *carte blanche* now granted to the Syrian Government betrays the spirit and the word of this unanimous decision. It is depriving the population of the protection they so urgently need. (Pillay 1)

It is clear from the case of Syria that the state interests of China, claiming that intervention would compromise "dialogue between the government and the opposition" (Moscow et. al) and Russia, "Syria's staunch ally"(Moscow et al), prevailed over appeals to Security Council humanitarian action. Returning to Simon Chesterman's demonstration that sovereignty is often used to veil underlying state interests or a lack of political will, it is clear that the honoring of international human rights law through RtoP remains easily overcome if just one of the Permanent Five Security Council members objects in the name of sovereignty or the preservation of their own self-interests. Until the United Nations overcomes the inherent flaws within the structure of the P5 Security Council, its unwillingness to act or uncertainty of when the threshold has been crossed to do so, RtoP will remain compromised, selectively applied, and therefore weakened in its potential to dramatically re-shape and re-

power the humanitarian moral standards of the 21st Century.

Conclusion

RtoP remains a somewhat abstract principle, despite its progress over the past several years. Its recent setback in the case of Syria, notwithstanding, which continues to unfold amidst serious international appeals for intervention, RtoP's emergence in world politics and international human rights law has been significant. "Five years from its adoption, RtoP boasts a Global Centre and network of regional affiliates dedicated to advocacy and research, and a global coalition of non-governmental organizations" (Bellamy 26). Published by Routledge, the Global Responsibility to Protect journal publication and book series continues to trace the RtoP principle, highlighting its relationship and applicability to past and present cases of genocide and mass atrocities. Through the University of Queensland in Australia, the RtoP Research Centre and associated fund sponsored by the Australian government "facilitates the organization of regional offshoots, including the "IRtoP" (Individual Responsibility To Protect) and "W2I" (Will To Intervene) projects, focusing respectively on engaging individuals as agents of change and generating the political will to intervene"(Bellamy 26). Still, RtoP has already heavily influenced the international diplomatic discourse of the 21st Century, and in many ways it exposes the responsibilities and expectations to which state actors should be held.

There is no doubt that the growing regard for human rights, and the international communities call to action in humanitarian support, has been significant over the last two decades. Speaking directly to this is the large increase in international efforts in "peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding, in which the UN has played a central role throughout"(Zifcak xviii). Successes in Kenya and Libya with the direct application of RtoP are to be commended, and often lacking responses in Gaza, Syria, the longstanding conflicts from the 1990s in the DRC, Darfur, and Somalia, and the 2000s in Iraq and Afghanistan should be continually brought to light. Work towards these ends will inherently be plagued by the geo-political interests of every state, notably the United States, Russia, and China, who have notoriously held their own sovereign agendas as sacred even at the expense of large-scale human rights casualties abroad.

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