

Great Powers Manipulating Norms: US, Chinese and Russian Approaches to the
Responsibility to Protect

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Between 500,000 and 1 million Rwandans were murdered within approximately 100 days in 1994 while the rest of the world watched and refused to act. As hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered by their neighbors, government officials around the world ignored the violence and resisted labeling the atrocity as a genocide in order to avoid their obligation to intervene.¹ States such as the United States attempted to pretend that they were unaware of the extent of the violence in Rwanda, although it became clear that government officials were aware of the killings early on and simply decided not to act.² The Rwandan Genocide took place during a time when the United States spearheaded what was considered acceptable behavior in international politics, meaning that without America's advocacy for an international response, no other country was going to commit itself to ending the atrocity.³ In the wake of this crisis, it became evident that a collective understanding of intervention in human rights violations and atrocities must be developed in order to avoid another instance such as the Rwandan Genocide. Thus, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was born in 2001 in an *attempt* to hold nations accountable in their surveillance and response to human rights violations.⁴

With the international community taking steps towards better protecting civilians after the events of Rwanda, the question two decades later is now: does the Responsibility to Protect work? Have states' international behaviors in response to humanitarian crises altered in favor of civilians and led to increased action to prevent

¹ Stanton, Gregory H. 2004. "Could the Rwandan Genocide Have Been Prevented?" *Journal of Genocide Research* 6(2): 218-19.

² Adelman, Howard. 2003. "Review Article: Bystanders to Genocide in Rwanda." *The International History Review* 25(2): 361.

³ Cohen, J. (2007). *One-hundred days of silence: America and the Rwanda genocide*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield: 3.

⁴ Thakur, Ramesh. 2016. "The Responsibility to Protect at 15." *International Affairs* 92(2): 416.

genocides or end atrocities that have begun? Have states acknowledged atrocities sooner and taken action more quickly than in the past? Has the Responsibility to Protect effectively protected civilians as it intended? The purpose of this work is to demonstrate how the R2P has failed to measure up to its purpose of becoming a “de facto emerging norm” and, in some critical cases, has been unsuccessful in serving as a tool to inspire states to take action to prevent further humanitarian crises.⁵

The creators of the R2P, Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, co-chaired the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in an effort to revise the approach to humanitarian intervention and center civilians as the priority rather than the states. They describe the R2P as an emerging norm meant to encourage states to alter their behavior until it becomes standard practice in the international community. However, Evans’ and Sahnoun’s intention to establish the R2P as an internalized norm has not been fulfilled; states have not consistently applied the R2P to human rights violations and atrocities. Rather, the R2P is a nascent norm that defines an ideal response to humanitarian crises but does not actually compel behavioral change in states. States like the United States, China and Russia continue to debate certain actions that could be taken to quell the violence that erupts in certain countries, but all too often actions are few and far between. Implementation of the R2P has been inconsistent and has in some cases fallen far short of stopping human rights atrocities. The R2P demands the “minimum necessary action” to secure the population and end the threat of violence, a standard that has not been met in cases such as Syria, Yemen or Myanmar.⁶ Instead, the Permanent Five (P5) states of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have taken

⁵ Evans, Gareth, and Mohamed Sahnoun. 2002. “The Responsibility to Protect.” *Foreign Affairs* 81(6): 3.

⁶ *Ibid.* 4.

the “minimum necessary action” to satisfy the international call to respond, which has not been enough to end the threat of violence in these cases.

The commitment to the R2P has been inconsistent and does not demonstrate the internalization of prioritizing civilian lives over state interference. Given that the R2P demands states use resources and military power in a country they may have no relationship with or allegiance to, it is unsurprising that its success as a norm has been disappointing. Without the ability to enforce humanitarian intervention by law, the R2P remains a set of guidelines that states can engage with when optimal for their own foreign policy or capabilities. Despite its putative status as an international norm, the Responsibility to Protect is frequently violated, especially by the most powerful. In this chapter, I will define the Responsibility to Protect and evaluate its role as an international norm, while also considering the evaluations by leading international relations scholars. Ultimately, I will conclude that the R2P has not had a behavioral impact on states, and states have and will continue to make their intervention decisions based on their own political, economic, or military self-interests, disregarding the needs of the subjugated population in question.

Discussion of the R2P

The Responsibility to Protect was first articulated in a report produced by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in December 2001, in response to the recent increase in human rights atrocities in which the question of state sovereignty ultimately impeded any preventative action or subsequent international military use to end violence. The goal of the ICISS and the R2P report was to address the lack of international rules for handling the demands of intervening in

situations of human rights violations, and the disagreements that existed about the right to intervene and use coercive action against a state in order to protect its civilians.⁷ This report was adopted as the official stance of the United Nations on October 24, 2005 with the promulgation the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which addressed an array of protections, from genocide to children's rights, that the UN sought to recognize in an effort to reaffirm the principle of the UN Charter. This resolution asserted that the UN Security Council (UNSC) is "prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner" to protect populations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.⁸ The 2005 World Summit Outcome was endorsed by all states within the UN to outline the conditions in which intervention in a humanitarian crisis is encouraged. As a result, the R2P established three pillars of responsibilities for all states: the responsibility to prevent, the responsibility to react, and the responsibility to rebuild.

The *responsibility to prevent* means that the international community is responsible for monitoring all states and addressing any existing root causes of internal conflict in an effort to put a stop to any future intensified violence. This also means that the state is responsible for its own citizens, and must always be willing and able to protect its population if an internal conflict arises. The *responsibility to react* requires the international community to respond to any situation qualifying as a humanitarian crisis with appropriate means, whether it be sanctions, prosecution or military intervention. It also requires that states are primarily responsible for the global community rather than state sovereignty, and must step in when a state does not protect the population within its

⁷International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, Gareth J. Evans, Mohamed Sahnoun, and International Development Research Centre (Canada), eds. 2001. *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre. 1-2.

⁸A/RES/60/1

territory. Lastly, the *responsibility to rebuild* asks the international community to assist in recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation while also addressing the cause of the conflict in order to prevent future violence.⁹

The R2P lays out specific guidelines on how the international community should be monitoring and responding to humanitarian crises in order to put civilian lives first rather than respecting the sovereignty of the state. The R2P affirms that it is states' "shared interest and responsibility" to improve the effectiveness of the UN.¹⁰ Thus, the goal of the R2P is to reconstitute states' interest so that they put the needs of civilian populations at risk above their narrow security interests.¹¹ The R2P asks that the Security Council be ready and willing to hear requests for assistance, discuss situations and draft resolutions in order to provide unilateral aid in many forms during a conflict. However, the international community's embrace of the R2P was expressed in a non-binding resolution rather than a more specific international legal instrument, in which no legal obligations were established for states. The R2P was created as an advisory due to the changing social environment in which many states were determined to positively change the approach to humanitarian intervention in order to avoid a repeat of Rwanda. Its efficacy is dependent on international pressure on states - especially the UNSC and the P5 states - to act on an ongoing or potential atrocity. Thus, the R2P must operate as a norm in an attempt to compel behavioral change within states, particularly the P5, to want to assist populations and prevent large-scale loss of life and violence.

Discussion of Norms

⁹ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, Gareth J. Evans, Mohamed Sahnoun, and International Development Research Centre (Canada), eds. 2001. xi.

¹⁰ A/RES/60/1

¹¹ Evans and Sahnoun. 2.

International law is largely based on customs and agreements between states to dictate appropriate state behavior. Norms fit into this concept by defining the ideal behaviors to enhance these agreements, but lack the legal authority to bind states. Cortell and Davis refer to Chayes and Chayes' definition of norms, as "prescriptions for action in situations of choice," which advise states on the appropriate way to act¹² Thus, a salient norm will "give rise to feelings of obligation by social actors and, when violated, engender regret or a feeling that the deviation or violation requires justification."¹³ International organizations play a central role in propagating norms to states. They are the closest semblance of an international norm enforcement agency, and persuade states to adopt and practice the norms because states are socially receptive to the international community; states alter their positions and policies to norms because they are embedded in the international *social* system as well as the international political system.¹⁴ If states begin to adopt a certain policy or prioritize a certain interest, other states follow in those footsteps in order to be seen positively in the social setting. However, as the international arena grows in tension, the norm creation and implementation dynamic has increasingly shifted towards more powerful states in control. Powerful states have both the standing and strength to control international norms in their favor, placing their concern for the balance of power as the main driver for the promotion of norms, which also encompasses ignoring certain norms.¹⁵

¹² Cortell, Andrew P., and James W. Davis Jr. 2000. "Understanding the Domestic Impact of International Norms: A Research Agenda." *International Studies Review* 2(1): 69. (citing Chayes and Chayes 1995: 113).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Finnemore, Martha. 1993. "International Organizations as Teachers of Norms: The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and Science Policy". *International Organization* 47(4): 593-4.

¹⁵ De Nevers, Renee. 2007. "Imposing International Norms: Great Powers and Norm Enforcement." *International Studies Review* 9(1): 54.

Scholarship around the creation and adoption of norms increasingly analyzes the relationship between a state's domestic interests and its international interests. In general, norms influence a state's behavior when the government officials or societal interest groups, or both, appeal to the international norm to further domestic political agendas.¹⁶ This scholarship focuses on the salience that a norm appears to have domestically, as only some norms adopted by states are internalized and shape their behavior, while others are not internalized. Ultimately, the understanding of this dichotomy is that the international norm does not sufficiently align with the domestic politics within a state, leading the government to reject its internalization.¹⁷ This dynamic results in a variation of normative applications and behavior, ultimately not reflective of the international norms the states claim to support.

Furthermore, issues with internalization of norms more often arise within advanced industrial democracies because of their strong establishment of domestic norms and power.¹⁸ Cortell and Davis argue that industrialized democracies have greater difficulty embracing emergent international norms because they need to frame these apparently self-interested norms in terms of a broader national interest, and also because norm entrepreneurs need to "unravel and transform existing domestic institutions."¹⁹ Their opinion directly contradicts the previous assumption that developing nations were problematic in their conformity and compliance to international norms, and I would advance this opinion from Cortell and Davis one step further. Not only do advanced industrial democracies have the most difficulty embracing emerging international norms,

¹⁶ Cortell, Andrew P., and James W. Davis. 1996. "How Do International Institutions Matter? The Domestic Impact of International Rules and Norms." *International Studies Quarterly* 40(4): 452.

¹⁷ Cortell, Andrew P., and James W. Davis Jr. 2000. 86.

¹⁸ Cortell, Andrew P., and James W. Davis. 2005. "When Norms Clash: International Norms, Domestic Practices, and Japan's Internalisation of the GATT/WTO." *Review of International Studies* 31(1): 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 22.

I would contend that the most powerful states face this dilemma, regardless of the type of government. Russia and China are nondemocratic advanced states that are self-sufficient and experience favorable asymmetric interdependence. Additionally, they are regarded as powerful states because of their military power and control over international institutions such as the UN. With a veto power in the UNSC, Russia and China are less vulnerable to external pressure such as the social construct of norms. These states, along with the United States, exhibit difficulty in establishing a practice of internalizing norms, inherently expanding the definition from Cortell and Davis. While I understand the thinking behind democratic states being the most difficult to embrace new international norms, I don't think that this opinion can be limited to just democratic countries, as other states have proven their continued resistance to adopting and altering their behavior to align with international norms.

Coercion and persuasion play a large role in promoting and adopting new international norms. Because stronger states have tended to control the dynamics of the international arena in recent years, they are able to project their agenda and interests onto other states based on those states' power and standing as well. Stronger states in good standing are typically persuaded in some way to follow certain norms because of alliances with the dominant state, while weaker states tend to be threatened into compliance.²⁰ Because powerful states are in control, they dictate norm change and are primarily the source of enforcement. Renee De Nevers illustrates an example of this dynamic in her discussion of the War on Terror campaign by the United States. After the 9/11 terror attacks, the United States was committed to combat terrorism worldwide and called for all states to join them in condemning state-sponsored terror and dispelling

²⁰ De Nevers, Renee. 2007. 54.

terror groups from within states harboring them.²¹ States were faced with two futures in this scenario: support the United States and further a potential partnership if none currently exists, or reject their command of assistance and either be coerced into assisting or become an enemy. Because of the United States' extreme political and economic power, many states did not see a choice in the matter. This situation resulted in a complete shift in international political behavior, that continues today, indicating that the United States' power was sufficient to compel weaker states to comply with its preferred norms without necessarily persuading them that the policy was normatively "correct." Although norms appear to be a salient form of compelling international behavior, the R2P does not motivate states into compliance, rendering it no more than a nascent norm existing to outline ideal state behavior.

Scholars' Evaluations of the R2P

The Responsibility to Protect as an international norm has been thoroughly debated by international relations scholars, contesting its efficacy and implications for states. Some scholars believe that the R2P has become an internationally adopted norm and that states' interests are shaped by the ability and effort to protect civilians. Alternatively, many scholars believe the R2P is not a norm but an internationally acknowledged policy that is not binding and often not considered as a resolution to humanitarian crises. These scholars find the R2P to be completely ineffective in the sense that states' decision to intervene is not only incredibly rare, but is not motivated by humanitarian needs, and will continue to be driven by states' political and economic interests.

²¹ Ibid. 53.

The R2P was originally created in response to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, in which the international community failed to intervene and halt the mass killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The idea of the R2P gained traction because it was a broadly-shared idea among multiple states, and not promoted by one homogenous group of states. With proponents in the International Commission of Intervention and State Sovereignty representing states from the Global North and South, the R2P's construction was able to gain collective support and resulted in the creation of the norm of state intervention during mass atrocities.²² Although the R2P seemed to have widespread support, its lack of internalization and implementation constitute problems in its agency and enforcement rather than in its creation and support. New norms are seldom entirely adopted by states, even if those states are driving their creation. Instead, states will manipulate norms to fit the context of specific situations they wish to address and oftentimes ignore the root concept of the norms all together.²³ This specified implementation of norms demonstrates that states want specific rules of behavior in place to compel compliance among other states, while actively manipulating those same norms for their own benefit.

According to the view of scholars who believe the R2P is a successful norm, states have aligned their interests with the concepts declared by the R2P, and states are now far less likely to ignore threats of mass atrocities because monitoring potential or ongoing humanitarian crises is now a priority.²⁴ Because states have reshaped their interests and identities to align with these important concepts, scholars have contended that the R2P is operational in states' international political behavior. Alex Bellamy, a

²² Acharya, Amitav. 2013. "The R2P and Norm Diffusion: Towards A Framework of Norm Circulation." *Global Responsibility to Protect* 5(4): 466.

²³ Ibid. 467-468.

²⁴ Glanville, L. (2016). "Does R2P matter? Interpreting the impact of a norm." *Cooperation and Conflict*, 51(2), 184–199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836715612850>

well-known author of international norms scholarship and a supporter of the R2P's current implementation suggests that the R2P norm created new habits for how states consider their international policy and actions. Although the invocation of the R2P and intervention in humanitarian crises does not always happen, this in no way suggests that the policy is never considered by states.²⁵ Bellamy argues that critics of inaction are simply seeing the situation as one-dimensional, when considerations and conversations of intervention or invoking the R2P happen within governments before ultimately deciding against these actions. Although R2P responses do not happen every time, Bellamy emphasizes that "the international community is getting into the habit of responding in some form," as the principles of the R2P are in the process of being internalized by states and begin to shape the international context of these atrocities.²⁶

There is also a contention among scholars that the R2P cannot be expected to be used as often as critics claim it should be, because it could quickly lose legitimacy. That is, if the R2P is invoked too many times or in instances not within the framework of the ICISS report, the concept will ultimately be exhausted and states will dedicate less effort to it. This assertion is based on the idea that invoking the R2P at every violent conflict would eventually lead to unnecessary fear and false expectations of the possible outcomes of intervening in conflicts or crises.²⁷ Eli Stamnes defends this claim - that R2P has very specific situations allowing for implication - by warning that employing the R2P in response to crises too much would lead to one of two equally destructive ends to the intervention norm. He argues it's possible that the R2P would ultimately deter states from

²⁵ Bellamy, A. J. (2013). The Responsibility to Protect: Added value or hot air? *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48(3), 333. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713482448>

²⁶ Ibid. 346.

²⁷ Stamnes, E (2009) 'Speaking R2P' and the prevention of mass atrocities. *Global Responsibility to Protect* 1(1): 71.

implementing it all together because it would have become an exhausted policy that some states may think would be a waste of resources for results that could have been achieved by other means. Alternatively, the excessive implementation of the R2P could raise even more questions about sovereignty that would inevitably result in a complete reversal of the policy in order to protect a state's right to govern and control activity within its own territory.²⁸ Proponents of this argument assert that the R2P must be applied conservatively, only in "extreme, extraordinary, not-to-be-ignored cases" in order to prevent its overuse or the danger of applying it outside its original scope.²⁹ However, this analysis is open widely to criticism, as the extreme, extraordinary cases of Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar that will be discussed later in this work are evidence that the R2P isn't used often enough. As of now, the R2P does not run the risk of becoming meaningless because of overuse, but in fact just the opposite. The R2P has been rendered meaningless because the UNSC won't implement it enough.

Finally, an argument has been put forward that the R2P is actually an ethical norm intended to guide states towards appropriate behaviors within their territories and in the international sphere. In this sense, the ethical norm would highlight how states *ought* to act in terms of the R2P, but does not mandate them to act in this way. Ercan Gözen, the proponent of this opinion, emphasizes that the R2P is not a legal commitment, so no state is bound to adhere by the suggestions put forward in the report.³⁰ The R2P ultimately isn't actually demanding of states, and critics are attributing duties to states (intervention, sanctions, etc) that the R2P lays out, but they are not required to abide by it. This ethical

²⁸ Ibid. 75.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Gözen Ercan, P. (2014). "R2P: From Slogan to an International Ethical Norm." *Uluslararası İlişkiler / International Relations*, 11(43): 36-37.

standard thus introduces the concept of naming and shaming among states who want to give credence to the R2P, as enforcing the invocation of the R2P can only happen through non-legal means. The defenders of the R2P in international relations scholarship rely on the interpretation that R2P is a norm that must be considered by states but not necessarily practiced often in order to preserve its longevity.

Gözen's argument is a truthfully bizarre way of saying that the R2P means nothing. I believe his intention is to defend the inconsistent implementation of the R2P by claiming that we shouldn't expect more because it is just a norm, and there is nothing to force states into practicing it. However, he deeply exposes himself to the criticism that he admits that the R2P is not salient. He is justified in saying that since the R2P is a norm and not law, it won't always be followed to the letter, and we shouldn't expect its application to be perfect every time. However, if it is rarely followed and states face no consequences for refusing to apply it in appropriate situations, does the R2P truly mean anything in international politics? Gözen's attempt to defend the R2P's inconsistency ultimately exposes exactly why the R2P is a failed international effort at preventing and addressing human rights atrocities.

The critics of the R2P widely regard the report as ineffectual because of the inconsistency in implementation and the lack of commitment demonstrated by states to use it to the fullest extent. The United Nations Security Council, responsible for the consideration and invocation of the R2P, is comprised of five permanent members with the power to veto a proposed resolution, and their agreement on issues is incredibly rare.³¹ States typically consider their own political or economic interests in regards to

³¹ Brunnée, Jutta and Toope, Stephen J. 2010. "The Responsibility to Protect and the Use of Force: Building Legality?" *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 2(3): 192-3

anything in international relations, and this continues even with the consideration to intervene during a humanitarian crisis. Courtney Fung exemplifies this statement in her work, which details the extensive considerations often made by China in particular. China's approach is strategic in that it heavily weighs its relationships with the state in question and surrounding states before determining an opinion on the matter.³² China is only one of the three most influential of the Permanent Five on the UNSC who predominantly prioritizes political relationships or economic benefits when considering invoking the R2P. The Arab Spring in particular is cited by author Aidan Hehir as a primary example of how national interests supersede humanitarian concerns, and the UNSC tends to only invoke or respect certain elements of the R2P and not others.³³ Following Hehir's argument, the biggest contention upon whether or not to intervene in a country has been in regards to Pillar III of the Responsibility to Protect: it is the international community's responsibility to take timely, collective action if a state is failing to protect its population. When states are making this decision based on their own interests, oftentimes intervention fails to be implemented.

The scholarly analysis on the effectiveness of the R2P is ultimately an ongoing debate as to whether or not it has become an effective norm in international politics. Some scholars believe the R2P has made positive changes in the ways in which states approach qualifying situations such as ethnic cleansing and genocide, while others criticize its lack of authority to guide state responses. While certain aspects of the R2P may be effective in some instances, the inconsistency in invoking the R2P and

³² Fung, Courtney J. 2016. "Global South solidarity? China, regional organisations and intervention in the Libyan and Syrian civil wars", *Third World Quarterly*, 37:1, 35-6

³³ Hehir, Aidan. 2015. "Assessing the influence of the Responsibility to Protect on the UN Security Council during the Arab Spring" *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 51(2) 169.

subsequent methods of implementation demonstrate a lack of internalization of the R2P's premise, suggesting that other motivations for using the R2P may be present.

Methodology

In order to support my contention about the Responsibility to Protect I will conduct a comparative case study with a focus on testing my hypothesis concerning why states make the decision to intervene or not. This case study is intended to produce a causal explanation between the decisions states - in particular the United States, China and Russia, permanent five members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council - make in regards to the R2P and the understanding that the R2P is not an internalized norm. The goal is to evaluate specific political, economic and military interests that influence a state's decision to invoke the R2P and intervene. Ultimately, the question is whether or not the possible removal of the current government in the target state would negatively affect the P5 state. If it would, then the assumption is that the state would veto an R2P resolution, and conversely the state would vote in favor of the R2P resolution if a potential regime change does not threaten their interests.

These critical security interests, comprising the independent variable, are critical political and military relationships with key states in the area and the economic alliances formed which heavily benefit the P5 state. The target states where the conflict exists all have a commonality that leads at least one P5 state to prioritize the government's survival over the humanitarian crisis at hand. Specific examples of these interests that will be further explored include Russia's political alliance with Syria, which allows Russia to expand its military presence in the Middle East while protecting its own national security

from Western nations creating instability in the international sphere³⁴, or the United States' alliance with Saudi Arabia that has bred a firm economic relationship partly based on arms trades that subsequently provide arms for the Hadi coalition in Yemen.³⁵ These military and economic benefits are so critical to certain P5 states, that they are willing to veto R2P resolutions that threaten to end or limit these relationships. Through this comparative case study, I intend to show how a potential threat to the relationships benefiting a P5 member can cause a state to veto invocation of the R2P in order to maintain the status quo and ensure their interests are protected. These relationships will ultimately be evaluated through the comparison of humanitarian crises which drew international attention and calls for action from numerous states and organizations.

The five cases chosen for this study were selected because they encompass countries suffering from serious crimes against humanity in which the civilian population is not protected from violence and exploitation. The cases all qualify as situations in which the Responsibility to Protect should be invoked by the United Nations, because the current government or regime is unable or unwilling to protect its population.³⁶ The case studies are then divided into two groups: those where a critical security interest for a P5 country is present, and those in which the critical interest is absent. The former group - Syria, Yemen and Myanmar - will analyze the specific political alliances, military strategies or economic relationships that one or more P5 states have with the country in question that resulted in a rejection of the R2P in order to preserve the government in

³⁴ Charap, Samuel, Elina Treyger, and Edward Geist. 2019. *Understanding Russia's Intervention in Syria*. CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3180.html. 5-6.

³⁵ "Yemen: Multibillion-Dollar Arms Sales by USA and UK Reveal Shameful Contradiction with Aid Efforts." 2017. *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/yemen-multibillion-dollar-arms-sales-by-usa-and-uk-reveal-shameful-contradiction-with-aid-efforts/>.

³⁶ Evans and Sahnoun. 2.

place. The latter group - Côte d'Ivoire and Mali - will explain how the absence of a critical interest from the P5 results in the willingness to invoke the R2P and take measures to condemn the ongoing violence. Both sets of cases aid in demonstrating how the R2P is a nascent norm rather than an internalized norm, as extensive discussion about its invocation is required before a decision is made. The main objective of these case studies is to discover exactly what factors influenced the decisions made in regards to the invocation of the R2P, and how it varies among P5 countries given the different target states.

Table 1: Security interests (if any) within each case

Case	US's Interest	China's Interest	Russia's Interest
Syria	The US wants to invoke the R2P in hopes of overthrowing Assad. This would allow the US to implement a pro-West government and keep the influences of Iran (the US's greatest adversary in the region) at bay. ³⁷	China doesn't want the R2P invoked in order to keep Assad in power. China wants to provide loans to Syria and invest in infrastructure projects, resulting in Chinese contracts that would expand China's Belt and Road Initiative and boost its own economy. From here, China would be a constant ally for the future. ³⁸	Russia doesn't want the R2P invoked because it would like to maintain and continue to build its relationship with the Assad regime. Russia's goal is to expand its military base campaign in Syria, thus expanding its military capability within the Middle East and Northern Africa, opening the door for a greater sphere of influence in the region. ³⁹

³⁷ Outzen, Richard. 2014. "The Flawed Strategic Debate on Syria." *Institute for National Strategic Studies* (285): 3.

³⁸ Yellinek, Roie. 2018. "Who Will Reconstruct Syria?" *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*: 3.

³⁹ "Russia Aims to Boost Military Facilities in Syria." 2020. *DW*.
<https://www.dw.com/en/russia-aims-to-boost-military-facilities-in-syria/a-53624765>.

Myanmar	The US has seen Myanmar as a potential target to introduce western ideals in a stable democratic government, alongside the notion that Myanmar would potentially provide the US with greater insight and influence in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), rivaling China. ⁴⁰	Myanmar is an important economic partner for China, offering expansion in investments and trade deals. Myanmar is a part of China's plan to expand its sphere of influence over Southeast Asia, and intervention may destroy this plan. ⁴¹	Russia has provided military training, weapons, and university education to Myanmar in recent years as internal tensions and violence have left the country isolated by the West. Myanmar serves as a potential ally in Asia, expanding Russia's influence and military campaign around the globe. ⁴²
Yemen	The US wants to avoid the invocation of the R2P because it is interested in isolating Iran's influence and ensuring a democratic government in Yemen willing to cooperate with the West. The goal is to prevent the US's enemy from dominating the	China's desire in Yemen is to ensure an authoritarian style government in the country, one in which China will have an easier time getting along with than a democratic style government. ⁴⁴	Russia ultimately has a very similar interest in Yemen that it does to Syria, in which it wants to protect its military expansion campaign and garner more influence in the Middle East, in order to collect more allies and build influence in the region, pushing the US out. ⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Sun, Yun. 2014. "Myanmar in US-China Relations." *Stimson Center* (3): 4-5.

⁴¹ Steinberg, David I., and Hongwei Fan. 2012. *Modern China-Myanmar Relations: Dilemmas of Mutual Dependence*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press. 168-169

⁴² Reuters Staff. 2021. "Russia Says It Is Seeking to Strengthen Military Ties with Myanmar." *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-politics-russia/russia-says-it-is-seeking-to-strengthen-military-ties-with-myanmar-idUSL4N2LO2H6>.

⁴⁴ Ramani, Samuel, and Ibrahim Qasim. 2017. "China's Role in the Yemen Crisis." *The Diplomat*: 7.

⁴⁵ Ramani, Samuel. 2018. "Russia's Mediating Role in Southern Yemen." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*: 1.

	country, with the possibility of that control expanding outwards to the surrounding region. ⁴³		
Côte d'Ivoire	The US does not have any critical security interest that would be threatened by the invocation of the R2P.	China does not have any critical security interest that would be threatened by the invocation of the R2P.	Russia does not have any critical security interest that would be threatened by the invocation of the R2P.
Mali	The US does not have any critical security interest that would be threatened by the invocation of the R2P.	China does not have any critical security interest that would be threatened by the invocation of the R2P.	Russia does not have any critical security interest that would be threatened by the invocation of the R2P.

To accomplish this objective, I will be looking at public statements made by the governments of the US, China, and Russia in regards to the situations at hand and the justifications of their decisions made on R2P resolutions in the Security Council. Statements released by the government and government mouthpieces, as well as public statements made at the United Nations, will reveal what interests are responsible for their decision on the R2P. Whether directly stated or not, referring to alliances within the country or any economic or military concerns in these statements will indicate these factors played a role in the decisions made. Additionally, statements made after the fact by government officials, former or present, may also provide insight into the true motivations for the state's decision, as well as the media attention the situation receives

⁴³ Murray, Donette. 2009. *US Foreign Policy and Iran: American-Iranian Relations since the Islamic Revolution*. Routledge. 14.

and what the main talking points are. Because many governments will try to sell policy initiatives favorably to their population, justifications made by any of these sources may also shed light on the real factors in the decision making.

The selected cases of this study are all situations of mass atrocities that have triggered discussions about the invocation of the R2P in the Security Council in order to end violence in the region. However, each of these cases also demonstrates that the consideration of the R2P is taken through the lens of political or economic interests of some of the more powerful states responsible for the invocation of the R2P. The R2P was not immediately considered in these cases by some UNSC states, and if so it was not motivated by humanitarian needs as was intended.

Libya: Setting a Precedent for the R2P

In order to understand the complexities of these case studies, we must first understand the tumultuous case that sparked the downfall of the R2P. The Libya intervention was the first true test of the Responsibility to Protect for the UNSC, as it was the first time military intervention was deployed in the name of the R2P against the wishes of the government of the target state. The Arab Spring, a pan-Arab awakening, began in 2011 after decades of tyranny in the Middle East pushed young people towards the search for political freedom.⁴⁶ These tensions boiled among the population for years and small revolutions began to take shape, from Iran to Syria to Lebanon. Inevitably, these tensions exploded and revolution consumed Tunisia and Egypt, with protests and unrest against authoritarian governments seizing the population. Protests against the government eventually spread across the Middle East, with nearly every state facing

⁴⁶ Ajami, Fouad. 2012. "A Year of Living Dangerously." *Foreign Affairs* 91(2): 56.

pushback for its strict rule and harsh treatment of citizens.⁴⁷ The revolution in Libya became the target for R2P implementation due to the severity of the violent response from the government.

Protests against Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's decades-long rule started at the beginning of 2011, marking the beginning of the end of his 42 year reign. He came into power in 1969 through a bloodless coup that removed the corrupt King Idris, asserting Gaddafi as Libya's liberator.⁴⁸ Gaddafi initially made many improvements to the life of Libyans; increased access to free public education, set up a universal healthcare system, and other programs that were funded with the new revenue from the oil industry that Gaddafi reformed.⁴⁹ However, Gaddafi's rule became increasingly autocratic after nearly a decade, as he began altering laws to make it difficult for anyone to gain enough power to challenge his authority. He surrounded himself with non-elected advisors, which fostered distrust among the population while fueling Gaddafi's unwavering belief that his people loved him and would die for him.⁵⁰ Gaddafi spent his rule increasing his power as his people longed for a change of authority through more democratic means, which they were inspired to engage in after the rise of the Arab Spring.

In response to the protests demanding his removal from power, Gaddafi proclaimed his desire to cleanse Libya of the "cockroaches" protesting against him⁵¹, calling for the deployment of all his security forces against protesting and ordering the bombing of Benghazi.⁵² Security forces shot indiscriminately into crowds of protesters,

⁴⁷ Ibid. 57-58.

⁴⁸ Totman, Sally, and Mat Hardy. 2015. "When Good Dictators Go Bad: Examining the 'Transformation' of Colonel Gaddafi." *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Global Studies* 10(2): 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 2.

⁵¹ "Libya Protests: Defiant Gaddafi Refuses to Quit". 2011. *BBC NEWS*, <https://perma.cc/E8QE-8Y7G>.

⁵² "Libya Air Force Pilots Refuse Orders to Bomb Opposition-held Benghazi". 2011. *HAARETZ*,

killing hundreds in the process. Gaddafi shut down internet services, expelled foreign journalists, and blocked access to social media sites all in an effort to reduce public knowledge of the violence, while protesters filmed security forces brutally attacking them and attempted to upload these videos online.⁵³ William Hague, Gaddafi's foreign secretary in Libya, even spoke out condemning the actions as "unacceptable and horrifying" and confirming Gaddafi's restriction on internet access before defecting from Libya.⁵⁴

Gaddafi's reaction to protests was unsurprising, as he had used lethal force against the opposition for years; he previously sent hit squads to murder exiled individuals who opposed the coup that put him in power,⁵⁵ and over 1,000 prisoners were shot and killed by Gaddafi's top security forces after they protested the regulations on family visits, meals and other aspects of Abu Salim Prison.⁵⁶ Prosecutor for the The International Criminal Court Luis Moreno-Ocampo even stated that evidence existed documenting that Gaddafi had planned the killing of his own people, plans that started after the uprising in Tunisia and Egypt and before protests took off in Libya. Ocampo said the original plan in Libya was to use tear gas to dispel crowds, but shooting protesters was the next step if that proved to be ineffective.⁵⁷ Gaddafi's lethal response to protests in his country ultimately warranted discussions of the R2P to protect the population.

<https://perma.cc/QE3U-6DCG>.

⁵³ Adetunji, Jo, Peter Beaumont, and Martin Chulov. 2011. "Libya Protests: More than 100 Killed as Army Fires on Unarmed Demonstrators." *The Guardian*

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Black, Ian. 2011. "Libya Protests Analysis: 'For Muammar Gaddafi It's Kill or Be Killed.'" *The Guardian*.

⁵⁶ "Libya: June 1996 Killings at Abu Salim Prison." 2006. *Human Rights Watch*.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2006/06/27/libya-june-1996-killings-abu-salim-prison>.

⁵⁷ Gray-Block, Aaron. 2011. "Exclusive: Gaddafi Pre-Planned Attacks on Civilians: Prosecutor." *Reuters*

Gaddafi's indiscriminate killing of his own people immediately caught the attention of the United Nations, with statements of condemnation quickly released and meetings among the Security Council commenced to determine a course of action to protect the Libyan people. The UNSC passed resolutions early to condemn the violence used by Gaddafi, and Resolution 1970 imposed sanctions such as arms embargo, travel bans, and asset freezes on senior government officials for their roles in allowing and perpetuating the crimes against humanity on the population of Libya.⁵⁸ This resolution also explicitly stated that Libyan authorities were failing in the state's "responsibility to protect its population."⁵⁹ When these resolutions didn't prove to deter Gaddafi's violent actions, the UNSC drafted Resolution 1973, which implemented a no-fly zone in Libya and authorized member states to use all necessary measures to protect Libya's civilians.⁶⁰ This was the resolution that would officially invoke the R2P. The UNSC stated in Resolution 1970 that Libya was failing to perform its Pillar 1 duties of the R2P to protect its citizens, so the next step was to launch an intervention using necessary means to stop the violence and ensure the population's protection.

China and Russia abstained from voting on Resolution 1973 to authorize the military mission in Libya, which allowed it to be passed and implemented.⁶¹ Although these two states were not in support of the mission - citing in particular their lack of confidence the mission would succeed - the idea of military intervention in Libya and breaching sovereignty wasn't so contentious to invoke a veto from them.⁶² Although

⁵⁸ S/RES/1970 (2011)

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Genser, Jared. 2018. "The United Nations Security Council's Implementation of the Responsibility to Protect: A Review of Past Interventions and Recommendations for Improvement." *Chicago Journal of International Law* 18(2):442.

⁶¹ Dunne, Tim, and Jess Gifkins. 2011. "Libya and the State of Intervention." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 65(5):523

⁶² Ibid. 523-524.

China and Russia tend to err on the side of caution and look to protect a state's sovereignty from intervention, the two states actively allowed the military campaign to happen even if they didn't completely agree with it fundamentally.⁶³ Their abstention and the remaining P5's 'yes' vote on March 17, 2011 allowed the UNSC to move forward with extensive military intervention in Libya. This action meant that the P5 were willing to prioritize the protection of Libya's population over whatever interests or reservations they may have had about the prospect of a military campaign, demonstrating exactly how the R2P should be applied.

The military campaign in Libya was led by NATO forces, and culminated in airstrikes conducted on Libya's capital Tripoli, which led to the overthrow of Gaddafi's regime on August 21, 2011. As Gaddafi fled the city, NATO forces continued to take control of more territory in Libya and fought the remaining forces loyal to Gaddafi.⁶⁴ However, the Libyan intervention did not accomplish all that it intended and led to more complications. When Resolution 1973 was passed six weeks after the conflict began, 1,000 civilians in Libya had already been killed. After intervention in a seven-month long military campaign, 7,000 more civilians were killed as a result of the conflict between NATO/rebels and Gaddafi's forces.⁶⁵ Additionally, a regime change was not the intention of the R2P when it was created, so the overthrow of Gaddafi's government was an unexpected consequence for Russia and China. This occurrence left Russia and China with a negative attitude towards the R2P, because they now associated the concept with

⁶³ S/PV/6498

⁶⁴ Emadi, Hafizullah. 2012. "Libya: The Road to Regime Change." *Global Dialogue:Nicosia* 14(2): 139.

⁶⁵ Kuperman, Alan. 2013. *Lessons from Libya: How Not to Intervene*. Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. 2.

regime change, going against their commitment to protecting a state's sovereignty, especially from the West.⁶⁶

One of the biggest worries among scholars is that the Libyan intervention has set an unintended negative precedent on the use of force in intervention. The intervention in Libya ultimately resulted in regime change, potentially striking an underlying fear in states - Russia and China in particular - that future R2P intervention would result in further instances of regime change.⁶⁷ The suggestion that regime change inherently follows intervention under R2P has led to states voting against intervention solely for that reason. Whether it is not wanting a certain country(s) to have control or influence over the newly implemented government or wanting to maintain a relationship with the current state, the unintended consequence of regime change ultimately impacts the decision making of these states. Scholars have recognized this behavior, as Russia has practiced this conservative approach in regards to Syria, China seems to have this same concern with respect to both Syria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,⁶⁸ and the United States is also guilty of this tactic when it comes to the case of Yemen.⁶⁹ Each of these states learned lessons from the Libya intervention that they have since carried with them in each subsequent discussion of the R2P.

The aftermath of the Libyan intervention guides the decision making and strategies for these three states in the subsequent cases this study analyzes. For example, each state's approach to Syria is directly influenced by the assumption that the end result in Libya could, and most likely would, happen again. From the Libyan crisis, China

⁶⁶ Fung, Courtney J. 2016. 40.

⁶⁷ Bloomfield, Alan. 2016. "Norm antipreneurs and theorising resistance to normative change." *Review of International Studies*, (42): 311 doi:10.1017/S026021051500025X

⁶⁸ Fung, Courtney J. 2020. "Just Not in the Neighbourhood: China's Views on the Application of the Responsibility to Protect in the DPRK." *The China Quarterly*: 3. doi: 10.1017/S0305741020000648.

⁶⁹ Exum, Andrew. 2017. "What's Really at Stake for America in Yemen's Con Ict." *The Atlantic*: 9.

learned that the West will always view China under the lens of a poor human rights record, and if the opposition to the standing government in future R2P crises wins, the new government will always side with the West who paved the way for regime change. Thus, China realizes that repercussions for voting on resolutions addressing situations such as Syria would be limited.⁷⁰ Likewise, when the Libya intervention resulted in regime change against a leader Russia viewed as an ally, the state's attitude in regards to the R2P changed drastically; with political instability mounting across the region, further R2P interventions meant Russia's allies could be replaced with democracy-driven western oriented governments, leaving Russia without a foothold in the Middle East.

Alternatively, the assumption of a regime change with the invocation of the R2P may encourage states like the United States to vote in favor of it, in order to then guide that regime change and implement a government or set of ideals that reflect their own interests. Similar to the United States' strategic plan for its invasion of Iraq to establish a permanent military base in the region, Syria has always been a location of value to the US to establish western ideals and influence, and supporting R2P intervention now furthers this agenda. The intervention and subsequent domination of Syria would allow the establishment of a western-backed Sunni government. This US-supported Syrian government would challenge the Shia government of Iran and would ultimately shift the balance of power in the region in favor of the US.⁷¹

De Nevers highlights the importance of the balance of power paradigm in which every powerful state wants more power tipped in their favor. She asserts that oftentimes the concerns over the balance of power will take precedence over promoting norms that

⁷⁰ Yellinek, Roie. 2018. "Who Will Reconstruct Syria?" *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*: 4.

⁷¹ Salhi, Hamoud. 2005. "Syria's Threat to America's National Interest." *Strategic Insights* IV(4): 1-2.

are beneficial to all, such as the R2P.⁷² We can see this struggle within the controversial decision of whether to implement the R2P or not, especially in the case of Syria. Russia and China may have been influenced in their decisions regarding the R2P because of the regime change in Libya when the R2P was unanimously decided upon. Either state could be fearful that an invocation of the R2P in Syria would result in another regime change, one that could ultimately be in favor of the United States and give them a stronger hold and sphere of influence within the region. Under this speculation, it can be inferred that Russia or China, or both, have prioritized their fight in the balance of power between great states over the invocation of the R2P. If this is true, then norms would truly be controlled by powerful states concerned with their own domestic and foreign policy agendas, and not with the protection of humanity the R2P was created to promote.

As demonstrated by the creation of and subsequent noncompliance with the Responsibility to Protect, great powers in the international sphere can frustrate the attempted application of a norm, even when other states are vocal and willing to implement it. The R2P emerged after an international acknowledgment by both powerful and weaker states that future action in preventing or stopping mass atrocities was imperative to the protection of populations not safeguarded by their own governments. However, with powerful states more or less managing the compliance of norms, their political and economic self-interests often drive their decisions to commit to the R2P. As Richard Price contends, the existence of a norm does not guarantee compliance, it simply requires justification for non-compliance. The more complex the norm, the greater the ambiguities that states can inevitably exploit in order to evade questions of norm

⁷² Ibid. 54.

violation.⁷³ The Responsibility to Protect has proven to be complex in its characterization of qualifying situations for invocation and strategies for implementation, resulting in a plethora of ambiguities states can use to justify noncompliance.

Libya has proven to be a baseline case for the international community, setting precedent for how the R2P is implemented and ultimately guiding states' decision making. The understanding that a possible regime change is inherently a part of implementing the R2P can either motivate states (such as the United States) to vote in favor of the R2P or encourage states to veto the resolution (such as China and Russia) if a regime change is not beneficial for them, politically or economically. Because regime change was an unexpected result of the Libya intervention, the assumption by states that it will happen again in a future R2P case aids us in uncovering states' motivations and decisions, and is why we expect certain actions in future cases. Overall, the primary motivation for states voting to intervene in humanitarian crises has been primarily politically and economically motivated, which results in strategic decisions that don't necessarily serve the best interests of the people facing these atrocities.

⁷³ Price, Richard. 1998. "Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines." *International Organization* 52(3): 641.

Chapter 2: An Influential Security Interest

The Responsibility to Protect was established as a tool to guide states in their behavior when approaching a situation where crimes against humanity are occurring and the government is unable or unwilling to stop them. This norm is intended to prioritize the safety and well-being of civilians, because they were so often ignored in the past. However, while the intention of the R2P is well-natured, its results have fallen quite short of prioritizing citizens. These case studies examine how different political, economic, and military interests influence the UNSC's decision on invoking the R2P. Specifically, these three cases demonstrate how these interests, which appear to be critical to a state's security, seem so vital to a state that protecting civilians is not the primary concern, and the R2P is ultimately vetoed or not brought up for discussion at all.

Syria

A. Background

Chaos in Syria erupted in March 2011 when the population rebelled against a longstanding authoritarian government led by President Bashar al-Assad. A group of 15 teenagers graffitied "the people want the regime to fall" on a wall in the southern Syrian town of Dara'a, resulting in their imprisonment by the governor and subsequent protests across the province.⁷⁴ The greater Dara'a population responded to the punishment promptly, igniting protests across the country including the burning of official buildings, the destruction of a statue depicting Assad's father, and pelting a poster of Assad with rocks. The theme of these protests were the demand to lift a forty-eight year old emergency law to release political prisoners, end corruption in the government and

⁷⁴ Abouzeid, Rania. 2011. "Syria's Revolt: How Graffiti Stirred an Uprising." *Time*. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2060788,00.html> .

amend a real estate law over property transactions at the border. Assad seemingly worked with the protesters at first, expelling the governor and releasing the 15 teens while agreeing to create a committee to investigate the death of five individuals killed during protest.⁷⁵

However, Assad quickly changed tactics and ensured all protest against his regime was met with brutal force. On March 21, 2011 men marching through Dara'a chanting "there is no fear, after today there is no fear" were met by the provincial security forces opening fire and killing fifteen while injuring many more.⁷⁶ These violent actions continued throughout the month of March, alongside the disappearances of at least ninety-three individuals who were arrested and detained in unknown locations, although the estimation is that hundreds more had been hidden.⁷⁷ As protests spread across the country Assad moved to conceal tensions by implementing a complete media blackout. This strategy was to ensure that news of the violent tactics against protesters couldn't reach other nations as it had through the media and cell phone use. Assad banned international journalists from reporting in Syria and detained and assaulted any local journalists attempting to cover the anti-Assad regime protests. Assad went so far as to disable cell phones, landlines, electricity, and the internet in all cities where protests were taking place, not only to block news of protests from leaving the state, but also to force protests to stop in order to recover essential utilities.⁷⁸

Reactions from the region came swiftly as the Arab League suspended Syria's membership from the coalition and agreed to impose political and economic sanctions on

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Marsh, Katherine. 2011. "Syrian Regime Launches Crackdown by Shooting 15 Activists Dead." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/24/syria-crackdown-shooting>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Attacks on the Press in 2011: Syria." 2011. *Committee to Protect Journalists*. <https://cpj.org/2012/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2011-syria/>.

Assad's regime for failing to cease violence caused by the government; however, no discussions about no-fly zones or military intervention took place.⁷⁹ The international community's first collective response to the violence in Syria came five months later on August 3rd, 2011, simply condemning the actions of the Syrian government. This appeared to have little influence on the Assad regime, as the government continued its rule by violence as the United Nations was not preparing to pass any resolutions to stop the violence.⁸⁰ With little international response, Assad continued his violent rule with almost no resistance for years, and even went so far as to release Sarin gas in Eastern and Western Ghouta, which killed hundreds of civilians, including children.⁸¹ The Arab League immediately responded, condemning Assad, and called for the United Nations to put aside political differences in order to implement the "necessary resolutions" to hold Assad responsible and end violence, hinting at the need for military intervention.⁸² Even after this attack, The United Nations Security Council continued to be inefficient in passing R2P resolutions to put a stop to Assad's assault of his people, mainly because of the stark opposition from both China and Russia. Both of these states wish to see Assad's regime continue in power, and the invocation of the R2P is viewed as a threat to the regime's livelihood.

B. Critical Interest

Syria's location in the Middle East has been attractive for the world's most powerful states with the hope of securing dominance and control of the region. Settled

⁷⁹ Batty, David, and Jack Shenker. 2011. "Syria Suspended from Arab League." *The Guardian*: 2.

⁸⁰ S.C. Pres. Statement 2011/16 (Aug 3, 2011)

⁸¹ "Analysis of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria". 2013. *Human Rights Watch*.
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/09/10/attacks-ghouta/analysis-alleged-use-chemical-weapons-syria>.

⁸² Reuters Staff. 2013. "Arab League Blames Syria's Assad for Chemical Attack." *Reuters*.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-league/arab-league-blames-syrias-assad-for-chemical-attack-idUSBRE97Q0NI20130827>.

east of Iraq and Iran and just North of Saudi Arabia, gaining a foothold in Syria would put a country such as the United States or Russia at a major advantage in terms of territorial control over local oil reserves and sphere of influence over surrounding states. The United States in particular has an interest in seeing the Assad regime replaced because of Syria's relationship with both Israel and Iran. In 1967, the Israeli Defense Forces launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, and then proceeded to seize territory from Egypt, Jordan and Syria.⁸³ This launched the bloody Six-Day War in the Middle East that was eventually resolved by UN ceasefire negotiations. However, this resulted in severe tensions between Israel and surrounding states, as Syria actively resisted the Israeli occupation through means the US has since called terrorism.⁸⁴ Thus, the US opposed the Syrian regime in light of its alliance with Israel, and the prospect of launching an R2P intervention leading to a regime change was quite appealing, presenting the opportunity to establish a pro-West democratic government that Israel and the US can then align with. Not only was its relationship with Israel an influential factor, but the US also had to consider Syria's relationship with Iran when approaching this case. Iran, Syria's ally and the US's greatest enemy in the region, continues to provide financial and military support while also aiding in expanding Syria's chemical weapons program through a deployment of scientists, training and equipment.⁸⁵

Because of the strategic location and potential for power shifts in the region, the international community's attention quickly turned to Syria when the civil war broke out, eager to find some way to capitalize on the Assad regime's instability. In particular, China

⁸³ Landis, Joshua. 2010. "The U.S.-Syria Relationship: A Few Questions." *Middle East Policy* 17(3): 66.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 64

⁸⁵ Sadjadpour, Karim. 2013. "Iran's Unwavering Support to Assad's Syria." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. 3.

and Russia have critical security interests in preserving Assad's power that compel them to prevent R2P intervention that would be utilized to protect the Syrian population. Taking a closer look at the history of these states' relationships and how crucial their ties have become will reveal just how critical the Assad regime is to convince China and Russia of undermining their R2P promise.

China

China's two major concerns in the international community are the state's reputation and potential for economic growth. China's government is aware that large western states hold the opinion that China is anti-democratic with little concern for human rights. Because of this, China's foreign policy has historically been to target smaller states that are typically in need of assistance, whether it be economic relief or other ways to stabilize the nation. China's ultimate goal is to gain a sphere of influence over these states in order to increase economic activity and investments. Although Syria was never of much interest or investment to China, the instability of the civil war presents an opportunity for China to establish itself as a reliable ally. China's concerns over reputation and economic opportunity shine through in the state's response to the Syrian crisis, especially after the Libyan intervention damaged the Middle East's opinion of China.

When approaching the situation in Syria, China was far less hesitant than in its handling of the Libyan crisis. After abstaining from the vote on Resolution 1973 advancing the R2P intervention and not participating in the military campaign that led to Gaddafi's removal, China was criticized as irresponsible and negligent to its R2P promise

by the West and Arab states.⁸⁶ China realized that repercussions for voting on resolutions addressing the situation in Syria would be limited, as criticism from the West was acceptable.⁸⁷ What China is primarily concerned about is catering to both sides of the Syrian civil war, in an attempt to ensure that no matter the outcome, China will be seen as an ally. China's support of the Assad regime is based on the premise that Syria will eventually need to rebuild when the violence eventually subsides. What China offers Syria right now is political support along with millions of dollars in donations earmarked for healthcare, humanitarian needs, and educational services.⁸⁸ Thus, if China vetoes R2P resolutions in an effort to protect Assad and keep his regime in power, China is seen as a reliable ally intent on providing support for the future. China's actions put it in a position to get business contracts and investments in Syria's rebuilding once the civil war eventually ends. Conversely, China has simultaneously hosted a delegation with members of the Syrian National Committee for Democratic Change, Assad's rival, in order to achieve this same level of trust.⁸⁹ With this relationship, China has once again put itself in a position to be a potential future ally, opening the possibility of having a major role in Syria's rebuilding process, no matter the outcome.

Through this relationship, China hopes to be the main actor for providing Syria with economic relief during the rebuilding stage. China hopes to be seen by Assad and the Committee for Democratic Change as an economic partner in the rebuild process. China wants to be able to provide loans to Syria and invest in infrastructure projects, which would result in Chinese contracts in Syria, expand China's Belt and Road

⁸⁶ Sun, Yun. 2012b. "Syria: What China Has Learned From Its Libya Experience." *Asia Pacific Bulletin* (152): 74.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kobierski, Lukasz. 2020. "China's Financial Support for Syria." *Warsaw Institute*: 1.

⁸⁹ Sun, 2012b. 2.

Initiative, and boost its own economy. From here, China would be a constant ally for the future.⁹⁰ This relationship is already building, as the Syrian Minister of Transportation has engaged in discussions with a Chinese delegation on ways to cooperate in advancement of air and ground transportation and railway construction.⁹¹ China ultimately benefits from vetoing R2P resolutions and keeping Assad in power, because China has the opportunity to build relationships with both sides of the civil war and attempt to form an anti-West alliance. Maintaining Assad's regime also maintains the current balance of power in the region, allowing China to send delegates to neighboring countries in order to cooperate and strategize how to best handle Syria, preventing chaos in the region and a vacuum in which western states can emerge and dictate policy. Finally, vetoing R2P intervention in Syria prevents the chance of legitimizing the R2P as a mode of overthrowing an unpopular government.⁹²

Russia

Russia has a heavy interest in maintaining the Assad regime's control of Syria due to their close, albeit complicated history of strategic political and economic ties between the two countries. Syria's alliance with Russia dates back to Syria's role as the Soviet Union's greatest arms importer from the Middle East in the 1970s, with more military advisors posted in Syria than any other state.⁹³ Syria, led at the time by Hafez al-Assad, was the Soviet Union's only constant and reliable ally in the Middle East.⁹⁴ However, the two nations were not ideologically aligned during this Cold War period, resulting in a tumultuous relationship for the first few years of their alliance. Syria's Ba'ath Party

⁹⁰ Yellinek. 3.

⁹¹ Ibid. 4.

⁹² Sun, 2012b. 2.

⁹³ Charap, et al. 11

⁹⁴ Allison, Roy. 2013. "Russia and Syria: Explaining Alignment with a Regime in Crisis." *International Affairs* 89(4): 801.

banned the Syrian Communist Party and subsequently expelled Soviet military advisers posted in Damascus after learning of the KGB's support of the Lebanese Communist Party during the Lebanese civil war, in which Syria intervened on behalf of the Maronite Christians against the communist party.⁹⁵ Although Moscow retained its communication with the Syrian Communist Party, the two states were able to move forward with a bilateral treaty of cooperation and friendship.⁹⁶ After the fall of the Soviet Union, the nation's military was greatly scaled back, and this relationship diminished until President Putin invested in rebuilding the military, later allowing for cooperative Syrian and Russian military academies by 2006 with Russian advisers serving in the Syrian military.⁹⁷ Russia now has two military bases in Syria - a naval base at Tartus and an air base at Latakia - and is intent on expanding its presence through a positive relationship with Assad.⁹⁸ As the military agreements between the two states continued to develop, Putin also saw an opportunity to enhance Russia's sphere of influence in the region.

One of Putin's overall goals during his presidency has been to revive the Soviet legacy and in particular reestablish Russia as a superpower that can bridge the gap between the Middle East and the West.⁹⁹ His first strategy was to build upon the relationships the Soviet Union had during the Cold War era, specifically with nations who were ideologically aligned with Russia. These states included Syria, Algeria, Libya, Egypt and Iraq. Russia demonstrated its loyalty and commitment to respecting sovereignty when the state opposed the United States invasion of Iraq in 2003, but when

⁹⁵ Ibid. 801-802.

⁹⁶ Charap, et al. 11.

⁹⁷ Allison. 802.

⁹⁸ "Russia Aims to Boost Military Facilities in Syria."

⁹⁹ Malashenko, Alexey. 2013. "RUSSIA AND THE ARAB SPRING." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*: 3.

Russia was unable to stop the invasion, it began to take a more aggressive approach.¹⁰⁰ When engaging with the Libya crisis, Russia was once again opposed to intervention. Libya was one of the states with which Russia aimed at rebuilding alliances, and coming across as the enemy would eliminate that possibility. After countless UN discussions, it became clear to Russia that intervention policies would be enacted one way or another, so the state allowed Resolution 1973 in hopes of playing a substantial role in guiding the Libyan government towards stabilization.¹⁰¹ When the Libya intervention resulted in regime change to a leader Russia viewed as an ally, the state's attitude in regards to the R2P changed drastically: with political instability mounting across the region, further R2P interventions could mean Russia's allies are replaced with democracy-driven western oriented governments, leaving Russia without a foothold in the Middle East.

As a result of these past actions, Russia has established itself in the Middle East and North Africa as a mediator of negotiations in an effort to boost its own economic investments in Syria. Russia views Syria as an avenue in which its domestic economic woes may be resolved through using Syria as a proxy for surrounding the region. Although Russia has provided Syria with less than 0% (less than \$8 million) of its total distribution of foreign aid between 2011-2015 (approximately \$1.6 billion)¹⁰², Russia aims to encourage the international community to contribute in an effort to appear as a supporter for smaller countries in the region. Russia wants regional and international trade and investment in Syria in order to stabilize the nation, as long as those states are also working towards stability and don't attempt to undermine Assad's regime.¹⁰³ In

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 8.

¹⁰¹ Allison. 797.

¹⁰² Asmus, Gerda, Andreas Fuchs, and Angelika Müller. 2018. "Russia's Foreign Aid Re-Emerges." *AIDDATA*. <https://www.aiddata.org/blog/russias-foreign-aid-re-emerges>.

¹⁰³ Hatahet, Sinan. 2019. "Russia and Iran: Economic Influence in Syria." *Chatham House*: 6.

return, Syria receives increased support from a powerful state that is willing to invest money and military power to shield off unwanted influence from the West as well as rebuild the state once the violence and protest eventually diminish. Russia's ultimate goal is to end its foreign aid to Syria and reduce its military presence, while garnering partnerships with other countries in the region, but this can only be achieved through the stabilization of Assad's regime, which according to Russia cannot happen with a Western-led R2P intervention.

C. Intervention

A resolution calling for a complete R2P intervention in Syria has yet to be passed by the Security Council due to the ongoing interference of China and Russia. The UNSC was initially slow in its response, waiting until August 3, 2011, five months after violence erupted, to issue a formal statement condemning the actions of the Assad regime.¹⁰⁴ This statement was simply an acknowledgement of the situation by the greater international community, as Russia and China would not allow actual action to be taken in forms of sanctions, punishments or military intervention. The following months consisted of meetings by the Security Council to discuss the ongoing violence, but no additional drafts were presented to the council. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) conducted an investigation on the violence in Syria at the end of 2011, ultimately finding evidence that the state was committing crimes against humanity against civilians.¹⁰⁵ The UNHCR then urged the Security Council to take action, which forced the UNSC to reconvene to discuss possible action.¹⁰⁶ This meeting occurred nearly

¹⁰⁴ Genser. 484.

¹⁰⁵ Indep. Int'l Comm'n of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, ¶¶ 100–10, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/S-17/2/Add.1 (Nov. 23, 2011)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

one year after violence first began in Syria, with Russia and China continuing to block measures calling for an international response in the form of sanctions and demanding the resignation of Assad, even after over 2,000 people had already died at the hands of his regime.¹⁰⁷

Numerous resolutions have been passed as a result of the ongoing violence in Syria, with Table 1 document the most substantial resolutions to date. Most of the resolutions have been condemnations of the Assad regime and the violence used on both sides of the conflict, with many others renewing measures established in previous resolutions. Resolution 2235 for example, establishing the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has been renewed several times since its implementation.

Table 1: The most substantial resolutions that have been passed on Syrian intervention

<u>Resolution</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
S/RES/2042(2012)	April 14, 2012	Authorized the deployment of 30 unarmed military observers to Syria
S/RES/2043(2012)	April 21, 2012	Established a UN Supervision Mission in Syria to observe potential human rights violations
S/RES/2118(2012)	September 27, 2013	Condemned the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime on civilians, authorized the removal and destruction of all Syrian chemical weapons stockpiles
S/RES/2165(2014)	July 14, 2014	Increased the amount of authorized roads and accessways that humanitarian aid can travel

¹⁰⁷ Paul Harris et al., Syria Resolution Vetoed by Russia and China at United Nations, The Guardian (Feb. 4, 2012), <https://perma.cc/PS55-ENH2>.

		on (with neighboring countries' consent); established a monitoring mechanism to document the situation for 180 days
S/RES/2209(2015)	March 6, 2015	Condemned use of chemical weapons against civilians, noted Syria's violation of S/RES/2118(2012), threatened further action if violations continue
S/RES/2235(2015)	August 7, 2015	Noted that chemical weapons were allegedly used after S/RES/2209(2015) was passed, established the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons - United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to investigate past and future chemical weapon violations
S/RES/2268(2016)	February 26, 2016	Detailed a UN commitment to the US/Russia joint statement from the International Syria Support Group calling for a ceasefire in Syria for all parties
S/RES/2336(2016)	December 31, 2016	Established a ceasefire agreement and welcomed the efforts from Russia and Turkey to end Syrian violence and jumpstart the political process

**All information is taken from the Index to Proceedings of the Security Council between 2011-2019¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ "Index to Proceedings of the Security Council." *Dag Hammarskjöld Library*.
<https://www.un.org/en/library/page/index-proceedings-security-council> (February 12, 2021).

Table 1 doesn't include resolutions after 2016 because there have been very few resolutions passed since that time. Additionally, the resolutions that have been passed are renewals of measures such as the JIM and fact-finding missions regarding both chemical weapon use and human rights violations. Although none of these resolutions have implemented R2P measures that have directly protected the Syrian population, they are steps in the right direction and will eventually lead to further R2P protections. Russia and China are responsible for blocking R2P measures currently, and will continue to do so as long as keeping Assad in power will benefit them.

D. Obstruction

Russia and China have gone to great lengths to prevent R2P resolutions to be passed by the UNSC in regards to the Syrian conflict. There have been 17 draft resolutions vetoed, all by Russia, with China contributing to some while abstaining from others. Most resolutions were vetoed because the language was deemed too political and indicated a western influence; those who drafted the resolution were focused on their own geopolitical intentions rather than considering the interest of the Syrian people.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, the draft resolutions that proposed sanctions were vetoed by Russia and China because they would weaken the Assad regime, leaving it vulnerable to its enemies within Syria as well as a potential ousting by rebel forces backed by Western states.

Table 2: Most substantial vetoes against R2P resolutions in Syria

<u>Draft Resolution</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>P5 Vote</u>
S/2011/612	October 4, 2011	Called for unofficial sanctions against Syria; encouraged	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK <u>Veto:</u> China, Russia

¹⁰⁹ S/PV/6810

		member states to limit / monitor their supply of arms and other resources to Syria	
S/2012/77	February 4, 2012	Condemned Syria for violence against civilians and called for the UN to assist the League of Arab States' mission to observe political activities within Syria	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK <u>Veto:</u> China, Russia
S/2012/538	July 19, 2012	Condemned violence in Syria and promoted a Special Envoy from the UN Secretary General to aid in establishing a democratic process within the government	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK <u>Veto:</u> China, Russia
S/2014/348	May 22, 2014	Condemned violence in Syria and referred the conflict to the International Criminal Court (ICC)	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK <u>Veto:</u> China, Russia
S/2016/846	October 8, 2016	Called for a halt of military flights over Aleppo by both sides in the Syrian conflict	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK, <u>Veto:</u> Russia <u>Abstain:</u> China
S/2017/172	February 28, 2017	Condemned Syria's non-compliance with UN resolutions and expressed concerns over the	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK <u>Veto:</u> China, Russia

		findings from the JIM; proposed sanctions against Syria as a punishment	
S/2017/315	April 12, 2017	Condemned chemical weapons attack on April 4, 2017; requested the Syrian government provide the JIM investigators with all information regarding flight plans, names of all people listed on aircraft, and a list of all meetings with generals and officers of the military for five days leading up to the attack	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK <u>Veto:</u> Russia <u>Abstain:</u> China
S/2018/355	April 6, 2018	Proposed by Russia to condemn US and other states of violating international law by entering Syria and acting aggressively towards the Syrian government	<u>Affirm:</u> Russia, China <u>Veto:</u> US, France, UK
S/2019/756	September 19, 2019	Called for immediate cease to hostilities and proposed methods to monitor the ceasefire; would make Syria undergo confidence building measures such as releasing prisoners to demonstrate to	<u>Affirm:</u> US, France, UK <u>Veto:</u> China, Russia

		the UN it is committed to a peaceful transition	
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**All information is taken from the Index to Proceedings of the Security Council between 2011-2019¹¹⁰

Russia and China delivered the initial veto of UNSC proposal S/2011/612, proposed by France, the UK and other non-permanent members of the Security Council, which aimed at condemning Syria's continued use of force against civilians and calling for member states to demonstrate restraint in supplying arms and other resources to Syria.¹¹¹ This veto blocked the UN's first effort to implement an R2P style response to the violence in Syria. Speaking at the October 4th meeting, UN Ambassador for China Li Baodong emphasized the principle of non-intervention, asserting that putting pressure on Syria rather than engaging in peace talks would only destabilize the country and the region more. Additionally, Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin emphasized the importance of protecting state sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as urging discussions constructed around a civil dialogue that would encourage a peaceful solution to the violence in Syria. Churkin highlighted that the draft resolution presented was riddled with sanctions and intervention plans that present Assad with an ultimatum, which does not inherently encourage cooperation on Syria's part.¹¹² Russia and China took the approach of drafting their own resolution on several occasions rather than simply vetoing a proposal they didn't approve of. The first dual proposal recommended conducting a peaceful dialogue with Syria, while ultimately leaving any action in the hands of Assad. Although that resolution was not ultimately voted on, it garnered support from Brazil, India and South Africa.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ "Index to Proceedings of the Security Council."

¹¹¹ S/2011/612

¹¹² S/PV/6627

¹¹³ Ibid.

E. Analysis

Both China and Russia are particularly conservative when it comes to invoking the R2P, due to the case of Libya in which the government was ultimately overthrown and replaced after military intervention efforts to hold Gaddafi's regime accountable for his regime's crimes against the Libyan population. In addition to this concern, both states have a vested interest in seeing Assad's regime continue. By not intervening in Syria, China and Russia have the opportunity to build relationships with the Assad regime that have potential to extend throughout the rebuilding process and beyond.

China has been relatively quiet in discussing its foreign policy in Syria, a strategy that allows the state to engage with numerous countries in the Middle East without isolating itself because of a specific opinion on the conflict. However, China has insisted that the international community must take a backseat position and allow Syria to resolve its own conflict. Foreign Ministry spokesman Lui Weimin emphasized China's position against intervention, citing it is the League of Arab States' responsibility to oversee Syria's progress, and intervention from the UNSC would only destabilize the country.¹¹⁴

Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs in Russia, also confirmed this fear on behalf of Russia during a press conference in Tskhinvali, citing that the Libyan occurrence has potential to convince protesters in other countries that assistance from the international community will aid them in overthrowing the regime in question.¹¹⁵ Because Libya was the first attempt to apply the R2P principles, the result of a regime change has

¹¹⁴ Ren, Mu. 2014. "Interpreting China's (Non-)Intervention Policy to The Syrian Crisis: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis." *Ritsumeikan Academic Achievement Repository*: 273.

¹¹⁵ Allison. 797.

become a permanent consideration that Russia and China specifically feel the need to consider when contemplating an R2P resolution in the Security Council.¹¹⁶

When asked at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum Plenary Meeting in 2017 about Russia's engagement with the Assad regime and subsequent vetoes of Responsibility to Protect Resolutions within the Security Council, Putin replied "we [Russia] are not so much defending President Assad as we are Syrian statehood. We don't want there to be a situation similar to Libya, or Somalia or Afghanistan, in Syria."¹¹⁷ Putin continued to emphasize the importance of state sovereignty, which would potentially be threatened with the implementation of R2P intervention. Russia furthers this idea by claiming that the violence in Syria does not pose a threat to international peace and security, and an intervention tactic would actually harm the Middle East as a whole, as the region would become completely destabilized in efforts to deal with the chaos inevitably ensuing.¹¹⁸ However, there have been several instances in which other nations have been threatened by the Syrian violence which would conflict with Russia's claim that international security is not threatened. One example is Under-Security-General Lynn Pascoe confirming at UN Meeting 6636 that Syrian troops killed a Syrian national on Lebanese soil in October 2011 after opening fire against Syrian nationals fleeing over the border.¹¹⁹ This is just one instance where Syria's violence has spilled across borders and threatened international peace and security.

Ultimately, the implementation of the R2P in Syria has been blocked by strong efforts from China and Russia in order to protect their economic and military

¹¹⁶ Bloomfield, Alan. 2016. 328.

¹¹⁷ President of Russia, "St. Petersburg International Economic Forum Plenary Meeting," June 2, 2017

¹¹⁸ Allison. 798.

¹¹⁹ S/PV/6636

entanglements with the Assad regime. Because of regime change in the case of Libya, China and Russia sought to be conservative and strategic in their approach to Syria, ensuring that the West is unable to overthrow Assad and implement a pro-West government that would diminish or eliminate these relationships. By aggressively preventing R2P in Syria, China and Russia have actively prioritized their own interests over the protection of civilians, directly contradicting the premise of the R2P. A very similar dynamic translated into the UNSC's approach to the internal violence in Myanmar, where states strongly oppose discussions of the R2P.

Myanmar

A. Background

Myanmar has a tumultuous history of military rule and instability that resulted in periods of global isolation and staggering poverty. A parliamentary democracy was established when colonizer Great Britain left Myanmar in 1948, which only lasted until 1962 when a military coup took control of the country.¹²⁰ The military ruled strictly, cracking down on those opposed to the government and isolating the country from the international sphere. The military junta unexpectedly dissolved in 2011, and a military-installed transitional government was put in place to attempt to usher in political stability.¹²¹ In 2015 Aung San Suu Kyi led the National League for Democracy (NLD) to win elections for both chambers of parliament, reintroducing democracy to Myanmar, and Kyi becoming the de facto leader of the country.¹²² However, this return to democracy has not encompassed everyone, as the government decided to withdraw

¹²⁰ Maizland, Lindsay. 2021. "Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict." *Council on Foreign Relations*.

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

temporary citizenship status for Muslims, disenfranchising approximately 700,000 people within the nation.¹²³ The continued constriction of Muslims' lives in Myanmar has led to numerous protests, and the eventual targeted killings by the government.

The military on multiple occasions has used force against protesters, destroyed thousands of villages, and used tactics such as “shoot on sight” policies in regions home to ethnic minorities in order to instill fear and compliance in the population.¹²⁴ There has also been longstanding conflict between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims within the Rakhine State, resulting in numerous occasions of violence and human rights violations. The Myanmar government was even secretly attempting to remove the Rohingya Muslims through means of conversion to Buddhism, restricting marriage and access to higher education, banning Muslims from holding government office or owning land, and many other restrictions detailed in a secret government plan adopted in 1988.¹²⁵ Tensions between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims grew intense as the government began a misinformation campaign against Muslims to depict them as a danger to the Rakhine population, leading them to view the Rohingya Muslims as the enemy. The state has engaged in “clearance operations” in order to drive Muslims out of the country, with 900,000 Muslims fleeing to Bangladesh while 600,000 remain under severe restrictions, including 120,000 detained in camps since 2012.¹²⁶ Although the government has kept the country locked down to keep out those providing humanitarian

¹²³ Burke, Adam and Independent consultant and researcher working on conflict and related concerns in Myanmar and across Southeast Asia. 2016. “New Political Space, Old Tensions: History, Identity and Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 38(2): 270.

¹²⁴ Genser. 489.

¹²⁵ Green, Penny, Thomas MacManus, and Alicia de la Cour Venning. 2015. *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*. International State Crime Initiative. 36.

¹²⁶ “Myanmar (Burma).” 2021. *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect*. <https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/myanmar-burma/> (March 01, 2021).

aid or looking to stop the violence, some documentation of the crimes against humanity have come out to shed light on the genocide the government is committing.

Testimonies gathered for a fact-finding mission in 2016 resulted in a report from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights that documented several instances of R2P violations from Myanmar's government: extrajudicial killings, forced disappearance, rape, torture, and ethnic and religious persecution, just to name a few.¹²⁷ UN High Commissioner of Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein cited numerous reports from Myanmar, stating that "the situation seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing."¹²⁸ Furthermore, two former soldiers for the Myanmar military fled the state and were ultimately transported to the Hague to testify about the genocide the government is conducting against the Rohingya population. They documented the villages the military pillaged, the mass graves created for the people indiscriminately shot and killed or raped and beaten as the military moved across the Rakhine State.¹²⁹

As these atrocities continued, the military conducted another coup on February 1, 2021 and implemented a year-long state of emergency, claiming fraud in Myanmar's democratic elections in 2020.¹³⁰ The continued political instability that Myanmar is plagued with will only perpetuate the suffering of the Rohingya, because there has yet to be a government seeking to protect them. The documented attacks against the Rohingya

¹²⁷ Mahmood, Syed S, Emily Wroe, Arlan Fuller, and Jennifer Leaning. 2017. *Interviews with Rohingyas Fleeing from Myanmar Since 9 October 2016*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0140673616006462>. 40.

¹²⁸ "UN Human Rights Chief Points to 'Textbook Example of Ethnic Cleansing' in Myanmar." 2017. *UN News*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/564622-un-human-rights-chief-points-textbook-example-ethnic-cleansing-myanmar>.

¹²⁹ Beech, Hannah, Saw Nang, and Marlise Simons. 2020. "'Kill All You See': In a First, Myanmar Soldiers Tell of Rohingya Slaughter." *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/08/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-genocide.html>.

¹³⁰ Cuddy, Alice. 2021. "Myanmar Coup: What Is Happening and Why?" *BBC*

overall paint a small picture of the real situation taking place right now in Myanmar, with the United Nations Security Council not acting to invoke the Responsibility to Protect in order to end human rights violations committed by the government of Myanmar.

B. Critical Interest

China

China has a particular interest in maintaining the status quo in Myanmar, as its current relationship with the state provides extensive economic benefits and an expanding sphere of influence across Southeast Asia. Myanmar has grown to be a strategic relationship for China that offers economic benefits and potential future expansions of influence in Southeast Asia. This relationship provided China with international advantages beginning in 1949, when the Republic of China's first non-socialist diplomatic relationship developed with the then democratic state of Burma. The relationship was China's first step out of international isolation from largely democratic states, and began as a political partnership until 2000 when China began using Myanmar as an economic partner as well.¹³¹ In search of economic expansion within the region, China realized that Myanmar is rich in natural resources such as oil and gas, and has potential for bilateral trade agreements and investments in energy sectors, particularly hydropower. China views Myanmar as an important supplier of natural gas for two reasons: a new, closer pipeline would reduce China's dependence on oil from North Africa and the Middle East that is shared with other western states,¹³² and this new pipeline would be under China's sphere of influence and have the potential to expand

¹³¹ Sun, Yun. 2012a. "China's Strategic Misjudgement on Myanmar." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 31(1): 79.

¹³² Steinberg, David I., and Hongwei Fan. 168-169.

trade relations between China and other Southeast Asian countries.¹³³ As a result, by 2010 China was Myanmar's largest investor and second largest trading partner, providing China a strong economic foothold in the region as well as a strategic geographic advantage, as Myanmar offers China a direct passage to the Indian Ocean.

The Indian Ocean provides China with two strategic advantages. The first would be the increased movement of Chinese energy and commodities, as the Indian Ocean provides more access to naval passages. Additionally, Chinese cooperation with Myanmar would assist in changing the balance of power and influence in South Asia in favor of China. Gaining access to the Indian Ocean subsequently limits the influence that India has over Myanmar, which is beneficial to China because India has deepening naval cooperation with the United States. A limited Indian influence in Myanmar would indirectly mean a limited influence by the United States which is always an advantage for China.¹³⁴ Any R2P invocation with the potential to lead to regime change would present the possibility of threatening China's trade agreements and investments in Myanmar, which certainly deters China from allowing an R2P resolution in the Security Council.

China in the past has also promoted non-intervention peace negotiations when dealing with ethnic conflicts in Myanmar, so China is maintaining its usual position in regards to the current ethnic cleansing. One of China's greatest concerns when it comes to Myanmar is border security, as ethnic conflict and violence have often threatened to or have actually spilled over into China. In 2009, China made the mistake of becoming involved militarily in the Kokang conflict, which resulted in 37,000 refugees flooding into Yunnan Province.¹³⁵ From this moment China moved forward promoting peaceful

¹³³ Sun. 2012a. 78.

¹³⁴ Steinberg. 2012. 174-175.

¹³⁵ Sun. 2012a. 75.

discussions on reconciliation, in efforts to protect the border and prevent further violence and migration flows into Chinese territory. It is also possible that China is simply less interested in the violence occurring in Myanmar because it hasn't threatened the China-Myanmar border. The Rakhine State is located along the Southwest border of Myanmar, meaning that violence is centralized there and most refugees are fleeing to the nearby countries of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, or even heading south to Australia.¹³⁶ Because China is not facing the direct threat of violence or migration spilling over its borders, the state can be comfortable with its position to have Myanmar handle the conflict internally.

These interests have proven vital to China, which is why blocking R2P intervention is an important strategy that China has taken within the United Nations. China has worked to be Myanmar's top ally in the region and kept the state's relationship with the West very limited. If an R2P intervention were to be passed, then it opens the floodgates for the United States and the West to increase its influence and build a working relationship with Myanmar's government, which could lead to a lesser relationship with China. Additionally, as mentioned in previous sections, China has become wary of the Responsibility to Protect because it may overthrow the current government and create the possibility of the implementation of a western-style or western-friendly regime, leaving Myanmar vulnerable to Western influence within the state and subsequently the Southeast Asian region. In order for China to maintain the influence it has and protect its investments in the area, Myanmar's government must remain intact.

C. Intervention

¹³⁶ Green. 2015. 21.

Very little action has been taken on behalf of the United Nations Security Council to stop the atrocities within the Rakhine State. Numerous efforts on behalf of non-veto-holding members to shed light on the crimes have not resulted in any proposed resolutions to recommend military intervention or impose sanctions on the state. These efforts have mainly been through the United Nations Human Rights Council, with several resolutions passed calling for investigations into the human rights violations by Myanmar's government.¹³⁷ Additionally, the European Union and 14 other individual countries have imposed sanctions on senior military officials and ended cooperation on developmental projects beginning in 2017. However, action stops there as no formal resolutions have been presented in the Security Council. The President of the Security Council released a statement on November 6, 2017 simply condemning the violence used by both the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and security forces of Myanmar's government, and reminding the government of its Pillar I promise under the Responsibility to Protect to protect its population.¹³⁸ Besides this statement, no other collective action or statement had been released by the Security Council until the military coup on February 1, 2021, which has halted the democratic transition of power and implemented a year-long state of emergency. This statement essentially repeated the message from the 2017 statement, condemning the coup and emphasizing the importance of protecting the population's human rights, while reaffirming the notion of state sovereignty.¹³⁹

Table 3: Actions taken by UNSC in Myanmar

¹³⁷ "Myanmar." *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/asiaregion/pages/mmindex.aspx> (March 3, 2021).

¹³⁸ S/PRST/2017/22

¹³⁹ SC/14430

Statement	Date	Description
S/PST/2017/22	November 6, 2017	President of the Security Council released a statement on behalf of the member states condemning the violence in Myanmar, on part of the government and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
SC/14430	February 4, 2021	Press statement from the Security Council calling for the immediate release of members of Myanmar's government who were detained in the military coup; stresses the need to uphold democratic institutions to ensure a democratic transition, end violence and protect human rights; states commitment to sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity.

**All information is taken from the Index to Proceedings of the Security Council between 2011-2019¹⁴⁰

D. Obstruction

Both Russia and China have expressed opposition to Security Council resolutions that would create an official R2P response to the violence in Myanmar. Russia is particularly concerned with the notion of sovereignty, while China has a much greater interest in keeping the United Nations out of the situation in order to maintain its influence and relationship with Myanmar. China has demonstrated within the UN General Assembly committees through voting against measures, such as instating a Special Envoy and human rights investigations in Myanmar, that it will not vote in favor of any R2P

¹⁴⁰ "Index to Proceedings of the Security Council."

resolutions introduced to the Security Council.¹⁴¹ Obstruction of R2P intervention in Myanmar has not been through the obvious means of vetoing resolutions since none have been introduced to the Security Council, but its actions in other UN committees and influence within ASEAN's decisions in regards to Myanmar demonstrate its strong objection to R2P interventions and have aided in the difficulty of introducing a resolution to the UNSC. ASEAN has continuously labeled the violence in Myanmar as a "matter of concern" but have not suggested any means of addressing the situation.¹⁴² Ultimately, China's position on Myanmar has emphasized the importance of respecting sovereignty and allowing the situation to be handled internally, without any international intervention.

E. Analysis

The R2P seems to be an option that will not be utilized by the Security Council in order to stop the crimes against humanity the government is committing in Myanmar. China's position on the situation has been clear through the state's rejection of resolutions in the UN General Assembly to conduct investigations in Myanmar and its encouragement of ASEAN's stance to remain disengaged in order to respect Myanmar's sovereignty and allow the government to make amends internally. Although China has not officially vetoed any R2P resolutions in the Security Council - as none have been introduced - it is reasonable to conclude that a veto would be China's strategy in order to protect its investments and relationship with Myanmar and protect its influence throughout the region. China's UN Ambassador Zhang Jun asserted on March 10, 2021 that now is the time for "diplomacy" and "dialogue," emphasizing China's opposition to

¹⁴¹ A/C.3/75/L34

¹⁴² "ASEAN: Don't Whitewash Atrocities Against Rohingya." 2019. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/19/asean-dont-whitewash-atrocities-against-rohingya>.

R2P intervention.¹⁴³ The change in government that the R2P may provoke has the potential to expand Myanmar's relationship with the West, which would not only diminish China's relationship with the state, but it would also provide the opportunity for the West to gain a greater influence throughout the region, which threatens China's economic investments and foreign policy in Southeast Asia. China is seeking to protect itself by keeping western influence out of the region and taking the position of rejecting the Responsibility to Protect in Myanmar.

Myanmar's internal conflict is a clear case qualifying for implementation of the R2P. Gareth Evans, co-author of the R2P, has spoken out in defense of the R2P in Myanmar. According to Evans, "the present crisis in Myanmar demands unequivocally to be treated as an R2P one," reaffirming how vital intervention in Myanmar is in order to protect the population.¹⁴⁴ However, Evans notes that strong pushback from China is expected with regards to R2P draft resolutions in the Security Council, so any methods that are able to be passed must be enforced vigorously in order to begin to make a difference in Myanmar. Ultimately, R2P intervention in Myanmar is not expected anytime soon, which allows the continued subjugation of the Rohingya people.

Yemen

A. Background

The Republic of Yemen officially formed in 1990 when the conservative Yemen Arab Republic in the north and the Marxist People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south merged. This new multiparty state was led by President Ali Abdullah al-Saleh

¹⁴³ Roth, Richard. 2021. "The Diplomacy behind the Scenes of the UN Security Council's Myanmar Statement." *CNN*.

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/10/world/myanmar-un-security-council-intl-latam/index.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Evans, Gareth. 2021. "Myanmar and the Responsibility to Protect." *Gareth Evans Op-eds*. <http://www.gevans.org/opeds/oped225.html>.

for thirty years up until his resignation in 2012. Saleh dominated the nation during his presidency, adopting an authoritarian style rule of government reinforced by constitutional amendments granting him a wide range of power and allowing him to remain in office longer.¹⁴⁵ During his rule, protest in the southern region of the country was common, however the Arab Spring sparked civil unrest in Yemen when a group of student and civil society activists took to the street in protest against Saleh just one day after Tunisia's president stepped down.¹⁴⁶ In response to increased protest in the south, Saleh deployed security forces that left hundreds dead, which resulted in the leaders of his party, the General People's Congress, and opposition parties drafting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) demanding a peaceful presidential transition to relieve Saleh of his position. After several months of resistance and battling with protesters, Saleh reluctantly agreed to the GCC and transferred his power over to his deputy Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi.¹⁴⁷

Although the transfer of power was initially a smooth and peaceful transition and many of the protests diminished once the transitional government was put in place, violence sparked once more in 2014 when a rebel group representing Yemen's Shia minority began a military campaign against President Hadi and stormed the capital city of Sana'a.¹⁴⁸ This rebel group, the Houthis, consisted of those who remained loyal to the ousted President Saleh and are reportedly backed by Iran. Interim President Hadi subsequently fled to Saudi Arabia when the Houthis gained control of over half the country, which led to a Saudi military intervention in 2015 to quell the Houthis and

¹⁴⁵ Durac, Vincent. 2013. "Protest Movements and Political Change: An Analysis of the 'Arab Uprisings' of 2011." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 31(2): 178-179.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 187.

¹⁴⁷ Genser. 478.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 480.

continue Yemen's transition of power.¹⁴⁹ This Saudi military intervention has resulted in consistent air campaigns and bombings that have resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties, with the U.N. Human Rights Council determining that there is a “consistent and significant” pattern of harm from airstrikes on both sides of the conflict resulting in human rights violations.¹⁵⁰ This report highlights that locations such as mosques, schools and hospitals have been the targets of airstrikes from both the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition. Furthermore, several civilians in Saudi Arabia have also been killed as a result of this conflict, as the Houthis began targeting Saudi civilian airports.¹⁵¹

In addition to the violence that this conflict threatens, it has also intensified two other situations in Yemen that have culminated in the humanitarian crisis that exists today. The spread of terrorism has increased throughout the conflict, as the Houthis have connections with Al-Qaeda and Ansar al-Sharia.¹⁵² Thus, civilians in Yemen are facing danger realistically from three sources: the Houthis, the Saudi/U.S. led military campaign and terrorist organizations working alongside but not under the Houthis. These organizations have increased the instability in the nation and perpetuated the violence that the population experiences. This conflict has also intensified the famine that Yemen has been dealing with simultaneously. As a result of sanctions placed on foreign assistance and the careful investigation of all products that arrive on Yemeni ports (in a nation where food supply was already heavily dependent on imports), food insecurity has become the greatest threat to civilians. An estimated 12 million Yemeni civilians are

¹⁴⁹ Sharp, Jeremy M. 2019. *Yemen: Civil War and Regional Intervention*. Congressional Research Services. CRS Report. 2.

¹⁵⁰ Report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts as submitted to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights - Situation of human rights in Yemen, including violations and abuses since September 2014 - A/HRC/42/17, September 3, 2019

¹⁵¹ Sharp 2019. 5.

¹⁵² Ibid.

without consistent access to food and water, leaving them without sustenance and the means to practice proper sanitation methods,¹⁵³ and 20.7 million people (roughly two thirds of the Yemeni population) are in need of humanitarian assistance.¹⁵⁴ These circumstances have left the Yemeni people vulnerable to death, disease and forced migration to locations both within Yemen and outside the state in search of relief. The Yemeni population is facing the greatest humanitarian crisis across the world, with very little being done to provide relief for civilians suffering.

B. Critical Interest

United States

The United States had heavy interest in the Middle East during this time as the Arab Spring introduced opportunities to implement democratic governments that populations appeared to desire after years of instability, brutality, and oppression. Additionally, Saudi Arabia is one of the closest allies to the United States in the region, giving the U.S. a clear pathway to insert itself in the conflict. The fact that Iran was supporting the Houthi forces just further emphasized the United States' need to back the Hadi presidency, as Iran is one of the United States' greatest adversaries. Given other crises in which the R2P is considered to be invoked, the United States tended to be on the side of implementation. However, in the case of Yemen, the U.S. has a vested interest in continuing the conflict in order to keep the Hadi government in place, which wouldn't necessarily happen under actions taken through the R2P. The U.S. has two priorities in Yemen: to keep in power the transitional government that offers democracy and will

¹⁵³ Laub, Zachary. 2015. "Yemen in Crisis." *Council on Foreign Relations*: 6.

¹⁵⁴ Coppi, Giulio. 2018. "The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen: Beyond the Man-Made Disaster." *International Peace Institute*: 6.

cooperate with the United States' plans in the Middle East,¹⁵⁵ and to keep Iran isolated from potential allies. Because the U.S. is also invested in its relationship as an arms dealer to both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (who are using these resources in the Yemen conflict), the strategy at this point is to continue support of Saudi Arabia's military campaign in Yemen until there appears a very sound path towards implementing a democratic state.¹⁵⁶ Until then, the US will continue to supply arms to Saudi Arabia and attempt to fend off Iranian influence in Yemen.

Early on in the civil conflict, President Obama authorized the collaboration between the U.S. military and Saudi forces in order to provide logistical and operational support, as well as provide mid-air aircraft refueling for a brief period of time.¹⁵⁷ This strategy was to aid the Saudi campaign without appearing directly involved. The U.S. had also developed a deeper relationship with the United Arab Emirates, which originally got involved in the Saudi-led military intervention in order to protect its own borders from the conflict. Through Saudi military efforts in Yemen, the UAE and the U.S. have garnered a relationship focused on counterterrorism efforts in southern Yemen.¹⁵⁸ The United States has a vested interest in combatting terrorism in this region, which began back in 2000 with the bombing of the USS *Cole* at the Yemeni port of Aden.¹⁵⁹ With the power vacuum that would open up if the Houthis gained control of Yemen, terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda threaten U.S. national security and the stability of the Middle East. Thus, the U.S. has had an active role on the Saudi side of the conflict in order to

¹⁵⁵ Laub 2015. 5.

¹⁵⁶ Genser 2018. 482.

¹⁵⁷ Sharp 2019. 3.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 7.

¹⁵⁹ Laub 2015. 2.

prevent further expansion of terrorism in the area - particularly southern Yemen - and seek an end to networks in place.

The U.S. is also interested in keeping Iran's influence out of the Yemeni government and does not want Iran to gain an ally in the region. Once an American ally, Iran has been a top enemy of the United States for decades after Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini took control of the country from the Western-oriented monarchy and led a series of anti-West revolutions within the state.¹⁶⁰ Ever since, the two states have been stark enemies, conflicting over economic resources and political influence in the Middle East, and most notoriously over Iran's efforts in obtaining nuclear weapons. Due to this tumultuous relationship, the United States is set on limiting any influence that Iran may have over another state, in this case with Yemen. Iran and the Houthis have similar geopolitical interests in challenging the Saudi/U.S. dominance in the region, which has led to Iran being the Houthis' greatest ally, arms dealer, and economic supporter.¹⁶¹ It is the United States' strategy to keep Iran isolated from other states in order to keep its network and resources limited. The less assistance that Iran has in the region, the less threatening the state is for the U.S. Overall, the United States has prioritized its efforts to influence the establishment of a democratic government in Yemen along with the monetary benefits of the continued violence and desire to quell Iran's influence over making strides to deliver relief to the Yemeni people.

C. Intervention

There has been little effort by the UNSC to implement the R2P in terms of engaging in intervention to stop the violence in Yemen. Certain aspects of R2P

¹⁶⁰ Murray. 14.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 4.

protections have been emphasized by statements released by the UNSC and the limited number of resolutions passed have simply condemned the ongoing violence and imposed sanctions that have not led to an end in the conflict. The Security Council's first action was October 2011, when it passed a resolution condemning President Saleh for his use of violence against protesters, and simply reminded him of Yemen's R2P promise to protect its population.¹⁶² Resolution 2051 came next in 2012, which simply echoed the same messages as the previous resolution, only this time it addressed the use of violence from both the government and the rebel group.¹⁶³ These resolutions were the only two 'actions' taken by the Security Council for the initial three years of conflict in Yemen.

Table 4: Actions taken by UNSC in Yemen

<u>Resolution</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
S/RES/2014(2011)	October 21, 2011	Condemned use of violence by President Saleh against protesters; reminded Yemen's government of its R2P responsibilities to protect population
S/RES/2051(2012)	June 12, 2012	Condemned the use of violence from the government and protesters
S/RES/2140(2014)	February 26, 2014	Institutes a year long travel ban for Yemen and year long sanctions halting all assets for entities in Yemen
S/RES/2201(2015)	February 15, 2015	Condemned use of violence by the Houthis and demanded that members of the transition government refrain from

¹⁶² S/Res/2014(2011)

¹⁶³ S/Res/2051(2012)

		engaging in violence
S/RES/2216(2015)	April 14, 2015	Called for the cessation of violence in Yemen and reinforcement of sanctions
S/RES/2451(2018)	December 21, 2018	Established a team to monitor, support, and facilitate the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, which outlined a process of reaching a political agreement between the transition government and the Houthis

**All information is taken from the Index to Proceedings of the Security Council between 2011-2019¹⁶⁴

Sanctions began in 2014, simply consisting of instituting a travel ban for one year, and a year of halting assets for all entities within Yemen.¹⁶⁵ These sanctions have been renewed by the Security Council every year since; however, that is the only official step within the Responsibility to Protect that the Security Council has engaged in. Although there have been no proposed resolutions in the Security Council to take more extensive action, the lack of the ability to veto does not reduce the impact of the United States' motivators. The critical interests that the U.S. has demonstrated to have in the Yemen conflict reflect the same dynamic as Russia and China's relationship with Syria and China's relationship with Myanmar. Given these interests, the United States' active refusal to bring forth R2P measures in the Security Council and actions perpetuating the conflict demonstrates the state's commitment to its own political and economic influence in the region as opposed to the well-being of the Yemeni population.

D. Analysis

¹⁶⁴ "Index to Proceedings of the Security Council."

¹⁶⁵ S/RES/2140

The United States has branded itself as promoting “aggressive diplomacy” as a means to ending the conflict in Yemen.¹⁶⁶ It isn’t quite clear how this diplomacy has created any progress in Yemen, as the conflict has further destabilized the Middle East and given Iran greater influence and opportunity in the region.¹⁶⁷ The United States has worsened the conflict by supporting Saudi Arabia and not taking serious measures towards ending it, making the US an accomplice to the violence. Since no other nation has come forward in the Security Council with a draft resolution to take further action in Yemen, the US is in a unique position where it is benefitting from the ongoing conflict without taking a massive hit to its reputation from the international community. However, a change in the United States’ approach to the Yemen conflict may see a future change to approaching the R2P as well.

President Biden early in his presidency announced steps for what could be disengagement from the conflict in Yemen, which could be a sign to the United Nations that the U.S. is ready to take serious action through the Security Council to address the crisis in Yemen. Biden announced that the United States is ending its military support for the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen, however only indicated that he would be eliminating *some* arms deals between the two countries.¹⁶⁸ Whether or not this disengagement is fulfilled and what implications it may have for Yemen are yet to be seen, but as of now the United States appears to be at a turning point in its foreign policy with regards to Yemen. It is important to note, however, that a change in strategy and a future decision to implement R2P intervention and protections would *not* reverse previous actions and

¹⁶⁶ “US: There Is No Military Solution to End War in Yemen,” Al Jazeera, December 22, 2017, available at www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/military-solution-war-yemen-171222060356636.html

¹⁶⁷ Malley, Robert, and Stephen Pomper. 2021. “Accomplice to Carnage: How America Enables War in Yemen.” *Foreign Affairs*: 2.

¹⁶⁸ Hubbard, Ben, and Shuaib Almosawa. 2021. “Biden Ends Military Aid for Saudi War in Yemen. Ending the War Is Harder.” *The New York Times*: 1.

motivations on the part of the United States. Any R2P implementations in Yemen would therefore signal that the R2P is beginning to be a salient norm; only a consistent and unwavering practice of implementing the R2P would achieve that goal.

This chapter presented three cases demonstrating scenarios in which civilian populations are facing crimes against humanity and their government can not or will not offer protection. These cases are clear cut examples of when the Responsibility to Protect needs to be invoked. However, because of political allies, economic opportunities, and the prospect of expanding military campaigns, the US, China, and Russia are all guilty of blocking R2P resolutions, through vetoes or refusing to entertain the discussions. Although the R2P is not a legally binding document, it was meant to motivate states to put suffering populations' needs above their own self-interests. While these cases have exposed the R2P's ineffectiveness in compelling state behavior, there are limited examples of when the R2P was implemented correctly and served its purpose effectively. The next chapter explores the optimal scenario of the Responsibility to Protect.

Chapter 3: How the R2P *Should* Work

This chapter explores two cases in which the Security Council quickly and efficiently used the Responsibility to Protect to put an end to mass atrocities against civilians. In these cases, the US, China, and Russia do not have significant security interests that are threatened by the prospect of possible regime change through the R2P. These two cases, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, are two of the best examples of how to quickly and effectively implement the R2P by putting the needs of the suffering population first.

Côte d'Ivoire

A. Background

Côte d'Ivoire's history is full of tension throughout its colonization and eventual independence from France in 1960, followed by years of violence between religious and ethnic groups culminating in multiple civil wars and coup d'etats, resulting in consistent political instability.¹⁶⁹ The international community has guided Côte d'Ivoire through its tumultuous state by leading peaceful discussions between the numerous conflicting sides, however, intervention proved necessary in 2010 when the democratic election was entirely ignored by the outgoing government. Seen as a second installment of the 2004 civil war, the large scale violence that erupted in Côte d'Ivoire proved too great for a crumbling government to handle, requiring international intervention in order to restore a sense of peace and stability to the nation.

Presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire have long been debated throughout the country, as previous presidents have consistently taken steps to prevent opponents from

¹⁶⁹ Bah, A. B. 2010. "Democracy and Civil War: Citizenship and Peacemaking in Cote d'Ivoire." *African Affairs* 109(437): 601.

winning or even qualifying as a candidate. The presidential runoff election on November 28, 2010 was no exception, and resulted in the standing President Laurent Gbagbo rejecting his opponent Alassane Ouattara's victory. Gbagbo refused to recognize the results of the election and remained within the presidential palace, taking the presidential oath and appointing a prime minister. Ouattara took similar actions within the confines of the Hotel du Golf in Abidjan, which Gbagbo barricaded with his military forces.¹⁷⁰ The following month consisted of pro-Gbagbo groups attacking both Ouattara supporters and immigrants to the country, committing crimes against humanity such as extrajudicial killings, rape, targeted killings of civilians and forced disappearances. Protesters demanding the election results be honored were shot down in the streets and pro-Gbagbo forces raided civilian households, torturing and killing those inside.¹⁷¹

These atrocities spread outside of government forces, with Gbagbo civilian supporters stoking hatred against minority groups and immigrants within the country, calling for 'outsiders' to leave and leave the state to the "real Ivorians," further antagonizing civilians and perpetuating violence.¹⁷² This tension emphasized an existing national divide that represented long standing conflict between the Christian South, supporting Gbagbo's revolt, and the Muslim North standing with Ouattara's fair democratic victory. In the span of just two months, approximately 400 civilians were killed, 16,000 internally displaced people and 23,500 Ivorian refugees fled to surrounding states.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Genser. 436.

¹⁷¹ Straus, S. 2011. "'It's Sheer Horror Here': Patterns of Violence during the First Four Months of Cote d'Ivoire's Post-Electoral Crisis." *African Affairs* 110(440): 483.

¹⁷² Nossiter, Adam. 2011. "Ivory Coast Leader's Rival Remains Under Blockade", *N.Y. TIMES*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/06/world/africa/06ivory.html>.

¹⁷³ Genser. 436.

Although the United Nations Security Council began taking steps to quell the violence in December 2010, Gbagbo and his supporters pushed on in their effort to retain power within the country. Machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades were used against civilians and UN peacekeepers that remained within the country since the end of Côte d'Ivoire's civil war in 2004, and a three-day clash between pro-Gbagbo and pro-Ouattara forces resulted in the massacre of civilians in the town of Duékoué, where it was estimated between 225-1,000 were killed.¹⁷⁴ A pro-Gbagbo youth group was even formed to monitor the presence and movements of "foreigners" in order to keep the 'enemy' under surveillance and intimidate anyone who opposed Gbagbo.¹⁷⁵ By the time of Gbagbo's eventual arrest in April 2011, these numbers dramatically increased to over 1,000 civilian deaths, over one million internally displaced people and 100,000 refugees fleeing to surrounding states.¹⁷⁶ Violence in Côte d'Ivoire lasted for months, and the initiatives put into place by the Security Council remained for six years in order to assure a safe and peaceful transition.

B. Missing Critical Interest

The previous case studies of Syria, Myanmar and Yemen highlighted a critical interest - an economic, political or military element vital to a P5 member's relationship with the state in question - that prevented the Security Council from implementing in part or whole the R2P. This element proved so important that the P5 member(s) was willing to protect the government's survival rather than push efforts to end the humanitarian crisis at hand in order to continue reaping the benefits of their relationship with that government. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, this essential component in blocking the R2P is missing,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 438

¹⁷⁵ Straus. 484

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 481.

which allowed the protective measures to be implemented without objection. Because none of the P5 states had a vital interest in preserving the government and allowing the violence to continue, the R2P was not viewed as a threat to economic prosperity or strategic political relationships and was thus carried out efficiently and effectively by the Security Council.

C. Obstruction

The implementation of the R2P was uncontested within the Security Council, making Côte d'Ivoire a relatively straightforward and successful case. Of the nineteen R2P-based draft resolutions introduced to the Security Council ranging from condemnation of violence, sanctions and military use against security forces in Côte d'Ivoire, each one was unanimously passed in an effort to establish peace. No internationally recognized government entity obstructed the discussions and eventual implementation of R2P measures. Surrounding states and regional bodies such as the A.U. Peace and Security Council and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) led the call for Gbagbo to step down and respect the democratic process, further strengthening the Security Council's case for taking action.¹⁷⁷ The only resistance that the United Nations faced in its condemnation of violence in Côte d'Ivoire was from Gbagbo himself and his supporters within the nation, which eventually came to an end after Gbagbo's arrest in April 2011 and subsequent UNSC resolutions to quell violence.¹⁷⁸

D. Intervention

The United Nations did not waste time when responding to the violent uprisings in Côte d'Ivoire, making its first statement in support of Ouattara's democratic election

¹⁷⁷ Genser, 437-438.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 439.

and condemnation of violence by all parties in December 2010. The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), launched during the civil war and eventually kept in Côte d'Ivoire to ensure the continuation of peace, was both extended and expanded by the Security Council in light of the ongoing violence caused by Gbagbo and his supporters. Resolution 1967 authorized the UNOCI on January 19, 2011 to use “all necessary means” to protect civilians and prevent the use of force or violence within the state.¹⁷⁹ Resolution 1975 was then passed on March 30, 2011 to place sanctions on Gbagbo and his inner circle of supporters who obstructed the peace and reconciliation process, obstructed the work of the UNOCI, and committed serious human rights violations or violated international humanitarian law.¹⁸⁰ In the Press Statement concerning this resolution released by the Security Council on April 4, Ambassador Joy Uche Angela Ogwu of Nigeria stated: “Let there be no doubt that this situation is a collective global responsibility. We must act now,” directly asserting that the Security Council understood the situation in Côte d'Ivoire to require the invocation of the Responsibility to Protect.¹⁸¹ That same afternoon, a UN military helicopter fired on Gbagbo’s security forces, eliminating their heavy weapons systems and ability to use heavy artillery against pro-Ouattara civilians and UN peacekeepers. Eight days later, Gbagbo was arrested by Ouattara’s forces, representing the beginning of the end to Gbagbo’s human rights violations in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁸²

Table 5: The most substantial resolutions that have been passed on the intervention in Côte d'Ivoire

<u>Resolution</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
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¹⁷⁹ S/RES/1967

¹⁸⁰ S/RES/1975(2011)

¹⁸¹ S/PV/6508 (Mar. 30, 2011)

¹⁸² Genser. 439.

S/RES/1962(2011)	December 20, 2010	Urged all parties in the state to accept the results of the election and recognize Ouattara as the President-Elect; also renewed the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in place from the end of the civil war in 2004
S/RES/1967(2011)	January 19, 2011	Deployed additional military personnel and capabilities for the UNOCI
S/RES/1968(2011)	February 16, 2011	3 month extension of the temporary redeployment of infantry companies and an aviation unit to UNOCI
S/RES/1975(2011)	March 30, 2011	Sanctions placed against targeted individuals who obstructed peace and reconciliation, obstructed the work of the UNOCI, and committed serious human rights violations or violated international humanitarian law
S/RES/1992(2011)	June 29, 2011	Redeployed logistics and military personnel from UN Mission in Liberia to assist UNOCI
S/RES/2260(2016)	January 20, 2016	Reduced the UNOCI's military component to limited military personnel
S/RES/2283(2016)	April 28, 2016	Lifted sanctions against targeted individuals in Côte d'Ivoire
S/RES/2284(2016)	April 28, 2016	Renewed UNOCI based on a limited military personnel

**All information is taken from the Index to Proceedings of the Security Council between 2011-2019¹⁸³

After Gbagbo's arrest, the Security Council directed military personnel from the UN Mission in Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire to assist the UNOCI in dispelling any further violence and revolt from pro-Gbagbo groups and pave the way for a peaceful transition of government for Ouattara.¹⁸⁴ Since then, a series of resolutions have been passed each year to renew the UNOCI and sanctions against Gbagbo sympathizers, with 2016 marking the beginning of UNOCI reduction and the end of targeted sanctions. The limited UNOCI military presence was not renewed in 2017, marking the expiration of the UNOCI and the end to R2P measures within Côte d'Ivoire. With the internal violence and resistance to the democratic process diminished, the Security Council successfully implemented R2P measures to end human rights violations and restore peace to Côte d'Ivoire.

Mali

A. Background

A section of Mali's military instigated a coup d'état on March 22, 2012 after growing frustrations within the military of the government's handling of the conflict with the Tuareg population within the country. The Tuaregs are separatist rebels who have been fighting the Malian government since the 1990s, and had formed the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in October 2011 in hopes of gaining independence in the northern region of the country.¹⁸⁵ After receiving a substantial increase in weapons from the conflict in neighboring Libya,¹⁸⁶ the MNLA was able to win a series of conflicts in Northern Mali and retain much of the territory in the area.¹⁸⁷ This was the final straw

¹⁸³ "Index to Proceedings of the Security Council." *Dag Hammarskjöld Library*.

¹⁸⁴ S/RES/2260

¹⁸⁵ Genser. 445.

¹⁸⁶ Nossiter, Adam. 2012. "Soldiers Overthrow Mali Government in Setback for Democracy in Africa", *N.Y. TIMES*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/world/africa/mali-coup-france-calls-forelections.html>

¹⁸⁷ Genser. 446.

for many in the Malian military, inspiring the coup in March. After being democratically elected in 2002 and 2007, President Amadou Toumani Toure, who was not seeking reelection in the April 2012 presidential election, was exiled, forcing the implementation of a transitional government.¹⁸⁸

The coup did not work in the military's favor as the MNLA saw the act as a sign of Malian weakness, and joined forces with Ansar Dine, a militant Islamic rebel group with ties to Al-Qaeda, in efforts to take over the northern section of the country. Eventually, the group was able to capture three cities in Northern Mali and declared independence from Mali, establishing strict sharia law.¹⁸⁹ This 'new state' was harshly controlled and the MNLA group committed numerous crimes against humanity against the population it oversaw, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and the pillaging of institutions such as hospitals, schools and governmental buildings.¹⁹⁰ The Malian military had conducted the coup in an effort to drive the Tuareg from Mali, but it only gave the Tuareg a greater opportunity to expand and gain control, forcing the junta to begin peace negotiations just as the previous democratic government had.¹⁹¹

After the MNLA quickly proved too difficult for the military coup to combat and the junta was unable to define a clear political agenda, an interim government led by appointed President Dioncounda Traoré was implemented in April 2012 with the aim of having a governmental body separate from the military efforts in the North.¹⁹² The

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ *Mali: War Crimes by Northern Rebels*, HUM. RTS. WATCH (Apr. 30, 2012), <https://perma.cc/APF8-HX6M>; *Mali: Five Months of Crisis: Armed Rebellion and Military Coup*, AMNESTY INT'L (May 16, 2012), <https://perma.cc/ZPH2-SUPU>; *Mali: Islamist Armed Groups Spread Fear in North*, HUM. RTS. WATCH (Sept. 25, 2012), <https://perma.cc/8UXH-9PWU>

¹⁹¹ Mann, Gregory. 2012. "Foreign Policy: The Mess In Mali." *NPR:Foreign Policy*: 8.

¹⁹² Erforth, Benedikt. 2017. "The Rocky Road to Stability: Mali 4 Years after the French Intervention." *Foreign Policy Blogs*.

conflict between the new government (which was not representative of the population) and the MNLA only intensified, with over 350,000 Malians displaced and hundreds of others subject to violence and killing.¹⁹³ In 2013, Ansar Dine and the MNLA pushed south and took over territory located close to the buildings of the transitional government in Mali, which forced President Traoré to request urgent assistance from the UN, which ultimately authorized French troops to intervene, resulting in four days of airstrikes that inevitably drove Ansar Dine out of the area.¹⁹⁴ This seemed to be a turning point in the conflict, as the interim Malian government surrendered and no longer stood in the way of UN missions to protect the civilians of Mali. While the UN began military responses, it also guided the democratic election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on August 11, 2013, restoring the democratic process to Mali.¹⁹⁵ As the UN has instituted its responses, the conflict in Mali has transformed from an R2P mission in response to a governmental overthrow into an R2P mission because the government is continually unable to protect the population from the threats presented by terrorist groups throughout the North.¹⁹⁶

B. Missing Critical Interest

Similar to Côte d'Ivoire, in the case of the Malian conflict there is a missing critical interest which is so important to a P5 member that it is protected through denying the implementation of the R2P. Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar demonstrated that powerful states are willing to allow populations to be subjugated to atrocities if the alternative (using the R2P) means their political relationships, military strategies, or economic benefits will suffer. Instead, Mali was treated as a 'textbook' R2P case with eventual

¹⁹³ Reid, Kathryn. 2020. "Mali Conflict Explained: Facts, FAQs and How to Help." *World Vision*. <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/mali-conflict-facts>.

¹⁹⁴ Gensar. 447.

¹⁹⁵ Reid.

¹⁹⁶ Erforth.

military intervention in order to protect the citizens within the country and prevent the intensification of atrocities or the expansion of violence to other states. Mali was seen by the United States as a “source of instability for the entire region” and a potential “safe haven” for terrorist groups such as Ansar Dine and others with connections to Al-Qaeda, which ultimately threatened international peace and security as well as the Malian population.¹⁹⁷ In addition to the United States having the primary concern of stabilizing the entire region, Ambassador Churkin emphasized Russia’s stance on preserving Mali’s sovereignty by asserting that it was responding to Mali’s eventual request for assistance. Churkin noted that because the resolution was at the request of Malian authorities, there is no violation of sovereignty.¹⁹⁸ The UN was willing to implement the R2P based on the actual reasons it was created in the first place - to protect the subjugated population from violence that the government cannot or will not protect them from. In Mali, there was no political relationship at stake or significant economic trade deal that would be altered by a military intervention and potential regime change. Because these risks did not exist for the P5 members, a veto against R2P measures was not necessary.

C. Obstruction

Similarly to the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, the introduction and implementation of R2P responses in Mali were uncontested in the Security Council, and were initiated by regional organizations who encouraged further UN contribution. Since the coup in 2012, there have been fifteen resolutions introduced in the Security Council to establish and renew military operations and sanctions, and every draft resolution has been unanimously

¹⁹⁷ 113 Congress: Committee on Foreign Affairs; 2013. (House of Representatives) *The Crisis in Mali: US Interests and the International Response*. Washington D.C.

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113hhr78949/html/CHRG-113hhr78949.htm>.

¹⁹⁸ S/PV/6952

passed.¹⁹⁹ The only obstruction that the Security Council or regional organizations have faced throughout the conflict has been from those who conducted the coup and members of the MNLA who were fighting to retain their own territory from the government of Mali. As time has gone on, the only continuous resistance that the UN has faced is from the terrorist groups that have persisted in the country.²⁰⁰

D. Intervention

The international community, similarly to the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, responded to Mali's instability quickly. The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African Countries (ECOWAS) promptly suspended Mali's membership and even imposed sanctions on the country. These sanctions included closing all borders to Mali, freezing the personal assets of those involved in the coup and Mali's national assets, and halting currency flow into the country.²⁰¹ Additionally, the United Nations released a statement the day of the coup condemning the actions that threaten the democratic process in Mali,²⁰² and a few days later released a Presidential statement in support of the actions taken by the AU and ECOWAS.²⁰³ The United Nations' initial responses and resolutions were to condemn the violent actions in Mali and praise the regional actors for their responses, generally remaining an active bystander to the situation. However, after ten months of unrest the United Nations recognized that the implementation of R2P measures was necessary in order to prevent the escalation of violence in Mali.

Table 6: Resolutions passed by the United Nations for the intervention in Mali

¹⁹⁹ "Index to Proceedings of the Security Council." Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

²⁰⁰ Reid.

²⁰¹ Look, Anne. 2012. "ECOWAS Imposes Sanctions on Mali." *VOA News*: 4.

²⁰² Press Release, Security Council, Security Council Press Statement on Mali Crisis, U.N. Press Release SC/10590-AFR/2359 (Mar. 22, 2012).

²⁰³ S.C. Pres. Statement, 3, 2012/7 (2012).

<u>Resolution</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
S/RES/2056(2012)	July 5, 2012	Condemned the seizure of government and subsequent physical assaults on the interim President Dioncounda Traoré; commended the swift responses from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU)
S/RES/2071(2012)	October 12, 2012	Condemned the violence by rebel groups in Northern Mali and the 'takeover' of the territory
S/RES/2085(2012)	December 20, 2012	Authorized the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) for a period of 1 year
S/RES/2100(2013)	April 25, 2013	Established the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
S/RES/2164(2014)	June 25, 2014	Extended MINUSMA for 1 year
S/RES/2227(2015)	June 29, 2015	Extended MINUSMA for 1 year
S/RES/2295(2016)	June 29, 2016	Extended MINUSMA for 1 year
S/RES/2364(2017)	June 29, 2017	Extended MINUSMA for 1 year
S/RES/2374(2017)	September 5, 2017	Established sanctions (travel ban and asset freeze) on those who threaten the political stability of Mali

S/RES/2423(2018)	June 28, 2018	Extended MINUSMA for 1 year
S/RES/2432(2018)	August 30, 2018	Renewed sanctions for 1 year
S/RES/2480(2019)	June 28, 2019	Extended MINUSMA for 1 year
S/RES/2484(2019)	August 29, 2019	Renewed sanctions for 1 year
S/RES/2531(2020)	June 29, 2020	Extended MINUSMA for 1 year
S/RES/2541(2020)	August 30, 2020	Renewed sanctions for 1 year

**All information is taken from the Index to Proceedings of the Security Council between 2011-2019²⁰⁴

The United Nations' first resolution demanding action came on December 20, 2012 after the UNSC unanimously passed Resolution 2085, triggering the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), which was implemented for the purpose of taking all necessary measures to rebuild Mali's Defense and Security Forces, recover the Northern territory taken over by rebel groups, and support a transitional government to stabilize the country and protect the population.²⁰⁵ This mission soon turned into a UN-led project, as only a few months later it was converted into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). This came at the written request of the transitional authorities in Mali and the President of ECOWAS²⁰⁶ with support from the AU Peace and Security Council²⁰⁷ in order to achieve greater international support. MINUSMA established over 11,000 UN troops in Mali for a period of one year, as well as requesting UN Member States provide additional troops

²⁰⁴ "Index to Proceedings of the Security Council." Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

²⁰⁵ S/RES/2085(2012)

²⁰⁶ S/2013/231

²⁰⁷ S/2013/163

and police forces to the cause.²⁰⁸ Additionally, the UNSC has established year-long sanctions against those in Mali who pose a threat to the political stability in the country, introduced through Resolution 2374 in 2017.

MINUSMA and the sanctions have both been renewed every year since their establishment, in order to maintain the path to peace the Security Council aims for. Although political stability in Mali is not yet certain²⁰⁹, the ultimate goal of the UNSC has been to prevent the escalation of violence and prevent the perpetration of mass atrocities against the population, one of the main goals of the R2P. Therefore, the implementation of the R2P has achieved its intended purpose within the state and controlled extreme occasions of violence, and both the United Nations and regional organizations are working closely with Mali to continue the reparation of the democratic government and stabilizing the country. Mali, as well as Côte d'Ivoire, demonstrated the effective ways in which the R2P can be implemented to protect civilians, in a way that puts their needs first.

²⁰⁸ S/RES/2100(2013)

²⁰⁹ "Destabilization of Mali." 2021. *Council on Foreign Relations*.
<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/destabilization-mali>.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This study addressed the efficacy of the R2P through the lens of two separate sets of case studies: one analysis in which the US, China, and Russia had an important self-interest at stake that ultimately guided their decision on R2P resolutions, and one study in which these self-interests were not threatened by the prospect of R2P intervention. Although Côte d'Ivoire and Mali were examples of how states effectively implemented the R2P, they have not proven to be the basis of future interventions by the Security Council (demonstrated by the reluctance to intervene in Myanmar). Syria, Myanmar, and Yemen raised questions about the effectiveness of the R2P to guide the P5 because there were clear instances where the US, China, and Russia were prioritizing their own critical interests when considering R2P resolutions in the Security Council. China wants to protect its sphere of influence over Myanmar and keep western influence out. Russia wants to remain close allies with the Assad regime in Syria in order to expand its military presence in the Middle East and eventually win the competition for investments in Syria's eventual rebuilding. The United States wants to continue funding Saudi Arabia's military campaign in Yemen while also preventing Iran from harboring influence over the Yemeni government, ultimately maintaining American influence in Middle Eastern geopolitics. Each of these cases presents reasons why the US, China and Russia are not compelled by the R2P to focus on the protection of the populations at risk. This study demonstrates that in important cases where civilian populations are experiencing prima facie crimes against humanity with the acquiescence (if not collusion)

of the state, Great Powers have consistently placed their own geopolitical interests above the Responsibility to Protect.

What has become increasingly apparent in comparison of these cases is that the P5 states have experienced fatigue in terms of implementing the R2P. Libya, Yemen, Syria, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire all began within the very short time frame of 2011-2013. The strategic decision making from the P5 states had to come one after another, with each case presenting different scenarios that the states had to consider when voting on resolutions. It is no wonder that the Myanmar situation has been so slow moving in generating support and discussion around the R2P: states are hesitant to engage in R2P deliberations again, as cases such as Syria have proven that these engagements can last years before they are ever resolved.

On the other hand, the closeness of these four cases also affirmatively demonstrates that other factors besides the elements laid out in the R2P are at play when making decisions about intervention. Five cases within the same time period led to vastly different outcomes, both in the types of resolutions passed and the countries that supported them. If P5 members were making decisions about intervention primarily based on the R2P, it is rational to assume that each state's vote and explanation would be similar across the board. However, China and Russia vetoed intervention in Syria citing the importance of defending the Syrian government's sovereignty, yet voted in favor of military intervention in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, emphasizing the importance of defending the sovereignty of the surrounding states because of the threat of violence and refugees spilling over the borders. (Ironically, Syrian violence and refugee flows are spilling over

into Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan, exposing the contradictory explanations based on self-interest.)²¹⁰

The United States also demonstrated inconsistencies in its regard of the R2P that became evident in the Yemen case. The US didn't want to begin R2P discussions during Yemen because of the inherent threat of regime change; with Iran's strong influences over the Houthis, a new government in Yemen was not guaranteed to be friendly to western countries. Thus, the US neglected to engage in the R2P conversations. However, its approach to Syria was drastically different, because the US saw a chance to control the government implemented that would benefit their interests in the region. After analyzing these cases, it is clear that consistency in decision making did not happen, affirming the hypothesis that other political, economic and military interests critical to states' security were factors in their decision to implement the R2P or to veto it.

Implications of the R2P

Although the R2P currently has no legal power or standing in international politics, it does serve a purpose in expanding our understanding of international relations theory. The R2P was designed as a norm for states to adopt and slowly adapt their behavior to, until following R2P guidelines played a central role in guiding states' responses to prima facie crimes against humanity. However, the cases illustrate how quickly the norm was displaced by geopolitical considerations. This constructivist approach has failed to fulfill its purpose, affirming that the present state of international politics is guided more by realist, self-interest tendencies than norms with the intention of benefiting everyone.

²¹⁰ Young, William, David Stebbins, Bryan Frederick, and Omar Al-Shahery. *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria: An Assessment of the Factors That Aid and Impede the Spread of Violence*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR609.html.

The R2P is not law, and no state is truly bound to it. Additionally, it is shown to not be an effective norm, because not all states feel compelled to follow it. Although the R2P is relatively powerless in dictating state behavior and establishing an acceptable norm for intervening in atrocities, it does have some positive qualities. The R2P does hold some weight in international relations, because it is considered an option by some states when dealing with human rights violations, and has been invoked on occasion. The R2P is an effective baseline establishing how intervention in atrocities such as genocide and crimes against humanity should be conducted. In this regard, the R2P does have an acute aspect of functionality, proven by its effectiveness in the Mali and Côte d'Ivoire cases.

The Future of the R2P

The future of the R2P as an active international norm is questionable, as these cases support the assumption that the P5 will continue to have a difficult time reaching a consensus on passing R2P resolutions and intervening in humanitarian conflicts. International politics has become an increasingly zero-sum game, as Russia and China have developed political and economic relationships with other countries, relationships that are beginning to rival the United States in power and influence.²¹¹ This multipolar world means that a state's decision on policies and actions will consider the implications they have for the state itself as well as other states. The goal is to benefit the most, while limiting the advancements of competing states, even if it means not protecting populations facing violence and crimes against humanity. If the R2P was restructured to center human rights protections as something that serves the self-interest of states, it is

²¹¹ Diesen, Glenn. 2019. "The Disorderly Transition to a Multipolar World." *New Perspectives* 27(3): 127-8.

possible that intervention would increase. However, as long as one P5 state has something to potentially lose with the invocation of the R2P, a veto will always be the solution. This doesn't mean that the R2P will never be invoked again. However, it would take a truly unique case in which the UNSC is in complete agreement on intervention.

Going forward, I believe that the R2P as constructed will remain ineffectual at compelling powerful states into aiding populations in need when there is an interest not to. However, states will very soon begin to feel the negative effects of allowing these atrocities to fester. Already, European states are facing the direct result of Russia's and China's block of the R2P in Syria, as 6.6 million Syrian refugees have escaped, flooding into surrounding states and traveling North to Europe for asylum.²¹² From here, crises will only get worse and the impacts will be felt by states for years to come. Unfortunately, as these pressures mount, states will become increasingly self-interested to the point where these atrocities will be openly acknowledged and ignored. While the R2P had good intentions, it is not capable of changing this type of behavior. The R2P's future in international politics will remain simply as window-dressing, offering nothing but wishful thinking for humanitarian interventions.

²¹² "UNHCR - Figures at a Glance." 2020. *UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency*. <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

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