

Forum: Security Council

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TOPIC 3: The issue of the application of Responsibility to Protect.

I. Introduction to the Topic

Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is an international norm unanimously adopted at the 2005 World Summit set to halt mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The notion gained traction with the failure of the international community to counter mass atrocities committed in Rwanda and Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Now R2P is upheld by three pillars (refer to the image section below)

- International

R2P is an international principle that entails all signatories to engage in preventing and countering crimes against humanity. Although countries became more polarised entering the 21st century, R2P's three pillars helped uphold and mend the nations' commitment. Acknowledging the importance of R2P's role, the General Assembly reaffirmed the 2005 commitment through a resolution ([A/RES/63/308](#)) in 2009. Since its inception, the Secretary-General has annually released reports to mark the progress of R2P. Moreover, R2P is mentioned in 80+ UNSC, 50+ HRC, and 13 GA resolutions on issues ranging from crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to arms trade in Yemen.

- Regional

Regional organizations stand at the core of R2P's mission to rapidly respond to concerning situations in nations. These organizations are tools for R2P to enhance the effectiveness of its prevention and responsive measures. Under pillars, I, II, and III regional organizations help governments pre-identify sources of friction, strengthen prevention efforts, and take over efforts when States are unable to uphold R2P. Moreover, the proximity of these organizations to crime situations helps eliminate delays and leaks of misinformation that can cloud international judgment.

- National

R2P is the go-to legislation for countries that need assistance in preventing listed crimes. Instead of waiting to respond, R2P is engineered to eliminate any and all potential crimes against humanity with early warnings. As R2P examines on a case-by-case basis (in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter), R2P is fit for providing tailored solutions for each nation. Moreover, the third pillar of R2P allows LEDCs to access international funds and assistance in tackling crimes, highlighting the importance of R2P.

- Local

R2P carries heavy stakes and duties at the local levels. For countries relying on the assistance of R2P, R2P is the only legislative body that maintains and polices the risk of crimes. As conflict zones stem from local regions, R2P is crucial in eliminating any signs of concerns that can later dominate locals, causing

humanitarian violations to starvation. R2P acts as a protective bubble for local governments and regions vulnerable to non-state armed groups.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Definition of Key Terms

Responsibility to Protect (R2P): Responsibility to Protect is an international norm set to halt mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The principle embodies nations' commitment to ending grim forms of violence and the mission to narrow gaps between international and domestic law.

Four mass atrocities: The four mass atrocities (genocides, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing) are systematic violations of human rights, such as acts ranging from murder, torture, and rape to attacks by the State on civilian populations. R2P highlights how these mass atrocities paint a grim picture of the failure of the international community to respond. R2P also aims to eradicate all forms of systematic violence against civilians by establishing the responsibility to prevent mass atrocities as an international duty.

Collective action: Collective action occurs when several member nations take the initiative to accomplish a common objective. Collective action is paramount to the success of R2P. Without the commitment of member nations to eliminate the four mass atrocities and accept collective responsibility, R2P becomes worthless.

Humanitarian intervention: Humanitarian intervention is the use of military force by a nation or nations intending to end human rights violations. Humanitarian intervention is an obstacle that R2P must overcome to prove its effectiveness in preventing the four mass atrocities

Sovereignty: Sovereignty is a nation's right to govern itself. R2P ensures sovereignty by helping (not forcing) nations to align themselves with R2P's pillars and the responsibilities it entails.

III. Key Stakeholders

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): NATO is a security alliance of countries with the purpose to ensure the sovereignty of its member states. Although NATO is often referred to as a layer of

protection against aggressive nations, under R2P, NATO is tied into high-stakes, controversial discussions.

P5 Nations: The permanent members of the UNSC (also known as the P5 Nations) that wield veto power to any resolutions. The P5 nations and their approval are crucial to the passage of resolutions related to R2P and its effectiveness.

Libya: NATO's 2011 military intervention in Libya was sanctioned under R2P. While NATO helped eliminate the four mass atrocities and authoritarian rule, many argue that NATO infringed on the sovereignty of Libya, using R2P as an excuse.

Canada: The Canadian government launched the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), publishing a report titled "The Responsibility to Protect" in 2001. Canada kickstarted the notion of "State sovereignty as a responsibility" and led discussions and challenges on R2P.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Military intervention under the third pillar of R2P: Several states claim that R2P's third pillar is an infringement upon the sovereignty of the state. However, proponents, such as the former Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon argue that R2P fortifies a nation's sovereignty because member nations are only authorized to intervene without consent when a nation is unable or unwilling to halt mass atrocities.

Loosening commitment of member nations: Despite the achievements of R2P and related resolutions, the friction between and within nations in recent decades is widening the gap between the commitment of governments and the reality of R2P's application. Loosening commitment will threaten to dismantle R2P and the principle is built solely upon the responsibility of nations.

Ineffectiveness of decision-making bodies (International Criminal Court): At the international level, States are avoiding investigation and prosecution of mass atrocity crimes by threatening to withdraw from the Court. The ineffectiveness and lack of judicial power of the court increase the UNSC's hesitancy to refer any cases.

The situation in Syria: The situation in Syria is a microcosm of issues generated by the ineffectiveness of R2P. Despite the besieging of civilians and denial of humanitarian aid, R2P is failing to invoke its third pillar to activate member nations to act.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
Mid-1990s	Mass atrocities committed in Rwanda and Yugoslavia and the birth of the concept of R2P
2000	Kofi Annan's challenge in his Millennium Report on humanitarian intervention and sovereignty
2001	The Canadian government launches the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) and issues a report titled "The Responsibility to Protect."
2005	The adoption of R2P at a high-level UN World Summit in 2005 by all UN member nations
2009	UN Secretary-General released a report of "implementing the Responsibility to Protect"
2011	NATO's intervention in Libya sparks conversations around whether R2P's third pillar infringes a nation's sovereignty.
2018	The General Assembly holds its first debate on the Responsibility to Protect in a decade.

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Military intervention under the third pillar of R2P: The international community is split into two sides on this issue: those who argue that the third pillar is an infringement upon the sovereignty and those who argue that R2P supports (rather than undermining) a nation's sovereignty. The UNSC must untangle this issue to streamline the implementation of R2P. This argument digs deep down to the concept of consent and whether a nation's sovereignty is upheld by civilians or the government. Stakeholders, such as NATO

will side with upholding that third pillar, while nations perpetrating mass atrocities will argue for sovereignty.

Loosening commitment of member nations: The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is built on the basis of member nations' commitment. Therefore, slacking commitment and discontent within a nation will threaten the resilience of R2P, and abandoning this issue will deem all efforts of R2P worthless. The UNSC must ensure collective action from all member nations to expedite the implementation of R2P. LEDCs that need assistance from R2P may call on MEDCs for strengthened support and commitment to R2P. On the other hand, States that may benefit from the meltdown of R2P may continue to undermine R2P by arguing for their sovereignty.

Ineffectiveness of decision-making bodies (International Criminal Court): The prosecution phase of R2P holds States responsible for the perpetuation of mass atrocities accountable. However, the lack of judicial power of these governing bodies such as the International Criminal Court creates a loophole for these aggressors to escape. Hence, the strengthening of the ICC and UNSC is crucial to preventing mass atrocities from repeating themselves. The UNSC may argue for extra judicial power for the ICC to ensure the prosecution of States, but conflict within the P5 nations may jeopardise the passage of such proposals.

The situation in Syria: The situation in Syria is an example of how the lack of international norms, such as R2P can allow humanitarian crises to persist. In nations where militia groups and non-government bodies take authority, average diplomacy is not possible. Member nations must seek different tactics to form negotiations and agreements to ensure humanitarian protection for civilians. Some stakeholders, such as NATO may argue that (citing the third pillar of R2P) member nations have a responsibility to intervene without consent to protect the sovereignty of the civilians. In contrast, militia groups may argue for the legitimacy of their leadership and reject R2P.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

1. For all Delegates:
 - a. Whenever you are stuck, start with the three pillars of R2P to understand what problems it is attempting to solve.
 - b. Also, do not hesitate to base your resolution on one of the issues in the "Key Issues" section. With a solid understanding of the issue, identify and analyse perspectives within your country and how they might align or collide with other countries' views.
 - c. You are highly encouraged to seek out countries with similar perspectives to blend ideas into resolutions.
2. For MEDCs:
 - a. Stress the importance of MEDCs' commitment to R2P as it runs on funds provided by MEDCs

- b. Evaluate whether your country is abusing R2P to justify jurisdiction on other countries, such as LEDCs
3. For LEDCs:
 - a. Research whether countries used R2P to enter your country's territory without proper consent
 - b. Put the third pillar of R2P on the spotlight for debate to argue for LEDCs' sovereignty
 - c. Evaluate the damage R2P-induced interventions inflicted on your country's politics, culture, and economy
4. For P5 Nations:
 - a. Evaluate the legal weight of a veto and gauge how much it can set the course for discussions around R2P-related resolutions
 - b. Scan through veto voting records on relevant Security Council resolution to properly represent your nation
5. For R2P signatories:
 - a. Evaluate your nation's recent commitment to R2P
 - i. Recommend how your country can increase its economic and social investment to R2P

VIII. Bibliography

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IX: Additional Resources

If there are any relevant maps, images or data that will help your delegates better understand the issue, include those in this section.

1 PILLAR ONE

Every state has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

2 PILLAR TWO

The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility.

3 PILLAR THREE

If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter.