Is R2P Dead? A Comparative Investigation into the Persecution of the Rohingya and Previous Humanitarian Interventions

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Paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Responsibility to Protect outcome document represent a shift in our conception of sovereignty from the state to the individual. By reinforcing this kind of sovereignty, the international community made a promise to intervene in cases of mass atrocities. The doctrine has flaws that challenge its status as a "new" international norm. These flaws are found in the inconsistency of its implementation. By evaluating the cases of Rwanda, Libya, Syria, and Myanmar, I establish thresholds for intervention and evaluate rather the Responsibility to Protect will be invoked for the Rohingya people of Myanmar.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was established in 2005. R2P provides fundamental protections for human security that includes the ability for states to intervene in each other's domestic affairs when mass atrocities occur. This involves intervention against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Additionally, the notion of humanitarian intervention is rooted in the post-World War II global order, which tends to represent liberal ideas, leading some scholars to consider it a form of neoliberalism. Recently these protections were invoked for interventions in Syria and Libya as a response to government crackdowns during the Arab Spring, which brought about popular change to overthrow oppressive regimes. Recently (and similar to previous calls for intervention), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), foreign governments, and news media have demanded that the international community acknowledge and intervene in the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Throughout this paper, I discuss the issues and complexities surrounding R2P and how its use (or non-use) has weakened or strengthened the norm. In evaluating its use, I cover the cases of Rwanda, Libya, and Syria in hopes of shedding light on the future of R2P, including evaluating whether it will be used to stop the persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar. In conclusion, I make the case that the current situation in Myanmar reaches the standards necessary to prompt past humanitarian interventions, and I end with my thoughts on the future of this doctrine.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

An Overview

Although the notion of humanitarian intervention predates any conception of R2P, it is important to understand some of the history leading to R2P's formation. Throughout recent history, states have intervened in other government's affairs for those oppressed by their own government. Since the nineteenth century, states have intervened based on humanitarian crises as seen by the interventions of European countries for Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire (Hubert, 2010). More recent examples include the United Nations-mandated interventions in Iraq, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Haiti, despite being met with mixed responses within the international community. Although these interventions were not rooted in any real legal framework, the international community realized that they had an obligation to make sure these events never happened again. As a result, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) sought to create a legal norm that would match mass atrocities with state intervention and presented their result in 2001. The final doctrine, known as the "Responsibility to Protect," was agreed upon in 2005.

R2P was established as an outcome of the 2005 UN World Summit and entails a responsibility on all member states to refrain from and prevent acts of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The international consensus over the principles contained in paragraphs 138 and 139 of R2P provide an urgency for states to act on these obligations. R2P has a binding responsibility for member states that offers many opportunities for them to assist states and

affected populations, which can be accomplish through many channels. These include capacity building, early warning detection, and a host of preventive and proactive measures to prevent these crimes and violations from occurring. Additionally, R2P calls on the cooperation of regional organizations and NGOs to improve their capacities. Agreed upon by all members of the UN at the 2005 World Summit, R2P promised to deliver on the solemn pledge of "Rwanda, never again" (United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, n.d.).

Contained within the doctrine are three pillars in addressing conflicts; namely, the responsibility to prevent, react, and rebuild. The first pillar entails a responsibility to protect those populations caught in the crossfires between warring parties, the non-combatants. The second pillar encompasses a timely and decisive response. The third refers to providing international assistance and capacity building for the state to provide a legitimate government. Because there is no single template for addressing every circumstance, the council concluded that each intervention must be done on a case-by-case basis in order to provide an effective response. For an intervention to be necessary, it must meet certain thresholds of either mass killing or displacement, which is either actual or imminent (Hubert, 2010). Within this framework, the 2001 ICISS report outlined four principles for intervention. These include right intentions, last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospects (see: United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, n.d.).[1]

Theoretical Complexities & Deficiencies of R2P

Many studies have assessed R2P's legality and effectiveness, opening up a diverse set of perspectives on the doctrine. These varying understandings of R2P question whether it constitutes a norm and if it has given the international community any new knowledge or legal justification for

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[1] Notably, Chapter 7 of the UN Charter further legitimizes the concept of humanitarian intervention and R2P as it establishes a regime to counter "breaches of peace and security." It calls for peaceful efforts, but failure of these methods can lead to an armed intervention if necessary. The addition of R2P into the UN framework complicates the role of UN Security Council and further evaluation of possible transnational interests is essential in each case of and response to mass atrocities.

humanitarian intervention. Because of R2P's inherently subjective nature, criticisms persist in evaluating whether its use legitimizes a new form of imperialism by big powers. The role of Western and transnational interests in each case require further evaluation, as many of the conflicts that fit into the context of R2P are commonly ignored by the international community at-large, including the current persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar and the mass atrocities of Darfur in 2008. Stemming from these criticisms are the institutional challenges presented in R2P, including the consistency of its implementation, the capacity of it to halt or forestall mass atrocities, and the willingness of outside actors to intervene (Hubert, 2010). Therefore, R2P's subjective implementation threatens its seemingly legitimate humanitarian concerns, opening it to the criticism that it does more harm than good.

Many scholars debate R2P's applicability and effectiveness in addressing issues of mass atrocities. Despite a common consensus on the principles imbedded in R2P, many atrocities continue without intervention, including the 2008 conflict in Darfur. Non-intervention in Darfur resulted in 290,000 internally displaced peoples and another four million people in need of humanitarian assistance (Hehir & Murray, 2013). However, many interventions conducted by Western nations have exceeded their initial responsibility, extending this to regime change. Some see this as a form of neo-liberalism (as highlighted by the United States' intervention into Iraq). Mahmood Mamdani, an Africanist, claims that "more than anything else, the 'responsibility' to protect is a right to punish without being held accountable – a clarion call for the recolonization of 'failed' states in Africa" (quoted in Bellamy, 2015). Although Alex J. Bellamy (2015) recognizes Mamdani's point as valid, he sees intrinsic benefits imbedded in the R2P principle. These benefits include a form of responsible sovereignty that breeds itself in R2P, a clear framework for action, the fact that R2P makes atrocity prevention a reality, R2P's ability to challenge the ideologies that give rise to mass atrocities, and a fundamental partnership connecting many world institutions and countries. Much of the skepticism surrounding R2P stems from its implementation on a case-by-case basis. This has led many weak states into cynical mindsets, claiming that R2P is a new form of imperialism. Misconstruing R2P as an

old-fashioned form of humanitarian intervention has caused states to see it as a "Trojan Horse"

attempt by the global North into the global South (Applegarth & Block, 2010). This rallying cry has

divided opinions on R2P and polarized states to both ends of the concept.

Since R2P was driven by various conflicts in the 1990s, evaluation of the roles of democratic

peace theory and the "end of history" thesis is helpful for considering these criticisms. Democratic

peace theory rests on the mildly-supported assumption that democratic nations are less likely to go

to war. Advanced by scholars as early as Kant and De Tocqueville, modern arguments for regime

change and humanitarian intervention have followed their recommendations. Most recently, one

can look towards the neoliberal positions of President George W. Bush and his cabinet in the

invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Owen, 2005). Their collective hawkish foreign policy led the U.S. into

interventions out of national interests, not humanitarian concern, and led to erroneous regime

change. Many realists refute the idea of democratic peace theory, as they see the idea of political

similarity to be a more significant factor in establishing alliances and evaluating the power game of

international politics. Tying the ideas of humanitarian intervention and democratic peace theory can

cause a deep distrust for many nations that have a form of autocratic or authoritarian rule, as it

posits them as targets for intervention. These distrusts run deep in many nations, such as Algeria,

Russia, and Syria. As a result, they see these interventions as restrictions on their national

sovereignty (Applegarth & Block, 2010).

Similarly, Francis Fukuyama's (1992) idea of the "end of history" links with democratic peace

theory. Fukuyama (1992) argues that with the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union,

liberal democracy and economic liberalization had won in the war against communism.

Unfortunately, the ideological fight did not end with the fall of the Berlin Wall and continues to this

day. Rather, what the world observed in the decade after the Cold War was a brief stint of

overwhelming U.S. hegemony that had no single power to counter it. As we can see today, it was

short-lived and left an impetus on the American public's conceptualization of the U.S. in the overall

global order. The 1990s and early 2000s spurred many revelations about the capabilities of our

international institutions, including an expansion of scope and doctrine in an attempt to spread the democratic values of the "victors" of the Cold War. This development included R2P and shifted the focus onto human sovereignty over state sovereignty, as well as human security over national security.

R2P, as a doctrine, inherently challenges the notion of state sovereignty and alters our understanding of sovereignty by placing powers onto the individual. The rights of the state are put below their obligation to adequately protect all peoples under their rule, which challenges the purpose of the UN and the role of states since the Treaty of Westphalia. Failure or inability to protect individuals allows international forces to intervene in order to stabilize domestic peace in the host state. The language of R2P allows states to intervene even in situations that do not affect general international peace (Hubert, 2010). Although there is a process and certain requirements that need to be met before it reaches this level, states have justified interventions without adequately fulfilling these standards. These include the 2003 intervention to Iraq, which did not receive permission by the UN Security Council.

On another note, the inherently vague inclusion of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity do not include any firm standards or legal definitions, beyond baseline definitions within the UN Genocide Convention. This creates issues for the international community in deciding when mass atrocities reach the level needed for intervention. Going on a case-by-case basis complicates this more when considering the standard required for intervention. For example, by focusing on pure numbers, the intervention into Libya is similar to the atrocities occurring in Myanmar. Before R2P was invoked by Francis Deng, the Special Advisor on Prevention of Genocide, there were 1,000 fatalities and over 250,000 displaced peoples (Hehir & Murray, 2013). On the other hand, the current situation in Myanmar has left 600,000 Rohingya displaced with another few thousand Rohingya dead in the last few months (Catanzano & Nazanin, 2017). Despite this, there has not been a call by the UN for intervention into Myanmar based on the principles of R2P, highlighting the subjectivity that such vague standards have caused.

Additionally, R2P lacks a structural framework in addressing mass atrocities – although I believe that past case studies provide lessons for moving forward. The 2005 UN World Summit outcome document outlined the "new way" of thinking about humanitarian intervention, but it did not provide a strategic way of preventing mass atrocities, reacting to them (with or without armed intervention), or rebuilding afterwards. Many states that support the R2P framework find themselves skeptical of its implementation and stress the importance of each pillar differently. Because there is no real framework to apply R2P in a standard way to every mass atrocity, the capacity of the UN to halt or forestall mass atrocities comes into question. The nature of the R2P doctrine exceeds just the fundamental principles established by the UN in 2005. Rather, it includes the norms of humanitarian intervention and military intervention that have risen since World War II. By analyzing successful and unsuccessful interventions by the United States and other UN countries, an idea of the threshold required for legitimate intervention can be developed. Capturing this threshold allows for a deeper understanding of the factors and limitations by which the international community responded, or failed to respond to, pass mass atrocities. By dissecting these contextual issues, we can understand the shortcomings of R2P's subjective application and hopefully remedy its inadequacies.

The Security Council has dispatched over 40 peacekeeping operations between 1989 and 2011, but has suffered from dwindling resources and financial aptitude (Hehir & Murray, 2013). This has led the UN to resort to regional organizations in order to provide effective missions. These include NATO, AU, EU, and ASEAN among other regional groups. Because these groups have taken over larger responsibilities, the legitimacy of the UN has come in question. As this change in delegating responsibilities occurs, member states and regional organizations have referred to the UN to legitimize their actions (Hehir & Murray, 2013). Despite the UN not formally setting up peacekeeping operations, their authorization still carries voice in most major diplomatic or military moves in order for peacekeeping missions to gain legitimacy among the larger international community. Yet member states and regional organizations may act without the authorization of the

UN, just as the U.S. and Britain continued with the 2003 invasion of Iraq after the UN denied their request. The defiance of countries to intervene without proper authorization continues to lessen the bite of the UN as a legitimate source of authority, causing further unauthorized interventions to happen. Cynically, this has the potential to add to the idea that humanitarian intervention is another form of Western imperialism. As states begin to align themselves in order to retain their own international power through the U.S. hegemonic structure, they become complacent in defying U.S. national interests to deter or promote intervention along certain moral guidelines. This would appear to be a similar scenario with other great and rising powers, like China and Russia, within their own international camps.

Further, the willingness of the international community, specifically the U.S. and other UN Security Council members, to intervene is under considerable scrutiny. Since cases are referred on an individual basis, the consistency of the implementation of R2P and humanitarian efforts needs evaluation. Because states hide their real motives to protect their transnational interests through selectively involving themselves in humanitarian crises, many states ignore atrocities where their interests do not lie. This hypocrisy challenges the establishment of R2P as a constituted norm and brings into question whether the international community jumped to conclusions in their claims that humanitarian intervention had risen to such a level of validation.

Case Studies: Mass Atrocities and Humanitarian Intervention

In this section, I evaluate the case histories of Rwanda, Libya, and Syria. These cases were chosen because of their ability to capture the story of R2P and the diverse response of actors to their situations based on Western and transnational interests within the host states. These cases help us pinpoint where government mass atrocities begin, as well as where humanitarian intervention (or lack thereof) plays a vital role. Warning factors of impending mass atrocities include the dehumanization of identity groups, the arming of civilians, the repression of certain groups, and the fracturing of political groups or political ties within the government. Additionally, this section

critiques the international community's response to these atrocities – particularly when there was a failure to intervene when the signs were pointing to clear cases of genocide or ethnic cleansing. These critiques will trace the story of R2P and comment on the efficacy of this norm in each case.

The Case of Rwanda

Rwanda offers an important case of non-intervention despite clear signs of genocide; indeed, the 1994 Rwandan genocide was one of the mass atrocities that prompted the adoption of R2P. The root of the Rwandan genocide was planted by Belgian's rule during the age of European imperialism. By perceiving ethnic differences within the population, colonizers used the ethnic terms "Hutus" and "Tutsis" as indicators of class distinctions. These identities were fluid before colonization, but the Belgians made these identifications static markers of ethnic identity. With the introduction of identity cards and "anthropological" studies to further make these differences more distinct, Belgian authorities promoted a Tutsi minority ruling class that they made politically and economically stronger than their Hutu majority counterparts. The systematic implementation of ethnic rule set the stage for the later conflict in April 1994, which resulted in the murder of 800,000 people and the displacement of more than two million Rwandans in the course a few months. With a population of seven million, this conflict killed 11 percent of the population and displaced another 28.5 percent (United Nations, 2017).

Before the genocide began, there was already a UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda led by General Roméo Dallaire. During his term there, Dallaire received information from a Hutu informant who believed preparations were being made for an impending genocide by Hutu extremists within the military, who were training civilians as part of a defense program to combat rebel threats. By incorporating citizens into war, the government was able to set the stage for civilian participation in the genocide. Dallaire received this information, along with the locations of weapon caches, and passed it along to the UN (Strauss, 2006). Unfortunately Dallaire's hopes to destroy weapons before violence began did not come to pass; sparked by the assassination of Rwandan President Juvenal

Habyarimna and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira when their plane was shot down on April 5, 1994, Hutu extremists executed their meticulous plan of genocide. At the same time, there were also movements in the southern part of Rwanda by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), comprised of Tutsi refugees from Uganda. Although no one is sure who is responsible for shooting down the plane, all that is certain is that Hutu extremists took to the streets and began their genocide the next day. Notably, the international community largely abandoned Rwanda after Belgian UN peacekeepers were murdered early in the genocide; Dallaire remained in Rwanda with a few hundred peacekeepers, but without permission to use force or intervene in order to save lives. Eventually the UN approved a plan to supply additional troops to the UNAMIR mission, but the genocide had ended (after armed intervention by RPF troops, led by now-Rwandan president Paul Kagame) by the time the UN peacekeeping forces arrived. Before the UN force arrived, a French humanitarian mission in the southern part of Rwanda may have saved tens of thousands of Tutsi lives, but also provided refuge to the perpetrators of the genocide (Strauss, 2006).

In the wake of the Rwandan genocide, the international community was faced with deep criticisms for not following through on protecting humanitarian norms. Although their failure in Yugoslavia's civil war had presented them with the challenges of implementing an effective intervention plan, the international community's response to Rwanda was one of disinterest. What perpetuated their non-response was the recognition that Rwanda did not hold any strategic value to most large powers, causing the international media to pay almost no attention to the area until the situation had spiraled out of control. Even when media had attracted the attention of the international public, it represented the conflict as a two-sided war, which was far from the truth. This spurred many countries to remain uninvolved, in respect for state sovereignty (Kuperman, 2000). Additionally, failure to understand the conflict in its cultural context resulted in the misfortunate response to Dallaire's information and pleas for assistance, thus allowing the genocide to continue.

Despite the many failures of the international community in responding to the Rwandan genocide, it did provide them with lessons in early warning detection for mass atrocities. For example, senior politician Leon Mugesera used the language of "cockroaches" to describe Tutsis as he preached the message that "anyone whose neck you do not cut is the one who will cut your neck," effectively inciting the genocide (quoted in O'Grady, 2016). This same language of dehumanization has been used leading up to other mass atrocity crimes; it was used by Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya, for instance, during the Arab Spring before cracking down on political opponents and protestors (Fahim & Kirkpatrick, 2011). Drawing on what we have learned from the Rwandan genocide, the international community can better identify early warning signs and hopefully more promptly address situations of impending mass atrocity crimes.

The Case of Libya

Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi controlled Libya after the success of his military-led coup against King Idris in 1969. Qaddafi's plan was to implement a form of pan-Arab nationalism in order to begin a process of state socialism to gain control of key economic sectors, including oil. Domestically, he created havoc by pushing for "revolutionary committees" that served as watchdog groups for counterrevolutionary forces within schools and workplaces, which resulted in institutionalized chaos. The type of surveillance of the Libyan population under Gaddafi is comparable to that under the Stasi in the East German government. The increased surveillance dissipated into anti-Qaddafi sentiments, eventually leading protestors to take to the streets. Once violence broke out in Egypt and Tunisia during the 2011 Arab Spring, Libya became the next target for regime change. Violence began to break out in Benghazi and other major cities on February 17 between anti-Qaddafi rebels and security forces. Simultaneously, the UN started conversations regarding a "no-fly zone" that was eventually implemented through UN Resolution 1973. As fighting began to settle down, countries started to recognize the emerging opposition group of the National Transitional Council (NTC) as the legitimate government of Libya. As political promises to hold

elections within eight months went unrealized, domestic forces began to grow unsettled. A real threat of the disintegration of a united Libyan state created panic within the political institutions and led to simultaneous civil wars in the east and west sides of the country (El-Gamaty, 2016; BBC News, 2018).

Intervention in Libya's crisis highlights the role that national interests play in responding to humanitarian crises. In the UN Security Council, five member states abstained from the vote (Russia, China, India, Britain, and Germany), revealing the extremely limited support for intervention and for the normative principle of R2P in general. The vote in the UN likely exposed the deep role that political concessions play in the decision-making process for intervention; the normative principles of R2P played a minimal part in approving Resolution 1973. The countries that abstained raised concerns over the implementation of the resolution, as it endorsed a "no-fly zone" but permitted "all necessary measures" and enabled NATO governments to launch air strikes against the Qaddafi regime (Hehir & Murray, 2013). Instead of having a genuine concern for the civilians oppressed by the Qaddafi regime, the U.S. and other supporting member states sought to destabilize the regime until it fell.

Failed foreign intervention approaches have restricted any hope of uniting Libya at the cost of preventing the growth of ISIS in the region. This has caused a lag in promoting a sustainable solution for the Libyan state. Therefore, attempts have been rushed and ineffective, making ongoing conflict (as seen in 2011) highly possible. As of July 2017, both of Libya's two main rival parties signed a ceasefire agreement and began talks to hold an election as soon as possible. These talks are being mediated by French President Emmanuel Macron. Unfortunately, nothing materialized from these talks and both parties remain in contest over the rights to key oil terminals. This has developed into an economic slowdown; oil production has been cut in half since the fall of Qaddafi (El-Gamaty, 2016). The Libyan Civil War resulted in an unknown number of dead, although estimates are near 100,000, with another 1.3 million displaced (Amnesty International, 2017). If placed in terms of the

pre-Libyan Civil War population of 6.15 million, this would represent .8 percent and 21 percent of the total population (Fargues, 2017).

In addition, the role of Western and transnational interests in the conflict cannot go ignored. Libya is a top-ten oil-producing nation with oil reserves estimated around 48 billion barrels. With increased foreign presence in the Middle East, Libya was surely held as an asset for ideological and economic interests. Libya provided a point of strategic interests within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. By establishing a democratic government, Western states hoped to continue to spread democracy in the region to promote their own transnational interests. Even these reasons did not push the UN to provide an effective response to the crisis, focusing on regime change and nation-building instead of a physical intervention to control Qaddafi's security forces and the growing power vacuum that ISIS filled (see: CNN, 2017).

The Case of Syria

The Syrian case presents perhaps the greatest need for humanitarian intervention in the past half-century and highlights the consequences that American retrenchment may have in the global order. With more than 250,000 dead and another 11 million internally and externally displaced, what started as the Arab Spring has ended in a bloody civil war with a complex web of political factors at play (BBC News, 2016). The UN's Syrian envoy places the death toll closer to 400,000 (United Nations Radio, 2016). If placed in terms of the pre-Syrian Civil War population of 21.4 million, this would represent 1.9 percent and 51.4 percent of the total population (Statista, n.d.).

After the U.S. and U.S. President Barack Obama's administration failed to follow through with their red-line policy on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime and their oppressive actions on protestors, violence ensued and continues to this day, even employing the use of chemical weapons such as sarin and chlorine. With the war proliferating since March 2011, al-Assad's Shia Alawite minority has been at odds with the Sunni majority. This has polarized the conflict along

13

sectarian lines. With the deterioration of a true political state, a power vacuum has opened up and the jihadist Islamic State (ISIS) has placed themselves in contention with the al-Assad regime. No side is free from scrutiny, as the government, ISIS, and rebel groups have engaged in activities that amount to war crimes and other mass atrocities. The conflict has resulted in one of the largest humanitarian crises in modern times and the UN responded with Resolution 2043, which has placed peacekeeping forces in Syria since 2012. Despite this, the current state of geopolitical affairs has not stopped the conflict and there is no sure sign that this will change in coming months (see: CNN, 2018).

Syria offers an example of the role that national interests play and how the international community has acculturated conflict into a proxy war between ideological forces. In a fashion paralleling the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia have struggled to cooperate in maintaining a legitimate response to the conflict, as both seek to set up governments that would align with their regimes. The success of a Syrian government that is palatable with either party would certainly hold strategic value within the larger Middle East, which has served as the most recent battleground for great ideological struggles, especially since the Arab Spring.

This does not distract us from the most genuine concern of the Syrian civil war – the dire humanitarian need of civilians caught in the crossfire. The Syrian conflict may be the most important international crisis of our time and deserves more attention than it has received. The results of such prolonged non-response from the international community will continue to affect the politics of Europe and the Middle East for decades to come, including with a further polarization of views over the status and rights of refugees. With the rise of alt-right populism in many European states (such as Germany, France, and Britain), the possibility that the mass migration from Syria might result in a violent backlash has certainly increased and deserves more attention over the coming years. Fears about the possible dissolution of the European Union, which has maintained regional stability, only adds to this gruesome possibility.

The Rohingya in Myanmar

The cases of Rwanda, Libya, and Syria set the scene for an ongoing case of mass atrocity crimes: the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar. The current genocide in Myanmar centers around the abuses of the Buddhist nationalist government towards the Muslim ethnic minority, the Rohingya. Ethnic and religious identities are rooted deeply in the conflict, as Myanmar officials seek to create a Buddhist state. Challenges towards the ethnic identity of the Rohingya is contested on a daily basis and has been ever since Myanmar (formerly Burma) gained independence from Britain in 1948. The Rohingya mainly reside in the coastal Rakhine region that borders Bangladesh, which has seen waves of refugees enter the country in the past half-century. Yet this conflict goes back further still; in 1785, the Rohingya experienced large waves of persecution by the Burman population which resulted in many Rohingya either escaping their homes or being sold into slavery in the Burmese state. With this experience still fresh, many Rohingya sided with the British during their rule in Burma beginning in 1825. This would later fuel the fire of genocide after Burma gained independence (Berlatsky, 2015).

While in power, the British conducted many censuses, including one in 1824. This survey contained the Rohingya as a separate ethnic group residing in the Rakhine region. This was important in establishing a Rohingya ethnic identity. Once Burma gained independence from Britain in 1948, the attacks on Rohingya citizenship began. One of the most common tactics focused on challenging whether the Rohingya were descendants of those counted in the 1824 survey. Instead, many Burmese argue that "Rohingya" is a political term created by Muslim residents in the Rakhine state and that they are most likely Bengali migrants living in the region (Ibrahim, 2016). This is far from the truth, but it has prompted the government to impose strict citizenship laws to disenfranchise the Rohingya – including leaving them stateless and preventing them from participating in government (Berlatsky, 2015).

Violent conflict has flared many times since independence, including military crackdowns against the Rohingya in 1975, 1991-1992, 2012, 2015, and most recently in 2017. The latest

atrocities began in late August 2017 and resulted in more than 515,000 Rohingya fleeing, in addition to millions of others who have fled in the past half-century due to persecution (Cumming-Bruce, 2017). More than 2,000 people, with some influxes of more than 10,000 people, escape to the neighboring Bangladesh every day. Many media sources and human rights organizations have followed the most recent conflicts, noting the well-organized, coordinated, and systematic attacks committed against the Rohingya. Most view these attacks as terror tactics used to prevent the Rohingya from returning to Myanmar (Al Jazeera, 2017).

There are five sides to this conflict. First is the Burmese military, which remains powerful despite political structure changes in 2008. The second group includes the two largest political parties, the United Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and National League for Democracy (NLD), which are comprised of mainly Burman Buddhists, despite their claim to represent multi-ethnic communities. Neither organization supports the Rohingya's recognition as citizens of Burma. The third group is the ethnic regional parties that focus on ethnic issues, mainly representing the Shan, Karen, and Rakhine communities. These do not include the Rohingya, who have almost no political representation. Fourth are some Buddhist monks, who have become increasingly essential in the political arena since 1998. They are represented by the 969 Movement and MaBaTha party. Both parties are at the forefront of intercommunal violence against Muslim minorities as they both seek to establish a purely Buddhist state. Lastly are the civil society groups that call for an end to the "anti-Muslim hate speech" and repressive laws. These groups constantly push for equal rights and demand intervention by the international community into the conflict (Ibrahim, 2016).

The Current Situation

As of November 2017, conditions for the Rohingya have barely improved. One hopeful light is that the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh, who has received an overwhelming amount of the refugees, have signed an agreement for the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya (Westcott & White, 2017). Many of the details of the agreement are still unknown, but there are

many points of tension within what is known. For one, the agreement will place the Rohingya returnees back into temporary camps, where many people have lived for years following earlier waves of violence. The level of mistrust between the government's words and actions have prompted Rohingya activist to impede the return of refugees as internally displaced people within their own Rakhine state. Since the attacks began, the Burmese army has continued to burn down Rohingya villages on their path towards ethnically cleansing the Rakhine state, with an estimated (at least) 30 villages destroyed so far (Freeman, 2017). Furthermore, army officers are carrying out a campaign of rape torture. Rape torture is surely a war crime, along with being a marker of ethnic cleansing and even genocide. Additionally, the government has offered to provide identity cards to verify that the Rohingya exist as a national group, as long as individuals can prove they have "evidence of past residence in Myanmar." Unfortunately, most of the documents that would confirm this information were confiscated or destroyed once violence started on August 25. Because of these impediments, concerns have risen whether even half of the refugees could be repatriated (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

On the wider international level, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson acknowledged that the situation in the Northern Rakhine state constitutes ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya in 2017 (Westcott & Koran, 2017). This statement should illicit support for an R2P intervention by the UN, but there has not been any call towards such an intervention. Instead, the U.S. has not directed these accusations at Myanmar government's; it has only considered possible targeted sanctions, although anything further than that is not on the table and would probably be unproductive in resolving the conflict.

Aung San Suu Kyi

The media attention surrounding Myanmar could signal a willingness by the international community to respond to, or at least investigate, the atrocities occurring in the country. The media has focused on condemning Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the NLD and the State Counsellor of

Myanmar, who was a Nobel Peace Prize recipient in 1991. She won the award for her outspokenness against the military regime in Myanmar that put her under house arrest between 1989 and 2010. Despite her push for democracy and the promotion of human rights, Suu Kyi has not spoken out against the mass atrocities or regarding the Rohingya claim to Burmese citizenship.

Her place in this situation is quite ironic, especially considering her father, Aung San, was a large proponent of human rights during the creation of the Burmese state. Unfortunately, he was assassinated in 1947, six months before Burmese independence from Britain. As the leader of the Communist Party of Burma, Aung San fought vociferously for complete independence from the British with the establishment of a socially democratic state. Out of retaliation, U Saw, the former prime minister, and other paramilitaries assassinated him. As Aung San represented the de facto leader of the infant Burmese country, a power vacuum opened for rule. This created a rift and hawkish military leaders tried to fill this political space, which has continued to this day.

Because of her unique history and situation, Suu Kyi walks a tightrope between the Buddhist hardliners in Myanmar and the democratic reformers within her country and around the world. To deviate too deeply on either side puts her newfound liberties in Myanmar under scrutiny of being reneged or her status as a human rights advocate under fire from the rest of the international community. In some ways, her case is comparable to former Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf, although to lesser extent; both are balancing their influence domestically and internationally due to hardliners in their states and international pressure abroad. What is much more concerning is that many religious and political figures are slow or unwilling to condemn the Myanmar government and Suu Kyi herself, including Pope Francis and U.S. Secretary of State Tillerson. This will continue to only serve the interests of the regime and perpetuate a non-response to the crisis within the international community.

Critique

The case of Myanmar, when compared to previous interventions based on either humanitarian concerns or the explicit call of R2P, clearly requires an international response to stop the genocidal attack on the Rohingya population. Without this response, the Myanmar conflict may become a haunting memory joining the ranks of international non-response in Rwanda. Rather than looking at the sheer numbers of refugees and IDPs, the international community must consider the percentage of the population that has experienced persecution at the hands of the government. In order to address the issue of genocide, an effective response is necessary to curtail further refugee migration and attacks in the Rakhine state. The case of Myanmar deserves further analysis and a deeper comparative study of the features that have led to these atrocities in order for the international community to address Myanmar more effectively. Solutions could include pushing for Rohingya citizenship to restore the basic rights guaranteed to them by the UN Charter. Myanmar has the ability to move past these atrocities and work towards the state that leaders such as Aung San Suu Kyi used to stand for, but its present situation requires the international community to address and mediate all sides in this conflict.

Regrettably, this will most likely not happen. Western states have little-to-no interest in this situation and major political and religious leaders continue not to stand up for those oppressed, the Rohingya. This case highlights the complexity of relations within the UN and the UN Security Council and allows political scientists to debate the three major lenses of international political theory in an attempt to decode each states' unique view. The case continues the literature regarding the inaction of the international community to readily address mass atrocities despite the major events that were international calls to action. This includes dehumanizing sections of the population, oppressive domestic policies, and targeted attacks on certain people. I believe this case will add to our understanding of the social environment that breeds mass atrocities; it's a small comfort, but I hope that someday the goals of R2P can be realized using some of this knowledge.

Evaluating the Data

For Myanmar, I am only concerned with the Rohingya population because it represents a clear case of targeted ethnic cleansing; the protection of other ethnic groups at the expense of the Rohingya population does not need to be included. Based on the data contained in Table 1, Myanmar reaches the thresholds used in previous interventions. The campaign carried out by the Myanmar army and government mirrors that of Syria in terms of percentage displaced (66.7 percent to 51.4 percent) and Libya (.1 percent and .8 percent) for percentage dead. Reviewing the factors that could signal an early warning to the atrocities in Myanmar, it hits the same checkmarks that warranted other interventions. These include oppressive domestic policies, dehumanization of certain groups, rape, and torture. Unfortunately, despite reaching these thresholds and checkmarks, there has not been a UN response to the situation or any real invocation of R2P in defense of the Rohingya. With no real Western or transnational interests in Myanmar, there is little hope that the international community will press on the matter any further than they have. Keeping this in mind, Myanmar may turn into the next Rwanda, leaving the international community to muse on the too familiar claim of "never again."

	Rwanda	Libya	Syria	Myanmar (Rohingya only)
# Displaced	2 million	1.3 million	11 million	600,000
# Dead	800,000	100,000	250,000	100,000
Population Pre-Conflict	7 million	6.15 million	21.4 million	55.1 Total; 1 million Rohingya
% of Population Displaced	28.5%	21%	51.4%	66.7% of Rohingya population (but all
% of Population Dead	11%	.8%	1.9%	.1%
Early Warnings?	Dallaire Fax: RPF Movement;:	Dehumanization Rhetoric, Oppressive Domestic	Dehumanization Rhetoric, Use of Chemical Weapons,	Dehumanization Rhetoric; ID cards; Oppressive
Western/Transnational Interests?	None	Yes, oil, regional stability, regime change	Yes, oil, regional stability (with proxy war	None
R2P Action?	None (did not exist, but no UN action)	Yes, Resolution 1973	Yes, Resolution 2043	None

Table 1

The Future of R2P

At the beginning of my research, I believed that R2P was an established international norm and just needed further development by the international community. What was missing not only from my discourse, but also from most rhetoric surrounding R2P, is discussion of what constitutes a "norm" in reality. In my opinion, a norm is something that is upheld indiscriminately in the actions and behaviors of states. R2P does not fit this description. Rather, R2P is used discriminately through the purview of Western states and institutions. The conflicts that are the most deserving of intervention have received little attention and, whenever a response was issued, they were dealt with ineffectively and inadequately. Look towards Darfur, Rwanda, the Central African Republic (CAR), among many more, that have received the minimal amount of attention from the UN and other regional organizations. If R2P was an established norm, then these humanitarian crises would not have risen to these levels of suffering and inattention.

There are ways for the international community to make R2P a realized and established norm. This would call for a complete revamp of the 2005 doctrine and a firmer commitment on behalf of the international community to intervene. It would call for assistance in capacity building for states on the verge of humanitarian crises. Nation-building will supersede any need for regime change. In the face of governments denying their people basic human rights, a multilateral response will be used over a unilateral intervention. But will this be enough? Will the international community try reconstructing R2P? In my opinion, the international community will continue to question the legitimacy of R2P. Western states that wish to uphold the principle as a safeguard against their transnational interests will revise and rework the doctrine to fit their narrow needs. I do not believe that the international community is in a position where long-term global humanitarian solutions are sustainable and upheld indiscriminately. Instead, we are stuck in the continued process of figuring out state identity in a progressively pseudo-realist and neo-liberal world where states cannot get past the curtain of increasing global power, rather than focusing on the collective good for all.

This project reinforces the realization that R2P is a corrupt doctrine that does not have much bite, other than what the international community subjectively applies to it. Since its conception in 2005, R2P has been used discriminately and to varying degrees, as represented by the cases of Libya, Syria, and Myanmar, among many others. My hope is that these cases capture the historical evolution of R2P since its adoption post-Rwanda, when the world seemed open to promoting democratic and neoliberal values, to its inevitable death in the wake of growing ideological struggles and multi-polarity in the international sphere. Whether the international community will decide to reevaluate this "norm" is key to its potential survival, but the chances of effective change are dim.

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