Mass Atrocities and Western Imperialism: Evaluating "Responsibility to Protect"

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Amidst unimaginable human rights violations in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Myanmar, the international community is faced with a moral predicament how to react. In 1999, Kofi Annan stressed the responsibility to protect citizens of states, meaning that even though states are sovereign, they do not have a free ride to endorse or accept the suffering or killing of civilians. The concept of the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P), authorised after the United Nations (UN) World Summit 2005 attempted to resolve the contradiction between individual human rights and sovereignty. It became legitimate for the international community to intervene if a country does not fulfil its main duty, the protection of its civilians (United Nations 2018). However, humanitarian interventions remain highly selective (Hehir 2013: 156). Hence, positive assumptions around R2P are problematic and this essay demonstrates why. To do so, it will critically evaluate the consequences of R2P under the consideration of its efficiency to stop human suffering. Since R2P gained major support of entities that came from the same liberal and democratic background, this essay will specifically focus on driving factors of Western[1] states and examine whether human rights violations are crucial for the West to intervene in other states (Pingeot and Obenland 2014: 26).

It begins with a brief overview of the historical background, key pillars, and proponents and opponents of the R2P-concept. Following arguments present an abstract of the dominant discourse on R2P. It is claimed that the uneven application of R2P can be explained best with the 'humanitarian imperialism'. The main section of this essay critically compares the decisions of Western states regarding two examples where the world witnessed major human rights violations through the state. Cases examined will be the intervention in Libya 2011, and the non-intervention in Myanmar 2017. It is shown that the intervention in Libya was driven by neo-imperial and neo-liberal aims of the West, whilst the non-intervention of Myanmar can be explained through the satisfaction of Western states and China with the current Myanmar government. Consequently, the international community and particularly the West has only interests in intervening for the purpose of the protection of civilians if it corresponds to their foreign policy strategy. Lastly, this essay summarises the findings of the case studies and sets them in a broader context. It concludes that at best, the concept of R2P creates awareness for human suffering elsewhere but does not resolve the key issues. At worst, it works as a tool for the enforcement of neo-liberal and neo-imperial aims. Overall, R2P sheds a new light on interventions, but this does not contribute to an effective solution to end human suffering.

The Emergence of the Responsibility to Protect

Failed and troubled humanitarian interventions throughout the 1990s and the unauthorised[2] intervention in Kosovo showed the tensions between states sovereignty and individual human rights. Sovereignty no longer functioned as a shield from intervention. From this situation, a debate emerged as to whether human rights are placed above a state's sovereignty (Annan 1999). The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) contributed to this debate and developed the concept of the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) from 2000 onwards, aiming for a common ground on the issue of humanitarian interventions. The objective of R2P is to resolve the dilemmas between state sovereignty and human rights, while reducing the risk of humanitarian disasters. Crucial to the development of R2P was the question: '[W]hen, if ever, it is appropriate for states to take coercive – and in particular military – action, against another state for the purpose of protecting people at risk in that other state.' (ICISS 2001: VII)

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After publishing the ICISS report on R2P, the concept found consensus for action within the United Nations (UN). The closing document of the World Summit 2005 includes three paragraphs on R2P[3]. According to this, the concept of R2P contains three consecutive elements: Firstly, the primary responsibility of the individual state is to protect its people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Secondly, the state is assisted by the international community, which uses peaceful instruments like expedient diplomacy or humanitarian means. Thirdly, if these instruments fail, the international community will ultimately be responsible for taking timely and determined action through the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the basis of the UN Charter (United Nations 2018). Therefore, the aim of R2P was not to justify intervention, but instead the non-intervention, if large scale human rights violations were committed. Generally, R2P does encourage a moralisation and possesses a cosmopolitan approach. Nevertheless, what first seemed to be an innovative solution tackling human suffering turned out to be unoriginal. It is neither a binding law, nor changed the R2P-concept structures within the UN. The UNSC still has to agree as the highest instance to intervention and the UNSC has no obligation to justify inaction. The contents of the R2P-concept are already integral parts of international law[4] (Hehir 2012: 82). Therefore, the final document has more a symbolic value.

Broadly speaking, R2P was supported from entities that have a similar ideological, political and economic background. Governments like Canada, United Kingdom (UK), Germany, and France were supporters of the R2P. The United States (US) in particular had two important conditions before the authorisation; R2P shall not create a legal duty of the UNSC to intervene, and shall not preclude the possibility of action absent of an authorisation by the UNSC (Pingeot and Obenland 2014: 26). Moreover, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and US-based foundations played an important key role in the establishment of R2P[5] and many well-known American academics also supported the concept[6] (Pingeot and Obenland 2014: 27-29). Countries as China, Russia, Brazil and India have argued R2P is just another 'form of [Western] imperialism cloaked in humanitarianism' (Keeler: 2012). However, criticism of these countries is 'painted as suspicious and linked to dark motives', arguing that their aversion to R2P is reflexive since they are considered as more or less undemocratic states (Pingeot and Obenland 2014: 37; Serrano 2011). Summarising, supporters of R2P originate from the same, democratic and liberal background. The next section offers an overview of existing relevant literature that explain interventions and non-interventions.

Dominant Discourse on R2P

Hehir (2012: 119-144) points out, that the political will is central for an intervention. Wheeler and Morris (2007: 448) similarly argue: '[I]n no case have states intervened when there were no vital interests at stake'. Hence, the resulting questions are: What shapes interests and why are the international responses to human rights violations uneven? This part compares two prevailing approaches that explain the selectivity of the application of R2P and humanitarian interventions.

Advocates of constructivism contend that international norms and state identities are important factors when considering an intervention. A norm is 'a given standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 891), while the notion of state identity refers to 'certain ideas about who one is in a given situation' (Wendt 1990: 170). Interventions are more likely, if a norm – like R2P – exists and it helps to change or maintain the state's identity. For instance, it is argued that Barack Obama legitimised the intervention in Libya to reshape the US identity, in the aftermath of the Bush administration and the 'moral' crisis of the US in the context of the War on Terror (Jarvis 2013: 212). However, constructivism has been critiqued for not explaining, how norms come into being and for representing a too linear and an unproven process (Gholiagha 2015).

Critical constructivism attempted to fill these gaps. Wiener and Puettner (2008: 4) state: 'norms are what actors make of them; and […] they are as "good" as what actors make them out to be', contending that 'critical constructivism considers norms as constituted through practice' (Wiener 2014: 21). As a proponent of the critical constructivism, Gholiagha (2015: 1086-1087) explains the application of R2P as a norm in Libya and the non-application of R2P in Syria, concluding, that 'norms remain inherently contested, but this does not mean [R2P] is weak or still "emerging". […] R2P should be seen as the beginning of a debate around preventing and stopping mass atrocities and not as a final result or solution'.

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However, the former approaches do not take neo-liberal aims, global capitalist dynamics and neo-imperialists objectives of the West into account. This should be understood in the context of American exceptionalism. Scholars like Brzezinski (1997) state that the US has a primary role as a superpower within the international system (Huntington 1993: 83; Brzezinski 1997: 31). Consequently, the central role of the US lies in strengthening international stability, democracy and economic growth – without its leadership, the world would end in a 'global chaos' (Brzezinski 2016). Thus, the overall US-strategy is the establishment of global capitalism (Panitch and Gindin 2004). Hence, indigenous nationalism has always been the threat to Western interests (Chomsky 2008).

Critics describe these assumptions as a neo-liberal form of 'free-trade imperialism' that divides the world into dichotomies: 'the cores and the peripheries of global capitalism', because free trade imperialism hinders capitalist developments in poorer countries (Kiely 2010: 170). Since direct forms of colonial and imperial control cannot be justified in an anarchic system, states use indirect means to gain influence and power (Damboek 2012: 291). In this sense, a better way to understand the selectivity of interventions is the so-called 'humanitarian imperialism' because it considers neo-liberal economic dynamics (Bricmont 2006; Chomsky 2008; Kiely 2010). Humanitarian imperialism is defined as 'the idea that our "universal values" give [the West] the right and even the duty to intervene elsewhere' (Bricmont 2006: 10), whereas 'military intervention should be regarded as the most extreme form of institutional shock therapy, and thus an intrinsic part of the process of neo-liberal structural adjustments' (Kiely 2010: 219). Interventions are more likely to occur when combined with the spread of liberal values like democracy and free-trade (Kiely 2010: 194).

Subsequently, R2P becomes a useful tool to justify interventions, in order to widen political and economic access to development countries (Chomsky 2008). Formally, states stay independent after an intervention in the anarchic system, but 'forms of coercion, such as economic, political or social instruments may in some cases be used to keep developing countries under Western dominance or at least under Western constraint' (Damboeck 2012: 291). In academia, one can observe a general mistrust towards the motives of (US-led) interventions. The West is accused of becoming the 'colonising enterprise of the modern world' (Kaldor 2007 in Damboek 2012: 291). If states have an interest in supporting and maintaining their own power and welfare, why shall the they fight for human rights elsewhere just for the 'noble purpose' – war has economic costs and needs to be justified to its own citizens (Damboek 2012: 292). Finally, R2P is more likely to be applied if neo-liberal and neo-imperial aims can be achieved. Discussion will now focus on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led intervention in Libya, with an overview of events leading to the UNSC vote.

NATO Intervention in Libya

Libya claims to be the first country, where the R2P concept was applied (Bellamy & Williams 2011). It will be questioned if the intervention was mainly driven by humanitarian issues rather than other factors. The uprising in Libya needs to be understood in the context of the Arab Spring in early 2011. The official revolution start date was the 17th February 2011 after protests in Benghazi. Political conflict escalated quickly and the National Transitional Council (NTC)[7] gained control over large parts of eastern Libya. Five days after the start of the revolution, Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi used a violent rhetoric against the rebels (BBC News 2011). The United Nations High commissioner for Human Rights (ONHCR) quickly demanded action, stating that Libya's government was committing crimes against humanity and states like the US, France and UK emphasised human suffering in Libya (Nebehay 2011; Mulholland 2011). The violent uprising in Libya and the large scale human right violations fulfilled every requirement for the application of R2P. On the 17th of March 2011, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1973 and authorised the Member States[8] 'to take all necessary measures […] to protect the civilians and civilian population areas under threat of attack […] while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of the Libyan territory' (Security Council 2011). The aim of the Resolution was, to establish a no-fly zone for civilian protection. Qaddafi was killed in Sirte by the rebels on the 20th October 2011.

Saving Human Lives?

Proponents of the R2P-concept welcomed the Resolution. Evans (2011: 40) stated that Libya is a perfect example 'of the R2P norm working exactly as it was supposed to'. Others spoke of a 'new era' because we 'move toward a more

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humane world' (Axworthy 2011). Concurrently, Ban Ki-Moon (2011) argued: 'By now it should be clear to all that the Responsibility to Protect has arrived.'

If one focusses on the NATO-actions, it remains questionable if the saving of lives was the central agenda. Barack Obama, Nicolas Sarkozy and David Cameron said in a joint statement in April 2011 (Stratton 2011) that the duty and the mandate 'is to protect civilians, and we are doing that. It is not to remove Qaddafi by force. But it is impossible to imagine a future for Libya with Qaddafi in power.' Dissenting voices accused the West that a regime change was the actual aim of this intervention (Black 2011). This concern was reinforced through the fact that NATO supported the rebels fighting the Qaddafi regime where it posed no threat to civilians. Sinclair (2016) summed up the happenings in Libya: NATO 'took part in directly killing scores of civilians and provided air cover, military and diplomatic support for rebel forces as they committed war crimes against civilians.' Reports showed that murder as well as torture were committed by both sides – Qaddafi regime and rebel forces (Smith 2011). Human rights organisations were seriously concerned about an ethnic cleansing of 30,000 inhabitants of Tawergha – a village in Libya, conducted by rebels with indirect support of NATO-forces (Tawergha Foundation 2018).

If the main aim of the intervention was to protect civilians, it remains doubtful why the NATO supported the rebels in committing crimes against humanity. Zenko (2016) argues: 'In truth, the Libyan intervention was about a regime change from the very start. […] NATO [provided] direct close-air support for advancing rebel forces by attacking government troops that were actually in retreat and had abandoned their vehicles.' Given the evidence of NATO supporting the killings of civilians leads to the question whether other interests were at stake explaining the intervention in Libya.

Even though energy reserves are not the only objective in the Middle East policy of Western countries, in an oil-rich state, 'a reliable dictator is granted virtual free rein' (Chomsky 2011). Chomsky (2011) suggests that large parts of the Libyan land are undiscovered, with the existence of major oil reserves. A more Western-inclined government, would make it easier to exploit resources. Contrasting with Chomsky (2011), some argue, that oil is not an important factor, considering that the European Union already had deals with Libya and access to oil (Hehir 2013: 139). However, this remains unconvincing by reading the leaked E-Mail of Sidney Blumenthal[9] to Hillary Clinton, former US Secretary of State (Blumenthal 2011). It poses a summary of France strategic interests in Libya. The main interests, according to Blumenthal were inter alia 'a desire to gain a greater share of Libya's oil production', and an '[i]ncrease [of] French influence in North Africa'. Human rights were neglected. Considering the amount of oil Western powers had the opportunity to reshape the country in their interests, while 'blocking the extension and radicalisation of the uprising' and undermining the influence of Russia and China within the region (Pradella and Rad 2017: 2416).

However, the question remains why Qaddafi was not a 'reliable dictator'. Another reason to explain NATOs agenda was the prevention of establishing an independent hard currency. Since 2009, Qaddafi was the elected chairman of the African Union and pushed the project of the 'United States of Africa' (Sarrar 2010). His aim was to harmonise the military of Africa, the establishment of free movement and a common currency to gain more independence from the US and Europe (Chothia 2011). The leaked email of Blumenthal (2011) to Clinton also refers to that: 'This gold was accumulated prior to the current rebellion and was intended to be used to establish a pan-African currency based on the Libyan golden Dinar […]. [T]his was one of the factors that influenced President Nicolas Sarkozy's decision to commit France to the attack on Libya.'

Before the intervention, Sarkozy called Libya 'a threat to the financial security of mankind' (Brown in Swanson 2011). Since the 1970s oil is traded in US-dollars. At a meeting of the African Union in Doha 2009, this new currency was even discussed as a substitute to the dollar for trade goods (Brown in Swanson 2011). This would shift of the economic balance of the world[10], where powerful elites dominate the world's global institutions (Panitch and Gindin 2004). Besides the pan-African currency, African unity would generally lead to greater independence and Africa would become a stronger trading partner. However, the aim of an African unity 'died' with Qaddafi (Smith 2013). Therefore, the intervention in Libya dismantled the attempt of Qaddafi for shifting Africa away from the West. As Forte (in Glazebrook 2013) summarises it:

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The goal of US military intervention was to disrupt an emerging pattern of independence and a network of collaboration within Africa that would facilitate increased African self-reliance. This is at odds with the geostrategic and political economic ambitions of extra-continental European powers, namely the US.

Roberts (2011) concludes that the decision-making processes are now only ostensibly independent. However, decisions about 'everything that really counts (oil, gas, water, finance, trade, security, geopolitics) [is made] behind the scenes. Libya's [new] government will be a junior partner of the new Libya's Western sponsors.'

Given the evidence of what has been discussed above demonstrates the responsibility of the international community to protect civilians was not crucial for the intervention, while one can identify imperialistic, geostrategic and liberal aims of the US and its allies UK and France. Considering the relatively independent and the welfare-state characteristics Libya had before, a positive outcome of the intervention remains doubtful. Libya is divided into rival factions and the current civil war does not show signs of abating (Robert 2011: 3; Council on Foreign Relations 2018).

Non-Intervention in Myanmar

The next chapter examines the non-intervention of the West in Myanmar in the context of ethnic cleansing of Rohingya, assessing why R2P was not applied. The so-called cleansing operation in Myanmar against the Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority, began on the 25th August 2017, after the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked 30 police stations and military bases. The catalyst was a report by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by UN General-Secretary Kofi Annan (Al Jazeera 2017). The report included recommendations for the prevention of violence, to preserve peace and to promote the reconciliation process between the state and the Rohingyas. Until now, an unknown number of civilians have been killed and 362 villages have been destroyed by the Myanmar military forces. Women and children were victims of torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence (Amnesty International 2018: 269-273). The OHCHR called the happenings a 'textbook example' for ethnic cleansing (Safi 2017). Since August, it is estimated that more than 693,000 Rohingya fled from state violence in Myanmar to Bangladesh (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2018).

However, the violence against the Rohingya is not a new phenomenon. Events since August 2017 are rather the culmination of decades of structural discrimination, oppression and prosecution. In 1982, the *Burma Citizenship Law* failed to acknowledge the Rohingya as citizens, with freedom of movement restricted, and rights further limited through structural violence (Green and MacManus 2015). In 2010, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GlobalR2P 2010) already demanded action. Likewise, in 2015 the International State Crime Initiative (Green and MacManus 2015) demonstrated: 'The State's persistent and intensified 'othering' of the Rohingya as outsiders, illegal Bengali immigrants and potential terrorists has given a green light to Rakhine nationalists and Islamophobic monks to orchestrate invidious campaigns of race and religious hatred reminiscent of those witnessed in Germany in the 1930s and Rwanda in the early 1990s.'

Additionally, state authorities tried to conceal mass atrocities, destroy evidence, hinder Fact-Finding Missions and restrict access to the state of Rakhine for aid-organisations (Amnesty International 2018: 269-273; GlobalR2P 2018).

Currently, the UNSC has not authorised a resolution or even debated about the application of R2P. The UNSC only reacted once since August 2017 and published a statement by the president of the UNSC, where he stated that the UNSC condemns the events, prompts for cooperation with aid agencies and reminds that Myanmar has 'the primary responsibility […] to protect its population' (Security Council 2017). The military forces of Myanmar still pose an existential threat to the Rohingya, while the events in Myanmar are a 'textbook case of R2P' (Hehir 2017). NGOs like Amnesty International (2018) and the GlobalR2P (2018) demand action from the international community. The next section aims to identify explanatory reasons for non-intervention.

Saving Human Lives?

Democratisation along with political and economic reforms of Myanmar since 2011 and the revocation of international

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trade embargos that isolated the country before, opened the doors for international investments. Myanmar is rich in natural resources. The liberalisation of markets enforced the investment of foreign countries to profit from land grabbing (Forino et al. 2017). In 2004, the gas field *Shwe* in Rakhine[11] was discovered and China secured its rights already in 2008. One year later, the construction of a gas pipeline from the state of Rakhine to China began, which has been operative since 2014. An additional oil pipeline was under construction since 2013, operating since April 2017. The oil pipeline is used to simplify the transport of oil from African and Middle Eastern countries to China (Hornby 2017). Webb (2017) argues, that both pipelines make China less vulnerable to a potential energy blockade of US and therefore provide crucial geopolitical importance. Economic interests of China in Myanmar can be seen in the broader context of China's 'Belt and Road Initiative', where Myanmar represents a crucial partner for China. Myanmar offers direct access to the Indian Ocean (Harper 2018).

Given the cooperation between these countries and Chinas economic interests in Myanmar, China as a permanent UNSC-member acts as a protector of Myanmar. Thaung Tun (in Lone and Lewis 2017), Myanmar's National Security Adviser, said in a press conference: 'We are negotiating with some friendly countries not to take it to the Security Council. […] China is our friend […] so it will not be possible for that issue to go forward.'

Historically, the West was never really concerned about a veto in the UNSC council when crucial interests were at stake (Kiely 2010: 219). One could argue that the West is worried about the ethnic cleansing and would push for the application of R2P. However, the West does not even initiate a discussion on the possibility of intervention. The major objectives of the US in particular supported the process of democratisation in Myanmar (Haake 2012 in Kuok 2014: 3). In the context of the Rohingya the US does not want 'to undermine the Asian country's democratic leader' (Pennington 2017), hence Aung San Suu Kyi's election victory 2015 could be partly traced back to US funding. Since 2012, the US administration provided substantial financial assistance, in order to support its democratic and economic transition (The White House 2014)[12]. Consequently, since 2012 the US allowed investments in oil and gas (The Telegraph 2012). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID 2018) was the main donor during the elections, providing technical infrastructure for the election. After the elections in 2015, US investment in Myanmar further increased drastically (Webb 2017). The US State Department (2015) argued that Myanmar is crucial because of its 'unique opportunities […] – including a rich natural resources base, a large market potential, a young labor force and a strategic location between India [and] China.'

At the moment, Myanmar appears to be in the middle of a power struggles between China and the US, both competing over influence and cooperation with the Myanmar government while promoting liberalisation of Myanmar's market. It is difficult to not conclude, that a Muslim minority is too unimportant to confront the Myanmar government and to push for an intervention. Outcry in the western public is also absent (Feffer 2017). It could be explained through the concept of 'Othering'. Muslims are depicted as 'others'. The West creates an 'us' versus 'them' mentality (Said 1981). Myanmar is distant from Western countries; Europe does not fear a 'refugee flow', and Western societies do not identify themselves with a Muslim minority. Combined with the economic and geostrategic interests, China as the big protector and the US support of the current government explains the disinterest of the R2P application. On the contrary, it seems that the Great Powers have no strategic aims that could be achieved through an intervention.

The Implications of R2P

The two case-studies illustrated, how interventions are highly selective and can be explained through economic, neo-liberal and neo-imperial incentives. This section will now summarise and interpret the findings above in a broader context.

Human suffering seems to be only the pretext, instead of the crucial argument for the R2P-application. In Libya, the UNSC resolution only required a few weeks while Western interests were at stake that could only be achieved through a regime change. Compared to Myanmar, where the Rohingya are oppressed for centuries, the West did not even consider an intervention. The consequences of R2P[13] are not as positive as the concept's supporters desire. In contrast, it rather works as an amplifier to promote the use of force and undermines peaceful solutions. With regard to Libya, Roberts (2011) states: 'The claim that the 'international community' had no choice but to intervene

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militarily and that the alternative was to do nothing is false. A […] non-violent alternative was proposed, and deliberately rejected' by the NTC and the NATO-partners. It therefore opens the door for interventions, driven by geostrategic and economic interests. The Libya intervention underlies a bellum iustum-understanding[14]. Yet, it remains doubtful whether the reasons of the use of force were just. Additionally, even though this essay does not support oppressive policies, it argues in line with Kiely (2010: 218):

[L]iberal imperialists are often […] naïve about the potential for […] intervention to not only limit the deaths of innocents, but also promote liberal democracy and free market solutions that supposedly lift such countries out of the 'zone of conflict'. This ignores domestic [aspects] and the ways in which neo-liberal[ism] […] actually hinders capitalist developments in an uneven international order. It also ignores the historical realities of capitalist development, which has been conflict ridden and violent.

Therefore, it remains questionable whether interventions, when driven by neoliberal aims, even better the situation of a country in the long term.

The concept of R2P asks the wrong questions and sees only two possibilities: (military) interventions and inaction. Proponents of the concept always refer to cases where the international community looked away, like Rwanda and Srebrenica (Evans 2008). However, this writing of history is flawed and ignores cases where the international community actively supported human suffering like in Timor-Leste or Guatemala. In reality, Great Powers are involved in almost all intra-state conflicts[15] (Pingeot and Obenland 2014: 39). R2P also ignores that intervention happened without resolution if in line with the interests of great powers. Essential questions the international community should dedicate itself to are rather: How can we create an international system that reacts to mass atrocities appropriately even if the great powers have no interests in intervening? How can the international community prevent human rights violations more broadly and how shall the international community react if they occur? Instead of focussing on early warning mechanisms and push factors, the concept remains vague, is based on unrealistic assumptions and can only be applied if the P5 have an interest in its application. R2P is not only open for its abuse but rather supports it (Pingeot and Obenland 2014: 47). At best, the concept of R2P is a tool to gain attention for mass atrocities in the international community. At worst, it is abused for neo-liberal and neo-imperial aims.

Conclusion

This essay argued that the consequences of R2P are problematic and not as positive as supporters want them to be. It contributed to that debate around human suffering and R2P, while critically questioning assumptions around the concept and the international system more broadly. To do so, it gave an overview of the emergence of R2P and its foundations. The followed section introduced key literature that explains the selectivity of intervention. Two case studies were compared: Libya, where the West intervened with reference to human suffering and Myanmar, where Western governments choose not to pressure for the application of R2P. The comparison of these two cases showed that the application of R2P is connected to foreign policy interests of the Great Powers. Therefore, the humanitarian imperialism, it is argued, provides an alternative framework for understanding interventions of the West. Furthermore, it demonstrates that R2P is not as innovative as suggested and far from of providing a solution for human right violations. R2P has been misused for geostrategic and neo-liberal objectives of the US and its allies in UK and France. As demonstrated above, the R2P does not really help tackling violence against civilians. In Libya, R2P justified the use of force and enforced Western interests. Myanmar showed that the international community does not really care about the Rohingya, because the Great Powers seem to be content with the current government and the overall democratic development in recent years.

In general, this essay argues for measures that help tackling human rights abuses, because from a humanitarian perspective it is difficult to witness human suffering without trying to stop it. However, so far one cannot really see smart outcomes of the existing R2P concept. This leads to uncomfortable questions around the current world order, neoliberalism and the provision of human suffering. In turn, this guides one to the consideration of questions dealing with anti-imperialism and cosmopolitanism (Kiely 2010: 218). One can only hope, that in the future, we will start to ask the right questions that really lead to an improvement of the international system and a debate with human rights

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at its core.

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Notes

[1] West in this context refers to liberal democracies but especially to the United States, United Kingdom and France as Permanent Members of the Security Council.

[2] The North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led intervention in Kosovo was not authorised through the Security Council. However, given the long oppression of the population of Kosovo led to the conclusion that it was 'illegal but legitimate' to intervene (Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000: 4).

[3] It is to add here, that the original ICISS document changed heavily from the accepted parts of the UN. To see the exact differences, see Pingeot and Obenland (2014).

[4] For instance, the Geneva Convention or the Genocide Convention.

[5] For instance, many influential INGOs (including Oxfam, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children and Care) lobbied for the concept.

[6] including famous academics as Samantha Power, Thomas Weiss and Gareth Evans

[7] Rebels and NTC are used interchangeable.

[8] It is crucial to mention, that China and Russia abstained from voting. For instance, Bellamy and Williams (2011: 843) contend that the arguments for obtaining circle around the general opinion of the use of force of China and the consideration of the opinions of the African Union and the League of Arab States towards the intervention.

[9] Blumenthal was an advisor of Hillary Clinton.

[10] If the US imports goods and pays in their own currency, they are independent of any exchange rate and it also supports US balance of payments and the trading power more broadly.

[11] The ethnic cleansing happened in Rakhine, a state of Myanmar. It is argued, that religious and ethnic issues were not the only reasons for their displacement, because political and economic factors also shaped the displacement (Forino et al. 2017).

[12] To name numbers: Between 2012-2014 the US administration gave more than 375,000,000 US-dollars assistance (The White House 2014).

[13] This essay does not discuss the general dilemmas of humanitarian interventions. For an overview, see Weiss (2007) or Bass (2008).

[14] In the context of humanitarian interventions, bellum iustum, also called Just War-Theory, is understood that the international community might have a moral right to intervene in order to save lives.

[15] For example, through direct or indirect support like financial assistance or the exports of arms.