Moving Forward with the Responsibility to Protect: Using Political Inertia to Protect Civilians

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MOVING FORWARD WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT: USING POLITICAL INERTIA TO PROTECT CIVILIANS

STEVEN J. ROSE*

Abstract: First formulated in 2005, the Responsibility to Protect has emerged onto the international legal landscape. This doctrine recently was expressed in the 2011 United Nations-authorized humanitarian intervention in Libya. Despite this promising start, the doctrine—designed to protect civilians from violence caused by their government or violence which the government is powerless to stop—has done nothing for the civilians in Syria. This Note explores the history of the Responsibility to Protect, identifies its flaws, analyzes proposed reforms, and ends with a suggested revision to the doctrine. This suggested revision would allow the political inertia of states to work for, rather than against, civilians.

INTRODUCTION

On March 19, 2011, U.S. warplanes targeted and destroyed military targets within Libya. President Barack Obama did not have Congressional approval for such actions. Instead, President Obama relied upon authorization from the United Nations Security Council and later the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Two days prior to the United States’ actions, the Security Council passed Resolution 1973, authorizing member countries and regional organizations to use all necessary measures to protect civilians in Libya. The resolution also implemented a no-flight zone and called on member countries to enforce an arms embargo. On March 22, 2011, NATO indicated that it would enforce the arms embargo, and by March 25, 2011, agreed to assume

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2 See id. at 45–46, 55.

3 Id.


5 Id. ¶¶ 6, 13.

control over the international military effort.\textsuperscript{7} The United Nations-backed intervention has been considered the clearest example of the emerging “responsibility to protect” doctrine.\textsuperscript{8}

For more than two and a half years, conflict has raged in Syria, resulting in an estimated 115,000 deaths as of October 2013.\textsuperscript{9} The rising death toll and recurrence of atrocities committed against civilians have led to a call by more than fifty countries to refer the situation in Syria for prosecution in the International Criminal Court (ICC).\textsuperscript{10} Despite this plea, neither the Security Council, NATO, nor any other regional organization has invoked the responsibility to protect doctrine to authorize the use of force.\textsuperscript{11}

Part I of this Note discusses the history of the conflict and intervention in Libya and the history of the conflict in Syria. Part II delineates the historic policy of non-intervention as well as the evolution and emergence of the responsibility to protect doctrine. Part III dissects two issues: whether the responsibility to protect doctrine is truly a responsibility, thus entailing an affirmative duty to act; and whether a country can use this doctrine as justification to act in the absence of Security Council authorization. Finally, this Note argues that the responsibility to protect doctrine should be approached similarly to the doctrine of self-defense.


I. Background

A. Libya

On September 1, 1969, at age twenty-seven, Muammar Al-Gaddafi (Gaddafi) became the ruler of Libya following the overthrow of King Idris.\(^1\) For much of the following decades, Gaddafi’s relations with Western leaders were strained due to associations with extremist groups and suspicions of complicity in the 1998 bombing of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.\(^2\) In the late 1990s, tensions with the West eased, prompting the U.N. to reduce the sanctions leveled against Libya by the U.N. in 2001.\(^3\) The spread of the political protests in Tunisia and Egypt, also known as the Arab Spring, however, did not leave Gaddafi immune.\(^4\)

On January 14, 2011, twenty-eight days after the start of the Arab Spring, protesters forced Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, the president of Tunisia out of office and out of the country.\(^5\) Fewer than two days later, Gaddafi condemned the uprisings in Tunisia, just as protests began in Libya.\(^6\) On February 11, 2011, more than two weeks of mass protests resulted in the removal from power of Hosni Mubarak, the former President of Egypt.\(^7\)

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\(^{2}\) See Kelly, supra note 1; Qaddafi Biography, supra note 1.

\(^{3}\) See Kelly, supra note 1; Qaddafi Biography, supra note 1.


The following weeks saw protests in Libya along with the use of military troops by Gaddafi in an attempt to quell the unrest, including an incident where two pilots from the Libyan Air Force defected to Malta, claiming that they had been ordered to bomb civilian protesters. Navi Pillay, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, decried the reports of violations of human rights, and called for the immediate end to the use of machine guns, artillery, and aircraft on civilians in Libya. The Security Council passed a resolution on February 26, 2011, which demanded an end to the violations of international humanitarian law and attacks on civilians. The Security Council also voted unanimously to refer the situation in Libya to the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC following reports of Gaddafi’s forces killing hundreds of protesters.

Even after this resolution, Gaddafi continued using the Libyan military in an attempt to defeat the rebels, whom he referred to as rats and armed gangs. The first push for outside use of force came on March 11, 2011, when then French President Nicholas Sarkozy called for the enforcement of a no-fly zone. President Sarkozy also suggested that the use of airstrikes to protect civilians in Libya may be justified.
Within a week, the Security Council passed a resolution authorizing member countries to enforce a no-fly zone. The same resolution authorized member countries to use all necessary measures to protect civilians in Libya. Fewer than forty-eight hours after the Security Council passed Resolution 1973, British and American warships began firing cruise missiles against Libyan air defense systems. At the same time, French warplanes began operating over the opposition-held city Benghazi in Eastern Libya. British Prime Minister David Cameron proclaimed the strikes both legal and necessary to prevent Gaddafi from using his military against Libyan civilians.

On February 24, 2011, the United States and other coalition nations transferred command of the forces enforcing Resolution 1973 to NATO. While Admiral James Stavridis, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander in Europe at the time, ran day-to-day operations, political oversight came not from NATO but from the individual member countries. President Obama did, however, issue a presidential finding that authorized the use and operation of covert U.S. forces within Libya to aid the rebel forces.

After two weeks of air strikes, the United States withdrew its forces from NATO command, leaving the French and British forces conduct-


25 See Watt, supra note 24.
30 See McGreal et al., supra note 28.
ing the majority of the NATO missions. By this point, the NATO forces had destroyed thirty percent of Gaddafi’s military capabilities. Eleven days later, President Obama recommitted U.S. troops to the NATO mission, issuing a joint statement with Britain and France indicating that the mission would continue until Gaddafi left power.

Around this time, the ICC Prosecutor revealed that investigators had uncovered evidence that Gaddafi developed plans for the intentional use of lethal force against Libyan citizens. The investigators reported that in fewer than two weeks, Gaddafi’s forces killed more than 560 unarmed civilians. These reports raised concerns over the potential abduction, torture, and killing of civilians targeted as Gaddafi’s enemies. The ICC Prosecutor described these killings as systematic. On June 27, 2011, the ICC issued warrants of arrest for Gaddafi and one of his sons. After two more months of fighting, anti-Gaddafi forces, backed by NATO airstrikes, launched an assault on the Libyan capital, Tripoli.

Following the death of Muammar Gaddafi in mid-October, 2011, NATO ended its mission in Libya. On March 8, 2012, the U.N. Hu-

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35 Id.
38 See id.
40 See id.
man Rights Council issued a report in which it documented violations of human rights law by Gaddafi’s forces, specifically: murder, rape, torture, and attacks on civilians and protected persons.\textsuperscript{45}

B. Syria

The unrest in the Middle East and North Africa spread to Syria in March 2011.\textsuperscript{46} In a day denoted “a day of rage,” civilians took to the streets demanding reform within the regime of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.\textsuperscript{47} Amid rising international criticism of the Syrian government’s violent crackdown on the protesters, Assad promised reform and forced his cabinet to resign.\textsuperscript{48} Despite such assurances, protests continued, prompting a violent response from Assad’s forces.\textsuperscript{49} Reports indicated that forces loyal to Assad shot several Syrian soldiers who refused to fire on protesters.\textsuperscript{50} Even Assad’s decision to end forty-eight years of emergency rule in April 2011 did not quell the protests.\textsuperscript{51}

The first multinational action came on May 23, 2011, when the European Union imposed sanctions on Syria, as human rights groups estimated that more than 700 civilians had been killed to that date.\textsuperscript{52}

\begin{footnotes}
gadhafi-saif-al-islam-gadhafi?_s=PM:AFRICA.


46 See Sterling & Abdelaziz, \textit{supra} note 11.


\end{footnotes}
The next round of international action against Assad came on August 18, 2011, when President Obama and the EU called for Assad’s resignation. President Obama also imposed further sanctions on Syria after reports by U.N. investigators indicated evidence of murder, torture, and abuse of children by Assad’s forces. On October 4, 2011, the Security Council voted on a resolution to impose sanctions on Syria, but Russia and China voted against the measure, which ultimately prevented its passage. Prior to the vote, the Security Council rewrote the resolution three times in efforts to avoid such a veto, even removing the word “sanctions” from the proposed resolution. The United States blamed the veto on the Chinese and Russian desire to sell arms to the Syrian government. Russia vehemently denied this theory. At the time, Russia imported the largest amount of arms to Syria. In response, Russia expressed concern that the proposed resolution evinced a “philosophy of confrontation,” and closed off opportunities for a peaceful settlement. The U.N. estimated at this time that approximately 2,700 civilians died in the violence. By December 13, 2011, the death toll passed 5,000 people. Between the October 2011 veto and the Decem-


56 Russia and China Veto UN Resolution Against Syrian Regime, GUARDIAN (Oct. 4, 2011), http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/05/russia-china-veto-syria-resolution.

57 Id.

58 Id.


60 Russia and China Veto UN Resolution, supra note 56.

61 Id.


As protests and government violence persisted, the Security Council once again attempted to pass a resolution condemning the violence and calling for its end.\footnote{Joseph Logan & Patrick Worsnip, Anger After Russia, China Block U.N. Action on Syria, Reuters (Feb. 5, 2012), http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/05/us-syria-idUSTRE80S08620120205; CNN Wire Service, Russia, China Veto U.N. Action on Syria; Opposition Group Calls for Strike, CNN (Feb. 4, 2012), http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/04/world/meast/syria-unrest/index.html.} Russia and China also voted down this resolution.\footnote{Logan & Worsnip, supra note 64; Russia, China Veto U.N. Action on Syria, supra note 64.} After the veto, the United States began flying unmanned aerial vehicles over Syria, strictly for observational purposes.\footnote{See Chinese Diplomat in Syria for Talks on Unrest, Al Jazeera (Feb. 18, 2012), http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/02/20122180534292171.html.} NATO, however, issued a statement announcing that it had no intention to intervene in Syria, even if the Security Council issued a mandate to protect civilians.\footnote{See Simon Cameron-Moore & Tulay Karadeniz, NATO to Stay Out of Syria Even if U.N. Mandate Emerges, Reuters (Feb. 17, 2012), http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/17/us-syria-nato-idUSTRE81G0ZF20120217.}


danger to the observers.\textsuperscript{72} By then, U.N. estimates put the death toll upwards of ten thousand casualties.\textsuperscript{73} One month later, Russian and Chinese votes defeated a third Security Council resolution to impose sanctions on Syria.\textsuperscript{74}

Fighting between Assad’s forces and the Syrian rebels continues as of the time of this writing, and U.N. estimates in October 2013, place the estimated civilian death toll at one hundred-fifteen thousand.\textsuperscript{75} Over the past thirty months, the U.N. Human Rights Council has repeatedly condemned violations of international humanitarian law.\textsuperscript{76} The Independent International Commission of Inquiry for the Syrian Arab Republic has also issued multiple reports detailing such violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence, and the killing of children by Assad’s forces.\textsuperscript{77} As of October 2013, the U.N. has not authorized the use of force to ensure civilian safety.\textsuperscript{78}


\textsuperscript{73} See id.


\textsuperscript{75} Evans, \textit{supra} note 9.


\textsuperscript{78} Bayoumy & Lyon, \textit{supra} note 11; Charbonneau, \textit{supra} note 11; Sterling & Abdelaziz, \textit{supra} note 11.
II. Discussion

A. Foundation of the Right to Protect

The international community founded the U.N. shortly after World War II with the main purpose of preventing the recurrence of war like that which had just ended. In the aftermath of the war, respect for the sovereignty of nations, regardless of size or power, ensured peace. This respect for sovereignty is embodied in the U.N. Charter, which requires countries to refrain from the threat or use of force against other countries. Under the U.N. Charter, a country may only use force against another country in two circumstances: pursuant to authorization by the Security Council; or as necessary for self-defense. The U.N. Charter further prohibits the U.N. from intervening in the domestic jurisdiction of a country, unless it is necessary for the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security. In order to authorize measures taken against a country, including the use of force, nine of the fifteen members of the Security Council must vote for such use. Additionally, a single vote against such a measure by one of the permanent members of the Security Council will defeat the measure. A country taking action in self-defense must report such actions to the Security Council, which retains the right to authorize other measures.

From this doctrine of non-intervention the theory of the “responsibility to protect” arose as a result of humanitarian crises in the 1990s. The first of these crises was the Rwandan genocide in 1994, which exemplified the U.N.’s failure to act. In order to maintain peace and security during the transition of governments following the Arusha Peace Agreement, the U.N. sent a peacekeeping force of 2,548

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80 Id; U.N. Charter pmbl.  
82 See U.N. Charter art. 2, para. 4.  
83 Id. arts. 42, 51.  
84 Id. art. 2, para. 7, art. 42.  
85 Id. art. 27.  
86 See id. The permanent five members of the Security Council are the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, China, and the Russian Federation. Id. art. 23.  
87 Id. art. 51.  
88 See Mohamed, supra note 8, at 321–22.  
89 See id.
troops to Rwanda.\textsuperscript{90} Canadian Brigadier-General Romeo Dallaire, the Force Commander of the U.N. Peacekeepers in Rwanda specifically requested authorization to use force in the event of acts of crimes against humanity.\textsuperscript{91} The U.N. Headquarters never formally acted upon the requested rules of engagement.\textsuperscript{92} Following the death of Belgian soldiers, who at the time were members of the U.N. peacekeeping force, Belgium withdrew the remainder of its personnel from Rwanda.\textsuperscript{93} Following this withdrawal, the Security Council reduced the remaining peacekeeping force to 270 troops.\textsuperscript{94} It was not until half a million people died that the Security Council authorized action by the French military.\textsuperscript{95} In 2000, the Security Council accepted responsibility for not ending the genocide that killed 800,000 Rwandans.\textsuperscript{96}

The international community reacted more swiftly in 1998 when violence broke out between Serbian forces and ethnic Albanians fighting for an independent Kosovo.\textsuperscript{97} In response to such violence, the Security Council passed Resolution 1160, which called for peace talks and political dialogue, while also implementing an arms embargo.\textsuperscript{98} The violence continued despite the Security Council resolution, leading to another resolution that demanded a stop to the violence and indicated that further U.N. action may be taken if violence continued.\textsuperscript{99} Despite the push by the United States and other nations for the Security Council to authorize the use of force, the Security Council took no such action due to threats by Russia and China to veto resolutions authorizing force.\textsuperscript{100} Without authorization by the Security Council, NATO undertook an air campaign against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{91} See id. at 9.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Id.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Id. at 36.
\item \textsuperscript{94} See Mohamed, supra note 8, at 322.
\item \textsuperscript{95} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{96} UN Admits Rwanda Genocide Failure, BBC News (Apr. 15, 2000), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/714025.stm.
\item \textsuperscript{100} See Mohamed, supra note 8, at 323.
\end{itemize}
troops. Seventy-two days after the air campaign began, President Milosevic agreed to a cease-fire plan.

B. A Modern Formulation of the Responsibility to Protect

In 2000, the former Secretary-General of the U.N., Kofi Annan delivered his Millennium Report. He designed this report to reflect on the progress made by the U.N. in the preceding years, while also identifying the areas requiring development and the future role of the U.N. In the report, the Secretary-General addressed criticism directed at the calls for increased intervention to prevent or end humanitarian crises. The Secretary-General acknowledged the concerns that “humanitarian intervention” could be used to unnecessarily interfere with the internal affairs of another state, the possibility that a secessionist movement might deliberately induce human rights crimes to prompt outside intervention, and the inconsistent responses by countries when intervening.

In response to these concerns, the Secretary-General posed a simple question: “if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica—to gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?” The Secretary-General explicitly rejected the use of national sovereignty as a shield for crimes against humanity, stating that the Security Council has a moral duty to act when peaceful efforts to stop such crimes have failed.

Canada, along with major foundations, created the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) to answer the question posed by Secretary-General Annan. The mandate of the

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106 Id. ¶ 216.
107 Id. ¶ 217.
108 Id. ¶ 219.
109 Int’l Comm’n on Intervention and State Sovereignty, The Responsibility to Protect, vii, (2001) [hereinafter Responsibility to Protect]. The ICISS consisted of members from around the world, including: Gareth Evans from Australia, Mohamed Sahnoun from Algeria, Gisèle Côté-Harper from Canada, Lee Hamilton from the United
ICISS was to promote global political consensus about how to take action through the U.N., reconciling state sovereignty and intervention. The ICISS took the next step in the transition toward a responsibility to protect doctrine in 2001 with the publication of its report, *The Responsibility To Protect*. This report is founded on the premise that sovereign countries have a responsibility to protect their citizens from avoidable humanitarian harm and when a country is incapable or unwilling to do so, the responsibility passes to the international community.

The ICISS deliberately changed the terminology in the debate surrounding humanitarian intervention from “the right to intervene” to “the right to protect.” In doing so, the ICISS hoped to focus on the needs of the civilians in need of protection. This also ensured the international community only bore the burden of the responsibility to protect when the civilians’ own country failed in its responsibility or became the perpetrator. By focusing on protection, rather than intervention, the ICISS also hoped to emphasize the importance of preventative, as well as remedial, actions.

In implementing the responsibility to protect doctrine, the ICISS identified three specific responsibilities: to prevent, to react, and to rebuild. The responsibility to prevent, as outlined by the ICISS, involves actions taken by countries to prevent humanitarian crises. Within this responsibility are three main elements: early warning, a “preventative toolbox,” and political will. The early warning element refers to systems designed to detect the precursors to such crises, along with the identification of root causes of potential conflicts in order to

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110 *Id.* at 81.
111 See *id.*
112 See *id.* at vii–viii.
113 *Id.* at 16–17.
114 See *id.* at 17.
115 See *id.*
116 *Id.*
117 See *id.* at xi–xiii.
118 See *id.* at 19.
119 *Id.* at 20.
enable organizations to prevent their occurrence.\textsuperscript{120} The “preventative toolbox” described by the ICISS is the range of direct prevention efforts available.\textsuperscript{121} Such efforts include political and diplomatic efforts, economic support or sanctions, legal recourse such as arbitration or adjudication before the ICC, and military action.\textsuperscript{122}

The ICISS identified the responsibility to react in the event that preventative measures have proven ineffective or an offending country refuses to redress a situation as the core of a responsibility to protect.\textsuperscript{123} The ICISS preferred measures short of military intervention, including the use of sanctions targeting the offending government or organization, or arms embargos.\textsuperscript{124} The ICISS recognized military intervention as an acceptable measure, limited to extreme cases.\textsuperscript{125} The ICISS identified six criteria for the use of military force: right authority; just cause; right intention; last resort; proportional means; and reasonable prospects.\textsuperscript{126} Of these criteria, the two most important are just cause and right authority.\textsuperscript{127}

With regard to just cause, in the view of the ICISS there are only two sets of circumstances which would justify resorting to military force under a responsibility to protect doctrine.\textsuperscript{128} Such circumstances are a large scale loss of life—as the product of state action, or the inability of a state to act—and a large scale “ethnic cleansing” through killing, forced expulsion, terror, or rape.\textsuperscript{129} The ability to use military action as a preventative measure is necessary to enable countries to prevent

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Id. at 21–23.
  \item \textsuperscript{121} Id. at 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Id. at 23–25.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Id. at 29.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Id. at 29–30.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Id. at 31.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Id. at 32. In referring to a requirement of right intention, the ICISS discusses the primary objective of any military action being the alleviation of human suffering. Id. at 35. The ICISS describes the criteria of last resort as requiring that the responsibility to react be discharged before military action can be taken. Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 36. While not every possible option must have been tried and failed, there must be reasonable grounds to believe that the measures not taken would have been unsuccessful. See id. The criteria of proportional means adopts the doctrine from the laws of war, in requiring that the scale, duration and intensity of the military action be proportional to the ends to be achieved. See id. at 37. Reasonable prospects requires that military action be justified by a reasonable chance of averting the suffering which justifies the actions. Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} See id. at 32.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Id.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Id. The report specifically disclaims any requirement for the loss of life to have a genocidal intent by the perpetrators. Id.
\end{itemize}
genocides and other atrocities, rather than being required to wait until such atrocities begin before taking action.\textsuperscript{130} 

The primary authority for sanctioning the use of military force in the context of the responsibility to protect is the Security Council, according to the ICISS.\textsuperscript{131} The U.N. Charter contains explicit prohibitions on intervention, with no exception for humanitarian interests.\textsuperscript{132} As such, Security Council authorization must be sought prior to any military intervention, though the Security Council also has a responsibility to deal expediently with such requests.\textsuperscript{133} The ICISS did suggest a reform to the Security Council, due to the ability of any of the permanent members to hold hostage any vote authorizing the use of force.\textsuperscript{134} This reform consists of the adoption of a code of conduct regarding the use of the veto on votes authorizing the use of force in response to large scale losses of life.\textsuperscript{135} The code would call upon the permanent members to refrain from vetoing an otherwise majority vote on such an authorization, if the member did not have significant state interests at stake.\textsuperscript{136} The ICISS did recognize that due to conflicts between the permanent five members, or differences in opinion as to how to react to a particular situation, the Security Council may be unable or unwilling to act.\textsuperscript{137} In such a circumstance, the ICISS envisions a role for the U.N. General Assembly, or a regional organization such as NATO to act.\textsuperscript{138} 

The final responsibility inherent to a responsibility to protect is rebuilding.\textsuperscript{139} This responsibility refers not only to the reconstruction of infrastructure which was destroyed, but also the reconstruction of the society impacted.\textsuperscript{140} The ICISS identified the reintegration and reconciliation of former combatants as the most important form of re-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{130} See id. at 33.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Id. at 49.
\item \textsuperscript{132} See U.N. Charter art. 2, paras. 4, 7; Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 49.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 50. The ICISS also suggests that in the course of responding to such requests, the Security Council should seek information about the alleged situations in order to confirm or deny the accuracy of the information prompting the request. See id.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Id. at 51.
\item \textsuperscript{135} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{136} See id.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Id. at 53.
\item \textsuperscript{138} See id. at 53–54.
\item \textsuperscript{139} See id. at Synopsis.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Id. at 39.
\end{itemize}
moving forward with the responsibility to protect

The most effective way to achieve such reconciliation is not by having the rebuilding efforts performed only by the interveners, but by the former combatants themselves. Rather than focusing on the actual construction of infrastructure, the primary responsibility of the intervening forces is to provide security throughout the process, including rebuilding local police and security forces. The long-term goals of the intervening countries are the development and growth of the affected state. As such, the intervening countries have a responsibility to end economic and other non-military sanctions which had been imposed on the affected state.

The report by the ICISS ended with a series of suggestions for both the U.N. General Assembly and the Security Council. These recommendations included adopting the principals outlined by the report, a definition of the threshold for military action, and the agreement by the permanent members of the Security Council regarding the use of the veto power in calls for military intervention to preserve human life. While the U.N. has not implemented all of the recommendations by the ICISS, the ideas contained within the report have been influential in the international community.

C. Modern Implementations of the Responsibility to Protect

After the U.N. World Summit in 2005, the U.N. General Assembly affirmed the idea that a country is responsible for the protection of its citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity in its World Summit Outcome document. In one breath the General Assembly affirmed the concept of international action when a country fails in this duty to protect, and reaffirmed the necessity of a Security Council resolution to authorize military action. The General Assembly expressly advocated for states to participate in the implementation of responsibility to protect doctrine through re-
The adoption of these principals was well received in the international community, even called “the only unequivocal success in September 2005.” The U.N. describes the responsibility to protect as standing for the proposition that a country can no longer use state sovereignty as a shield from outside interference in the event of genocide or other crimes against humanity.

Since the adoption of the Summit Outline, the U.N. Secretary-General held one formal debate and two informal interactive dialogues to better define the extent and application of the responsibility to protect. In 2009, the U.N. Secretary-General identified three pillars essential to his plan for implementing a responsibility to protect: first, the protection responsibilities of the state; second, international assistance and capacity-building; and third, timely and decisive response. In a report two years later, the Secretary-General focused on the importance of using regional and sub-regional groups to implement his three pillars. The Secretary-General indicated that participation by regional and sub-regional groups was important in each of the dozen situations in which responsibility to protect ideals had been implemented in the previous three years. A global-regional-sub-regional partnership is considered the “surest path for advancing the responsibility to protect [doctrine].”

The responsibility to protect doctrine has proven to be more than mere words since its inception, with the U.N. Secretary-General citing the use of responsibility to protect principals as informing U.N. actions in Darfur, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Côte d’Ivoire, Yemen, Abyei, Syria, and Libya. In each situation except Libya, the responsibility to protect took effect without the use of military force.

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151 Id.
156 See Regional Role Report, supra note 154.
157 Id. ¶ 4.
158 Id. ¶ 44.
159 Id. ¶ 30.
160 See id.
In 2004, the Security Council exercised its Chapter VII powers to create the U.N. Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI).\textsuperscript{161} UNOCI’s mandate included monitoring the ceasefire, monitoring the movement of armed groups, assisting in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation, resettlement, and assistance in the fields of human rights and law and order.\textsuperscript{162} In 2010, Côte d’Ivoire was set to hold its first election in ten years after the former president Laurent Gbagbo postponed elections six times following the end of his term in 2005.\textsuperscript{163} After the U.N. certified vote, the electoral commission named Gbagbo’s challenger, Alassane Ouattara the winner.\textsuperscript{164} Despite the U.N. declaring Ouattara the winner, Gbagbo refused to leave office, naming his own cabinet.\textsuperscript{165} For nearly six months following the election, forces loyal to Gbagbo and Ouattara battled throughout Côte d’Ivoire.\textsuperscript{166}

On March 30, 2011, the Security Council passed Resolution 1975, which reiterated the responsibility of the government of Côte d’Ivoire to protect its civilians, and authorized the UNOCI to use ‘all necessary means’ to protect civilians.\textsuperscript{167} Five days later, UNOCI forces targeted and destroyed military installations belonging to Gbagbo in the city of Abidjan.\textsuperscript{168} Within hours of this operation, Gbagbo’s forces either deserted or negotiated for surrender.\textsuperscript{169} A week later, former president Gbagbo was captured by forces loyal to Ouattara.\textsuperscript{170} Gbagbo is currently

\textsuperscript{162} Id. ¶ 6.
\textsuperscript{165} See id.; Xan Rice, \textit{Conflict Looms over Ivory Coast While Poll-loser Gbagbo Refuses to Cede Control}, \textit{Guardian} (Dec. 6, 2010), http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/06/ivory-coast-election-stalemate-gbagbo.
\textsuperscript{169} Perry, \textit{supra} note 168.
awaiting trial for crimes against humanity before the ICC, which found him fit to stand trial.171

During the 2011 uprising in Libya, the international response to Gaddafi’s actions was a near unanimous condemnation.172 When the Security Council adopted resolution 1970, enacting an arms embargo against Libya, it specifically referred to the responsibility of the Libyan authorities to protect the Libyan population.173 When the Security Council adopted resolution 1973, fewer than three weeks later, it relied upon the responsibility to protect as justification for authorizing the use of force and the implementation of a no-fly zone.174 In authorizing the use of force, the Security Council asserted authority under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, even though it did not specifically cite a threat to international peace.175

III. Analysis

A. Remaining Questions

There are several questions still remaining from the modern implementation of the responsibility to protect.176 The first of these arises from the name of the doctrine itself: does the responsibility to protect actually constitute a responsibility?177 That is, does it impose an obligation to act?178 By the language of the ICISS report, it is clear that each country has an affirmative action to protect its own citizens.179 The


175 See id. pmbl; Payandeh, supra note 172, at 376.


177 See id.

178 See id.

179 See RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT, supra note 109, at 17.
ICISS makes clear that other countries face a responsibility to protect only when the host country fails in its own responsibilities.\textsuperscript{180} The U.N. adopted both of these premises in its 2005 World Summit Outcome.\textsuperscript{181} It is less clear, however, whether other countries have an affirmative duty to act when the host country fails in its responsibilities.\textsuperscript{182}

The language in the ICISS report may signal the existence of such an affirmative duty, including the statement “[w]hen preventative measures fail to resolve or contain the situation and when a state is unable or unwilling to redress the situation, then interventionary measures by other members of the broader community of states may be required.”\textsuperscript{183} In discussing the use of military force in a responsibility to protect scenario, the ICISS is similarly definitive in stating that in certain situations other countries are required to act when a host country has degenerated to the point that massacre, genocide, or other ethnic cleansing is possible.\textsuperscript{184} The corresponding paragraphs in the World Summit Report are less forceful than the ICISS report, stating only that the international community, acting through the U.N., has the responsibility to use appropriate means, including military force if authorized by the Security Council.\textsuperscript{185} The retreat from a more forceful obligation is striking due to the fact that a lack of political commitment was the primary reason for the U.N.’s failure to prevent genocide in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{186}

The ICISS report also goes beyond the World Summit Outcome by addressing a situation in which the Security Council refuses or fails to act.\textsuperscript{187} The ICISS identified several avenues of action for countries to implement the responsibility to protect in such an event—namely action by the U.N. General Assembly, action by a regional or sub-regional group against a member country, or action by a regional group against a non-member country followed by seeking \textit{ad hoc} authorization by the General Assembly or Security Council.\textsuperscript{188} The ICISS recognized that failure of the Security Council to act would not necessarily cause other

\textsuperscript{180} See id. at 29.
\textsuperscript{181} See Summit Outcome, supra note 149, ¶¶ 138–139.
\textsuperscript{183} Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 29.
\textsuperscript{184} Id. at 31.
\textsuperscript{185} See Summit Outcome, supra note 149, ¶ 139.
\textsuperscript{186} See Rwanda Report, supra note 90, at 30; Implementing R2P Report, supra note 155, ¶ 6.
\textsuperscript{187} See Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 53–55.
\textsuperscript{188} See id. at 53–54.
countries to rule out taking action despite the lack of authorization. More importantly, the report recognized that such a failure would damage the credibility and stature of the U.N. as a whole.

Despite these concerns, the U.N., through the World Summit Outcome, does not specifically address states’ obligations in the event that the Security Council does not act. The World Summit Outcome states that military actions are to be implemented through the Security Council’s Chapter VII authority, even though it leaves open the possibility of countries taking non-military actions similar to those outlined in the ICISS report. While no affirmative duty to implement the responsibility to protect doctrine exists, a customary norm may be developing that requires some form of action that is less than the use of military force. State practice lends support to the conclusion that no positive duty exists to use military force, even when authorized by the Security Council, reflected in the language used in the resolution, which authorizes rather than mandates the use of force. Indeed, the only Security Council resolution authorizing member countries to use force resulted in action taken only by NATO. It appears that at this time the term “responsibility” is a misnomer, imposing no affirmative duty to protect.

The second remaining question is whether, and to what extent, a country or regional organization may take action to implement the responsibility to protect without U.N. authorization. At first glance the language of the ICISS report appears to foreclose the possibility of tak-

189 See id. at 55.
190 See id.
191 See generally Summit Outcome, supra note 149, ¶¶ 138–139 (stating that only Chapter VII powers require Security Council action).
192 See Summit Outcome, supra note 149, ¶ 139; Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 29–31 (including non-military sanctions such as: arms embargos, ending military cooperation, financial sanctions, restrictions on access to petroleum products, restrictions on diplomatic representation, restriction on travel, and suspension or expulsion from international or regional bodies).
194 Compare S.C. Res. 1973, supra note 4, ¶ 4 (“[a]uthorizes Member States . . . to take all necessary measures . . . to protect civilians.”), with S.C. Res. 1970, supra note 21, ¶ 9 (“Decides that all Member States shall immediately take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply . . . of arms and related materiel.”) (emphasis added).
195 See Bumiller & Kirkpatrick, supra note 7.
196 See Mohamed, supra note 8, at 328 (describing the significance of replacing “responsibility” with “preparedness” as indicating a retreat from an affirmative duty).
197 See Rao, supra note 182, at 735–37.
ing action without authorization. This requirement for authorization is supported by the U.N. Charter itself, which recognizes only two instances involving the legal use of force against another country: as authorized by the Security Council exercising its Chapter VII authority, or in self-defense. The Secretary-General of the U.N. has endorsed this interpretation of the responsibility to protect by requiring Security Council authorization for military action. The weight of scholarly works also falls on the side of declaring unilateral humanitarian intervention in contravention to the U.N. Charter and international law. Among the primary concerns underlying the prohibition on action without U.N. authorization is the potential to use humanitarian intervention as a pretext for war.

Although such arguments appear to end the inquiry, the ICISS report specifically addresses scenarios in which the use of force may be appropriate absent Security Council authorization. One of the major flaws identified by the ICISS in relying on the Security Council as the sole authority for military force is the possibility that the Security Council will fail to act. Specifically, the ICISS identified the possibility for the U.N. General Assembly to convene in an emergency special session under the “Uniting for Peace” procedures. The General Assembly does not have the authority possessed by the Security Council to enable military action, although such a meeting could give legitimacy—

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198 See Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 47–49 (“Because the prohibitions and presumptions against intervention are so explicitly spelled out in the Charter, and since no ‘humanitarian exception’ to these prohibitions is explicitly provided for, the role of the Security Council becomes of paramount importance.”).


201 See, e.g., Sean D. Murphy, Criminalizing Humanitarian Intervention, 41 CASE W. RES. J. INT’L L. 341, 341–42 (2009) (arguing that under current international law unilateral humanitarian intervention is considered illegal); Ryan Goodman, Humanitarian Intervention and Pretexts for War, 100 Am. J. INT’L L. 107, 111 (2006) (“[I]t is difficult to escape the conclusion that international law forbids the unilateral use of force to rescue victims of a humanitarian catastrophe.”).


203 See Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 53–54.

204 See id.

205 Id. at 53.
if not legality—to the actions. The biggest drawback to this procedure is the improbability that the required two-thirds majority could be assembled to legitimize actions taken without Security Council approval.

The ICISS also foresaw a role for regional and sub-regional organizations to implement the responsibility to protect. The U.N. Secretary-General echoed the important role of regional and sub-regional groups in ensuring the responsibility to protect is carried out, calling more effective collaboration with such groups a “key plank” in his strategy to implement the responsibility. Although the ICISS report specifically contemplates leeway in allowing regional or sub-regional groups to take military action and seeking Security Council authorization after the fact, the role envisioned for such groups by the Secretary-General predicates any military action upon prior Security Council authorization.

Allowing regional and sub-regional organizations such as NATO or the African Union to take action against member countries has significant advantages. Not only are these organizations typically in a better position to act, but they also often have a greater understanding of the context and background of the issues giving rise to the need for intervention. Moreover, some regional and sub-regional groups have expressly given themselves the right to intervene in the event of humanitarian crises, without expressly requiring Security Council authorization. This ability presents a solution to the problem of a lack of political commitment by the Security Council and minimizes the risk of pretextual war, because the intervening countries may be subject to intervention themselves. Regional groups also have the ability to set higher levels of

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206 See id.
207 See id.
208 See id. at 53–54.
209 See Regional Role Report, supra note 154, ¶ 4.
210 Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 54.
211 See Regional Role Report, supra note 154, ¶ 5.
212 See Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 53–54.
213 Id.
215 See Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 54; Rwanda Report, supra note 90, at 30.
humanitarian standards and have the most at stake to ensure the maintenance of such standards.\textsuperscript{216}

There is a more fundamental problem with assuming that the language of the ICISS report and the U.N. Charter prohibit intervention without prior authorization because such an assumption focuses only on implementation of the responsibility to protect through its last resort: military intervention.\textsuperscript{217} The responsibility to protect is not a choice between sitting idly by and using military force to intervene.\textsuperscript{218} In fact, both the ICISS and the Secretary-General focused on the use of force only as a last resort, preferring less or non-coercive means to uphold the responsibility to protect.\textsuperscript{219} Even within the coercive measures identified, the use of military force is but one option, less preferable than economic, political, and military sanctions.\textsuperscript{220} Unlike the prohibition on the use of force without Security Council authorization or in self-defense, the U.N. Charter does not prohibit sanctions to uphold its principles, even those the U.N. does not specifically authorize.\textsuperscript{221} In addition to individual countries imposing unilateral economic sanctions, the U.N. Charter allows regional or sub-regional groups to do the same.\textsuperscript{222}

The ability of regional groups to impose economic sanctions has been reinforced most markedly by the response of the U.N. and the Secretary-General to the Arab League’s suspension of Libya.\textsuperscript{223} This suspension preceded a similar suspension by the U.N. General Assem-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{217} See \textit{Implementing R2P Report}, supra note 155, ¶ 40; see also \textit{Summit Outcome}, supra note 149, ¶ 139 (predicating the use of force on the failure of peaceful means and a manifest failure by the host state to uphold its responsibility to protect).
\item \textsuperscript{218} See \textit{Implementing R2P Report}, supra note 155, ¶ 7 (“Humanitarian intervention posed a false choice between two extremes: either standing by in the face of mounting civilian deaths or deploying coercive military force to protect the vulnerable and threatened populations.”).
\item \textsuperscript{219} See \textit{id.}, ¶ 40; \textit{Implementing R2P Report}, supra note 155, ¶ 40; \textit{Responsibility to Protect}, supra note 109, at 29.
\item \textsuperscript{220} \textit{Responsibility to Protect}, supra note 109, at 29–31.
bly, and both suspensions took place before any action by the Security Council. Notably, the Secretary-General did not condemn such unilateral action, but rather held it out as an instance of cooperation between regional and global organizations, and suggested expanding the use of such actions. Similarly, Syria has remained suspended from the Arab League, despite the lack of Security Council action. Like the Arab League, the EU recently renewed its own sanctions against Syria. These economic measures are the type of targeted sanctions envisioned by the ICISS because they continue the arms embargo against Syria while allowing “non-lethal” aid to the civilian population. Not only did these sanctions come without Security Council authorization, but they came only months after the Security Council vetoed a resolution to impose economic sanctions on Syria. Actions to implement the responsibility to protect which do not involve military action, therefore, enjoy greater acceptance than using military force without Security Council authorization, which remains potentially legitimate, but not legal.

B. Moving the Responsibility to Protect Forward

Scholars have offered varied suggestions for reforms to make the responsibility to protect doctrine more efficacious. The ICISS in its report suggested a modification to the veto power exercised by the

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224 Regional Role Report, supra note 154, ¶ 34.
225 See id.
229 See Gladstone, supra note 74 (indicating that the resolution garnered eleven votes in favor of passage, with Pakistan and South Africa abstaining, and Russia and China providing the votes against passage which vetoed the resolution; and that the resolution came to the Security Council under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter).
230 See RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT, supra note 109, at 53–54 (noting instances in which authorization was sought after the fact); Ress, supra note 222, at 731; Cleveland, supra note 230, at 51–52.
231 See, e.g., Davis, supra note 216 (arguing for a two-track approach consisting of reforms to the U.N., and development of regional institutions); infra note 232 and accompanying text.
permanent members of the Security Council.\textsuperscript{232} The ICISS found it unconscionable that one permanent member, through the exercise of its veto power, could effectively overrule the opinion of the rest of the world about issues of humanitarian concern.\textsuperscript{233} To address these concerns, the ICISS suggested that the permanent members agree to a code of conduct, in which they would forgo the use of their veto powers for resolutions to end or prevent a humanitarian crisis unless their own vital national interests were at stake.\textsuperscript{234} Although one draft of the World Summit Outcome included an invitation to the permanent members to refrain from using their veto powers on resolutions dealing with crimes implicating the responsibility to protect, this language was cut from the final document.\textsuperscript{235} Adoption of such a proposal would prevent the unilateral veto of an otherwise approved resolution.\textsuperscript{236} Such a change would not be a perfect solution, particularly for the “overriding failure” of the U.N. action or inaction in Rwanda—the lack of political will.\textsuperscript{237} In the ongoing situation in Syria, despite the fact that a proposed resolution garnered eleven of fifteen possible affirmative votes, it still took more than four months for a Security Council statement simply condemning the violence in Syria.\textsuperscript{238}

Another suggested development for the responsibility to protect is a shift in the oversight responsibility to regional or sub-regional groups.\textsuperscript{239} The basis for this reform would be to allow regional or sub-regional groups to develop independent human rights standards, and would predicate non-intervention of the regional group on the maintenance of these standards.\textsuperscript{240} This reform however, possesses several problems.\textsuperscript{241} As articulated, the change lacks any timetable for the de-

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\bibitem{232} \textit{Responsibility to Protect}, \textit{supra} note 109, at 51.

\bibitem{233} \textit{Id.}

\bibitem{234} \textit{Id.}


\bibitem{236} See \textit{Responsibility to Protect}, \textit{supra} note 109, at 51; \textit{Russia and China Veto UN Resolution}, \textit{supra} note 56.

\bibitem{237} Rwanda Report, \textit{supra} note 90, at 30.

\bibitem{238} See Gladstone, \textit{supra} note 74; \textit{Russia and China Veto UN Resolution}, \textit{supra} note 56.

\bibitem{239} See Davis, \textit{supra} note 216, at 31, 36 (describing a two-track approach for reform consisting of U.N. reform and development of regional organizations).

\bibitem{240} See \textit{id.} at 36–37.

\bibitem{241} See \textit{infra} notes 242–245 and accompanying text.

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velopment for such human rights standards. More concerning is the fact that it does nothing to solve the overriding failure leading to the genocide in Rwanda because it still requires other members of the regional group to have the political will to act. Unlike the U.N., the neighboring countries within the regional or sub-regional group may not wish to take steps to intervene, knowing that they may face the same intervention in the future. Notably, the African Union rejected the Security Council-authorized intervention in Libya, even though its charter includes the right to economic and political intervention in member countries which failed to comply with its decisions and policies.

A final unsatisfactory proposal is the development and adoption of a binding agreement that outlines the responsibility to protect doctrine and constrains the signatories to its terms. Such an agreement would predicate intervention under the responsibility to protect doctrine on the occurrence of one of the events outlined in the World Summit Outcome: genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The proposed agreement goes on to say that if the Security Council becomes aware of the occurrence of one of these events, it can presume the host country has manifestly failed to protect its civilians. The proposed agreement further adopts a version of the reforms to the Security Council veto power described above. Such a reform would prohibit a permanent member of the Security Council from exercising a veto in situations where a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations before the Security Council could authorize the use of force.
from using its veto power upon the occurrence of a triggering event, unless vital national interests of the permanent member are at stake.\textsuperscript{250} Though the proposed agreement has the benefit of narrowly tailoring its reforms on the veto power, it is unlikely that the permanent members would agree any more easily to a binding resolution depriving them of their veto power in even a limited role,\textsuperscript{251} given that they made clear that they did not want to heed the call for an informal agreement to produce the same restrictions.\textsuperscript{252}

There is, however, a different way to deal with the problems—notably, the forestalling of Security Council action due to a lack of political will—plaguing the responsibility to protect doctrine.\textsuperscript{253} The responsibility to protect should be implemented in a manner similar to self-defense, adapted to the requirements of the responsibility.\textsuperscript{254} This proposal incorporates the threshold incidents from the World Summit Outcome, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity, before giving rise to a right to take military action.\textsuperscript{255} Limiting the trigger events to these crimes gives clear limits to when the responsibility may be invoked, avoiding the broad definitions from the ICISS report.\textsuperscript{256} As identified by the Secretary-General, information regarding the occurrence of these events is rarely lacking.\textsuperscript{257} This proposed implementation of the responsibility to protect also incorporates the precautionary principals outlined in the ICISS report, motivation to halt human suffering, last resort, the use of means proportionate to the objective, and reasonable prospects for success.\textsuperscript{258}

This proposed implementation of the responsibility to protect differs from the current model or other proposed changes in its determi-
nation of when a country may intervene. Similar to the doctrine of self-defense under the U.N. Charter, a country would be allowed to intervene following the occurrence of one of the threshold events, until the Security Council takes action. Drawing further from the self-defense doctrine, any country taking such action would be required to report its actions to the Security Council. After reporting, the country taking action to protect the civilians of the host country would be allowed to continue to act until the Security Council acts. By implementing the responsibility to protect in this way, the inertia of the Security Council, along with any lack of political will to act, would work to the benefit of the civilians in danger.

This proposal would also benefit from a built-in protection against a country claiming to implement the responsibility to protect doctrine as a pretext for other motives. Because the subject of a Security Council resolution mandating intervention be replaced with peaceable dispute resolution mechanisms would be the country or countries intervening, those countries would not have a vote on the Security Council resolution. As such, if the country taking protective acts under the responsibility to protect doctrine is a permanent member of the Security Council, that country could not use its position to automatically veto any resolution ordering it to withdraw its troops. Moreover, if the protective actions are taken by a regional or sub-regional group, such as NATO, the resolution can incorporate the participating constituent states so as to ensure that they could not veto the resolution. This adaptation of the self-defense doctrine would also benefit from the U.N. Charter’s notice provision: any time a country takes action under this proposed implementation, they would be required to report it to

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259 But cf. Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109 (urging the adoption of a modified Security Council veto power); Davis, supra note 216 (arguing for reforms to the U.N., and development of regional organizations).

260 See U.N. Charter art. 51.

261 See id.

262 See id.

263 But cf. Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109 (urging the adoption of a modified Security Council veto power to reduce the possibility for one country to prevent collective action); Davis, supra note 216 (arguing for reforms to the U.N., and development of regional organizations).

264 Cf. Kresock, supra note 202, at 238; Nzelihe, supra note 202, at 1178.

265 See U.N. Charter art. 27, para. 3.

266 See id. The U.N. Charter draws no distinction between permanent members and non-permanent members of the Security Council for the purposes of this provision. Id.

267 See James E. Hickey, Jr., Challenges to Security Council Monopoly Power over the Use of Force in Enforcement Actions: The Case of Regional Organizations, 10 IUS GENTIUM 77, 84–87 (2004).
the Security Council, ensuring that the Security Council would be aware of the events and could pass a resolution.\textsuperscript{268}

Another protective measure that could be implemented in a new proposal would be a “heads-up” notice requirement.\textsuperscript{269} Under such a requirement, before a country may take protective actions, it must give notice of its mission objectives and plan for engagement, within a specified timeframe—for instance four weeks—prior to implementing those plans.\textsuperscript{270} This period would serve several purposes, including giving both the acting country or countries and the U.N. time to continue gathering information to ensure that the host country has in fact manifestly failed to protect its civilians.\textsuperscript{271} This notice period would also allow the Security Council to act before the intervening countries began operations—either explicitly authorizing such actions, or requiring use of a pacific resolution mechanism—pursuant to U.N. Charter Article 48.\textsuperscript{272} The Security Council could modify the intervening states’ outlined objectives and plans, such as encouraging countries to use non-military measures like an arms embargo or a no-flight zone.\textsuperscript{273}

The main benefit of this proposed reform to the responsibility to protect comes from its effect on a situation in which the Security Council fails to act.\textsuperscript{274} Under current implementations of the responsibility to protect doctrine, the Security Council’s failure to act prohibits countries from taking military action.\textsuperscript{275} By contrast, in the proposed implementation, such inertia would allow countries to offer protection until the Security Council chose to act, rather than require the world to stand by idly.\textsuperscript{276}

The ongoing situation in Syria serves as a prime example of the potential effects of this proposed reform.\textsuperscript{277} The Security Council has

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\textsuperscript{268} See U.N. Charter art. 51.
\textsuperscript{270} Cf. id. (using the loss of military surprise as a benefit rather than a drawback).
\textsuperscript{271} Cf. Summit Outcome, supra note 149, ¶ 139.
\textsuperscript{272} See U.N. Charter art. 48, para. 1 (requiring countries to carry out the decisions of the Security Council).
\textsuperscript{273} See S.C. Res. 1973, supra note 4, ¶¶ 4, 6–18.
\textsuperscript{274} But cf. Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 53–54 (noting that the General Assembly lacks the power to require action be taken, along with the fact that the Security Council must authorize actions taken by regional organizations).
\textsuperscript{275} See Timely and Decisive Response Report, supra note 200, ¶ 32.
\textsuperscript{276} See id.
\textsuperscript{277} See infra notes 275–279 and accompanying text.
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voted on three resolutions aimed at ending the violence in Syria—all three of which have been vetoed by Russia and China.\textsuperscript{278} As a result, an estimated 115,000 people have been killed as of October 2013.\textsuperscript{279} Under the proposed reforms to the responsibility, countries which developed mission objectives and plans and gave the Security Council sufficient notice could take protective action unless the Security Council prohibited such countries from acting.\textsuperscript{280} This proposed reform would repurpose the lack of political will and allow the responsibility to protect doctrine to focus on the proper goal, “the requirements of those who need or seek assistance,”\textsuperscript{281} while building in safeguards against abuse of the system.\textsuperscript{282}

**Conclusion**

The responsibility to protect doctrine is the next step in the evolution of the role of the U.N. and the international community in protecting civilians from the worst abuses. The U.N. was born out of a desire to prevent future wars. Kosovo and Rwanda were poignant lessons of occasions when a civilian’s greatest threat comes from his or her own government, especially behind the shield of sovereignty. The answer came in the form of the responsibility to protect doctrine, affirming the need for a government to protect its citizens from the worst crimes, and laid the foundation for international response in the event the host country failed in its responsibility. Although problems still exist with the doctrine, implementing the responsibility to protect doctrine as a modified form of self-defense will use the inertia of the political process to protect civilians. The need for such a reform is, unfortunately, heightened by the more than 115,000 killed in Syria, as the world watches, estopped from intervening by politics in the Security Council.

\textsuperscript{278} Charbonneau, supra note 11; Gladstone, supra note 74.

\textsuperscript{279} See Evans, supra note 9.

\textsuperscript{280} See U.N. Charter art. 48, para. 1; supra notes 256–273 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{281} See Responsibility to Protect, supra note 109, at 18.

\textsuperscript{282} See id. at 35; see also Delahunty, supra note 202, at 44–45; Goodman, supra note 201, at 112–16; Kresock, supra note 202, at 238; Nzelibe, supra note 202, at 1178.