

Responsibility to Protect: Translating Ideas into Capacity



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Douglas Wilson

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Responsibility to Protect: Translating Ideas into Capacity

Douglas Wilson
March 2009

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Introduction

The international community was deeply divided during the 1990s between those who advocated “humanitarian intervention” in response to mass human rights atrocities, and those who viewed such a doctrine as an indefensible infringement of state sovereignty. The need for a new norm to guide international responses to terrible human rights violations and mass loss of civilian life was borne out by the 1999 NATO bombings to end ethnic cleansing in Kosovo after the UN Security Council had reached an impasse on whether to sanction intervention, highlighting differences within the international community and competing claims of legitimacy and legality. It was in this context that Secretary-General Kofi Annan challenged the international community to come up with a framework for action in states where catastrophic human rights violations were taking place – or risk another collective failure as in Rwanda or Srebrenica.

In response, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), sponsored by the government of Canada, was convened in 2001, ultimately publishing a report that formulated the “responsibility to protect” principle, or R2P, which shifted the emphasis away from the right of states to intervene and stressed instead the responsibility of states to protect citizens against human rights atrocities.

In 2005, the World Summit unanimously voted to accept the report’s findings and efforts are now focused on implementation in the wake of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon’s recently published document, “Implementing the Responsibility to Protect”. However, some observers feel that some states are resiling on previous commitments, and R2P continues to be viewed with suspicion and distrust in large parts of the world today.

On 9-10 March 2009, the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior

(FRIDE) and Intermón Oxfam, with the cooperation of the Canadian and British Embassies in Spain, brought together a number of experts to discuss R2P, its implementation and its prospects as an internationally accepted working norm of the future. As part of the discussion, representatives of the above mentioned Embassies also laid out some of the plans of their respective governments in the months ahead with respect to R2P. What follows are some of the key points from the overall debate, which are presented here in accordance with the Chatham House rule on confidentiality.

R2P: definition and global challenges

By way of introduction, a brief overview was given of the context in which R2P emerged, and it was argued that we have a moral duty to prevent atrocities like Rwanda or Bosnia again in the future. R2P was described as an ambitious new norm, one which recognises that the first responsibility of the state is to its own citizens. The polemical nature of R2P was also highlighted, and a call was made to exponents and detractors alike to remember that what is at stake when discussing R2P is the well-being of our fellow human beings, not abstract technicalities. The obligation to respect civilian populations, the need for regional cooperation, and the potentially vital role of organisations such as the African Union were all referred to in what was termed an increasingly challenging international context, where fresh crises such as Zimbabwe and worrying new developments like the Israeli attack on the UN during the recent occupation of Gaza pose new challenges every day.

The first discussion saw R2P described as one of the most important normative advances since World War II, a re-conceptualisation of sovereignty which rests on the following idea: individual subjects, not states, have rights; states have responsibilities, first and foremost of which is the responsibility to protect subjects from

mass atrocities. If any state is unable or unwilling to carry out this responsibility to protect, then that responsibility does not fall into abeyance, but instead passes by default to the international community at large. This was described as a vital “shift” away from the old emphasis on humanitarian intervention to a new focus on protection and capacity building for protection.

Furthermore, the “revolutionary” third part of the R2P pillar, which allows for intervention by the international community as a last resort, is something quite different from traditional warfare (war between two armies), collective security (the use of force by the international community against an aggressor) or peacekeeping (the interposition of a neutral international force between two rival armies). It constitutes a step-change in which the international community stands between those perpetrating mass human rights abuses – genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity – and the civilian population and its inalienable right to be protected.

R2P: actors and development

The input provided by the Commissioners who drafted the report was explained - most importantly that of chair Gareth Evans, widely seen as R2P’s chief architect, and co-chair Mohamed Sahnoun -, as was the pivotal role played by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who had been profoundly and personally affected by the collective failure of Rwanda. Kofi Annan worked unstintingly for a new normative framework, challenging the international community to agree upon common ground rules, recognising the value of R2P from the beginning, and shepherding it through the system until it became an internationally endorsed norm. The support of the government of Canada, and also Australia, was also highlighted as fundamental to the R2P cause, with Canada acting as

“norm champion”, providing the backing at state-level so vital for an idea to become transformed into an internationally accepted norm.

To a large extent, the Commission’s work was a reformulation of concepts already circulating in the ideas community and their re-deployment to more decisive effect. For example, the qualification of state sovereignty inherent in R2P is merely the recognition that sovereignty was never absolute. Indeed, the notion of qualified sovereignty has long informed political culture, with citizens tacitly demanding certain responsibilities from states. In addition, international trends have been moving in the direction of a more diluted sovereignty since at least 1945, when the use of both internal and external force by states started to become increasingly circumscribed. The integration of states into the international system through membership of ever more important international and regional organisations such as the African Union, the EU and the UN amounts to a further dilution of sovereignty. Seen in this light, R2P is merely another step along the same path – albeit a highly significant one.

The same can be said of R2P and the protection agenda, which has been developing since the Geneva Conventions and the rise of Humanitarian Law. For example, in 1992, Hindu extremists overran a Mosque in India, killing 2,000 Muslims and prompting widespread criticism and resentment against the Indian government for failing to prevent the tragedy. This condemnation was already couched in R2P language. Thus R2P should be understood as the crystallisation of tendencies already “in the air” into a normative framework.

The Commission’s report was delivered in December 2001, which was unfortunate timing given that the reaction to 9/11 was in full-swing; a further setback saw some key R2P terminology hijacked by those responsible for the invasion of Iraq. Nevertheless, in 2005 the World Summit acting as the UN General Assembly adopted R2P, a decision later reaffirmed by the Security Council.

The end of Kofi Annan's term as UN Secretary General and his replacement by Ban Ki Moon, widely seen as a US candidate lukewarm about UN reform, was considered a setback for R2P by some. However, Ban Ki Moon has answered his critics by making the R2P cause his own, publishing his report on "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect" in early 2009. The Secretary General's document does not add much in terms of substance to the original report, though it does introduce the metaphor of the "three pillars": state responsibility, international assistance and international intervention. The "three pillar" metaphor seems useful as far as it goes, but excessive in suggesting each "pillar" sustains the R2P edifice in equal measure: in fact, the first pillar, the state's responsibility to protect its own citizens, is paramount, whilst the third is the most critical in preventing human rights atrocities - and also the most controversial.

Added value and implementation

R2P's added value lies in what it brings to the table in terms of the third pillar, intervention to protect civilians in the face of human rights. However, no-one should think R2P will make controversy surrounding intervention suddenly disappear; every time international force is used, the matter is bound to cause controversy. Furthermore, R2P is not just a work of commission, but also of omission - what is not covered under the norm is also important, and attention was drawn to the wide array of alternative instruments already available to deal with crisis situations. For example, the objective of the government in Sri Lanka is not to kill as many Tamil Tigers as possible, but rather to secure military victory, suggesting R2P would not be the appropriate instrument here. This brings us onto one of the pitfalls identified by the architects of R2P, namely that it could encourage armed groups to step up violence (or resort to it in the first instance) in order to attract international attention and

intervention if misused. The new norm is primarily preventive, and this should *always* be borne in mind; force can only be contemplated as a last resort.

How and when R2P decisions are made, on what basis, and how it applies to local contexts are some of the questions to be jointly addressed by the West and the developing world. So far the West has been somewhat insensitive, dominating the discourse on R2P, as with so much else. In this sense, widespread acceptance of R2P ultimately requires UN Security Council reform. Unless the developing world feels its voice is heard, it will always be tempted to see R2P as another tool of Western propaganda and imperialism, and there will always be a ready-made excuse for R2P's detractors. Taking up this point, one expert looked at R2P from the perspective of the Middle East and stressed that the UN is perceived as a place where the rules are set by a small group of powerful countries. How R2P could be applied to local realities on the ground was examined, and it was suggested that the Middle East, and Gaza specifically, would be a useful testing ground for R2P. Many in the Middle East suspect R2P contains a hidden Western agenda, the same old "humanitarian interventionism" in another guise. Some of the obstacles for R2P in the region mentioned by this participant were: the chasm between rulers and the ruled; restrictions or absence altogether of the media (for example, the recent media blackout during the Israeli invasion of Gaza); the relative inexperience of regional organisations like The Arab League or The Islamic Conference as decision-making bodies in terms of regional responses; and the relatively unsophisticated nature of civil society, described as too immature to fully embrace R2P. The region's religious culture, with its emphasis on protecting one's fellow man, was highlighted as conducive to R2P, though translating this into political action is an obvious difficulty which was recognised.

This speaker then stressed that military action should be regarded in a different light to other kinds of intervention. Any attempt to "re-package" Iraq as a humanitarian intervention, for example, is disingenuous. The argument was also made for the need

to agree upon certain objective conditions which must be obtained before military deployment can be contemplated. In terms of prevention and reconstruction, the expert lamented the fact that often there is a real shortage of skills and expertise in conflict-ridden societies, and often no obvious replacement for people like President al-Bashir. The need for rapid civilian response capacities was highlighted, as well as a functioning judiciary and a reformed media.

A number of participants then stressed the need for the international community to show the political will required to make R2P a functioning reality. Others were more sceptical, arguing that the redefinition of sovereignty inherent in R2P is a big issue for many states, so many of which are former colonies. R2P is seen by some as a “Trojan horse” of Western imperialism, and the developing world’s wider misgivings regarding the international system must be addressed if suspicions surrounding R2P are ultimately to be assuaged; more specifically, international institutions must evolve to reflect the changing world order.

The relationship between the International Criminal Court (ICC) and R2P was then briefly touched upon. It was argued that the responsibility to protect and the responsibility to prosecute were two sides of the same coin. But one participant pointed to a growing crisis of credibility for the ICC brought about by the fact that no Israeli, US or British nationals have been indicted by the Court to date, despite these countries being the world’s most belligerent, thus raising doubts about impartiality. For the time being at least, too close an association with the ICC would appear to be counterproductive for R2P.

The need for a reform of the UN Security Council was underlined again, with one participant describing the US veto as a serious problem for the international community. In terms of Gaza and other occupation scenarios, one expert clarified that occupying powers also have responsibilities to protect local populations under R2P. The lack of information surrounding the US

assault on Fallujah (Iraq) in November 2004 was mentioned in this context.

The participants then went on to hail the arrival of President Obama to the White House and a new international environment, and it was further noted that Susan Rice, current US Ambassador to the UN, is a keen supporter of R2P. Finally it was suggested that the UN request the International Commission to investigate events surrounding the recent Israeli invasion of Gaza and the attack on the UN facilities which took place there.

R2P and the protection of civilians

R2P was described as a double-edged instrument by one expert - an instrument of justice, but also one of “civilisation”; it is the potential use of R2P in the latter sense which causes such unease in the developing world. R2P should be used to meet citizens’ needs rather than become another tool of the state, with the emphasis always on prevention rather than intervention, the latter being far too much the focus of states at present. R2P cannot simply become another route to the same old military interventionism.

Some of the challenges facing the international community in terms of the protection of civilians were outlined here; these included the growing militarisation of humanitarian spaces; the blurred lines between combatants and non-combatants in conflict situations; the growing gap between local populations and UN personnel due to excessive focus on the safety of the latter; the fundamental importance of capacity in humanitarian efforts - for example, the MONUC mission in DR Congo was simply insufficient in scope for an area four times the size of Western Europe; intimately related to this last point, the all too frequent absence of powerful countries in peace missions was lamented, as was their tendency to devote time and resources to unilateral efforts or “coalitions of the

willing". The worryingly high number of cases where UN peace missions actually lead to the perpetration of gross human rights violations rather than peace and security was also highlighted; despite steps being taken to address this problem in the shape of Resolution 1820, impunity persists. Even if a culprit is sentenced, the victim often does not see justice carried out as the trial takes place in the perpetrator's home country, something that needs to be addressed.

Prevention as the key to protecting civilians was underlined; catastrophic situations like Rwanda do not spring up overnight, and the need for a greater effort by the international community to understand and prevent the causes of violence was stressed. For example, although moral outrage surrounding the arms industry is frequently expressed, insufficient action is taken to demand accountability of arms manufacturers and supplier countries. Countries and companies involved in the arms trade should be brought to book when those arms are used in human rights violations. This expert also went on to note that in countries suffering from so-called "resource curse", too much of the onus for action has been being left in the hands of private companies through the much vaunted Corporate Social Responsibility. Finally, the growing problems refugees are experiencing in exiting countries at war where borders are often sealed was mentioned, and a call was made for this simple protection mechanism to be maintained.

The argument was put that too much emphasis is placed on the security aspect of reconstruction and that it is a mistake to view peace processes as neutral - ultimately, they create winners and losers, with peace often established by granting the powerful a place at the decision making table to the detriment of justice. Reconstruction must be carried out in partnership with the local community, including that part of the community which does not traditionally wield power, otherwise - what are we reconstructing?

Another participant put the R2P controversy into some kind of context by pointing out that no current international norm has come into being without intense

debate. Doubts were also cast on to what extent R2P can belong to "the people" rather than the state, as demands are generally channelled through the latter. The need for some kind of normative framework like R2P was argued for, and the dangers of romanticising non-interventionism pointed out. We seem to be currently faced with the dichotomy of the failed policies of the West on the one hand and, on the other, the non-interventionist implication that leaving troubled states to get on with things will somehow solve the world's problems, an idea which the historical record belies. Yet if R2P is the answer, we need to be cautious about using it; it could easily become another propaganda weapon against the West in the hands of the wrong dictator, and further undermine multilateral action.

This expert then ran through some of R2P's highly varied opponents, whose differences suggest R2P has a far from easy task ahead in establishing itself as a functioning international norm. Some of the detractors mentioned were: those who see themselves directly affected, implicated or threatened by R2P - Sudan's President al-Bashir, recently indicted by the ICC, would be one such example; the "anti-imperialists" who think R2P's presentation and packaging is just a front to hide the same old Western agenda; those opposed to intervening in the internal affairs of other states as a rule, or the legalists who point out that no right to intervene as such is mentioned anywhere in international law (this is an empirical fact rather than an opinion); finally, the sceptics who think that R2P is all well and good, but impossible to put into practice equitably in real life situations in a biased international system, as well as the doubters who argue that interventions always end up creating as many problems as they solve.

Exponents of R2P include "cosmopolitan interventionists", the liberal interventionists who think states can intervene in other states, and finally the "false interventionists", those attempting to hijack R2P terminology for their own purposes.

In the debate which followed, it was noted that peacekeeping missions are responsible to the UN

Security Council, but often the mandates under which they operate have no R2P clause, something which ought to be remedied. The important role regional organisations like the EU and the African Union can play was highlighted, though it was also noted that these organisations often lack funds, being reliant for their finance on member states. Another participant affirmed that we are condemned to failure if we think of the state as the key actor, because the state is always moved by interests. Multilateral interventions tend to be tied to values, whereas unilateral initiatives are usually tied to interests. It was further noted that the best military personnel rarely take part in peace keeping operations, and that their superiors are desperate to avoid casualties at all costs, to the detriment of the mission at hand.

Touching on the next discussion, one of the participants emphasised the importance of early warning systems for conflict prevention. Another speaker agreed this was true, but pointed out that states with internal problems are often reluctant to accept early warning systems, as they are wary of being subject to external supervision of any kind.

The preventive dimension of R2P

The preventive dimension of R2P is its most important aspect according to one of its exponents who described R2P as the codification of a number of tendencies – such as a widely accepted need for protection – emerging in the international community over recent decades.

The difficulties in distinguishing between R2P temporal areas and a criticism of the general tendency to prioritise reaction over reconstruction and prevention were noted. The focus on prevention in the Secretary General's latest report has won round a number of otherwise sceptical countries, encouraging them to endorse R2P, though at the same time it was

also noted that prevention has been criticised for diluting the importance and analytical clarity of R2P. One of the difficulties of prevention lies in deciding the thresholds at which point action is triggered. This is still a much debated subject, with some arguing that thresholds are too high, thus risking tardy interventions which come too late in the day to avert humanitarian catastrophe. Thresholds are bound to be very demanding if global agreement on them is required, which risks rendering R2P ineffective in practice. On the other hand, if thresholds are set too low and interventions are triggered too easily, the clarity of R2P as a concept risks becoming blurred and it becomes somewhat meaningless.

Prevention can also mean tackling the structural causes of conflicts. What exactly should be prevented under R2P and how are questions still to be answered. In any event, effective prevention requires highly sensitive instruments but also ones which can be used in a systematic way, which is anything but easy. Political society is still very much state centric, but advances in prevention in the main come from society. It is civil society where we need to see prevention fostered, but how can this be carried out independently of the state?

The case of Kenya was mentioned as the one indisputable R2P success story to date, with international and regional diplomacy preventing violence there from spiralling into a full scale humanitarian calamity after the disputed December 2007 elections.

R2P as a response tool: the use of force as a last resort

This panel began with the observation that political science is no alchemy, and that some dilemmas have no easy answer. For example, the use of force - even as a last resort – constitutes a moral problem for decision-makers and a controversy which goes back at least to Biafra - Nigeria in 1967.

One participant stressed that the international community should be pressing governments to do more with the rights and obligations already in existence under several international treaties and conventions which are rarely applied. The United Nations Charter, for example, is a very fine document indeed. The importance of public opinion on possible R2P interventions was stressed. For example, the 1995-1999 conflict in Bosnia united public opinion in Western Europe in favour of intervention, but the conflict in Kosovo shortly afterwards divided it. The real difference between the two conflicts was the media's portrayal of events and the resulting differences in public perception of the two conflicts.

If intervention ultimately takes place, it ought to be proportional, have clear goals, a clear exit strategy, and a plan "B" in case the original plan fails. The UNPROFOR mission in the former Yugoslavia was deficient in almost every regard - there was no clear objective, responsibilities were hazy, it lacked permission to use force even to separate the two warring sides, and it was poorly equipped.

Some criticisms of R2P

During the next panel, R2P was described as the most recent expression of the hegemony of the liberal agenda, and was criticised for resting on externally

defined standards of "good governance". R2P is presented as a response to deviant situations, necessarily implying a false dualism between war and peace; reality would be more faithfully reflected by a sliding scale of violence. There is often more violence during peace time than war - for example, against women in El Salvador since the end of the civil war. This expert also highlighted the growing tendency to mix military and humanitarian intervention, quoting the US marine manual which states: "US soldiers must also be nation-builders". The blurring of the distinction between humanitarian and military action casts doubt on the credibility of the West.

R2P military intervention can only occur based on "reliable evidence" according to its own terms. Ideally, this is to be supplied by an impartial third party – but no such impartial third party exists nor can this ever be the case, for impartiality is a mere figment of the liberal imagination, just like the misconception that geo-political self-interest can ever be absent. States conflate human rights concerns with self interest, just as they always have done, and geo-political interest never disappears. This speaker speculated that the R2P narrative was merely a new language for an old problem, a rehash of the "just war" doctrine - *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* - and concluded by stating that R2P can only be useful as an additional tool in the fight against violence in all of its manifestations.

A lively debate followed, with one expert rebutting these criticisms, affirming that R2P was the normative expression of a human rights culture which has been developing since at least 1945. According to another expert, the Achilles tendon of R2P is the issue of self-determination and the struggle by certain groups within states for independence. The same participant wondered whether the Spanish government was acting at odds with the principle of R2P in refusing to recognise the new state of Kosovo, going on to point out that the US normally decides when a struggle for self-determination is legitimate, most recently in Kosovo, something which does not augur well for R2P.

The debate ended with the reflection that we are rapidly returning to a 19th century world in which inviolable state sovereignty is a matter of degree, dependant on a number of factors concerning the state in question and the increasingly decisive role public opinion can play in this regard.

R2P as a peacebuilding tool and the role of the Peacebuilding Commission and other inter-governmental agencies

The first issue noted was that prevention should always be uppermost in our minds, and that talk about reconstruction always implies a failure of prevention, and thus political will. The point was made that reconstruction is not about going back to the original starting point of a post-conflict society. This is the kind of reconstruction carried out in Gaza, for example, and it is no more than a temporary way of dealing with a problem, not a solution as such. Structural problems require structural solutions, no matter how much the international community likes to put problems into quarantine, ring-fencing them rather than tackling them.

The difference between post-war reconstruction and humanitarian action or development aid was examined, before some general reconstruction guidelines were offered: civilian and policing components of international missions should predominate over military ones. Reconstruction should focus on local capacities, and the protection of civilians should always be a priority. Reconstruction ought to be conceived of and undertaken with a view to the long-term. Often this is no easy matter, because national

politics basically deals with problems on a short term basis. One of the biggest aids to the reconstruction process is the reduction of socio-economic inequalities between groups.

Some of the concrete steps vital to successful reconstruction processes were mentioned: the security system must be reformed and strengthened if necessary, generating stability. A fully functioning state is also vital for reconstruction; that does not always imply holding elections, though it may do so. Matters such as Demobilisation, Disarmament and Re-Integration and Truth Commissions are all important, but they are also long term goals. The point here is not to argue for collective amnesia, but to recognise that a realistic time frame is an essential component of any reconstruction process, as are the respect and protection of human rights. A constant danger is the proliferation of small firearms amongst the local population, and this must be curtailed as much as possible.

Another participant looked at the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, a development which addressed “a sensation of institutional abandonment” as there was previously no specific UN organisation for this area. Its aim is to bring actors together, marshal resources, promote fundraising and advise on long term strategies, serving also to institutionalise the debate in its ultimate aim to provide sustainable reconstruction. But the Commission faces a number of problems: it is very badly off in terms of resources; it lacks an analytical capacity and the ability to adapt to experience on the ground, suffering from a kind of one size-fits-all view of reconstruction. In short, it has difficulties in understanding conflicts and all of their different dimensions. In addition, too much emphasis is frequently placed on the security elements over any attempt to analyse causes.

This expert went on to add that care must be taken not to ask too much of local societies in post-conflict situations. For example, in Mozambique, there was far too much emphasis placed on the liberalisation of the economy and the holding of elections and this can be

problematic. Too often external reforms are imposed on societies which require organic responses arising from within. A number of other problems require answers: how to oversee the change from a war economy to a peace economy? How to integrate all sectors of society in decision making processes, for example, women? Finally, how do we strike the right balance between principles and pragmatism, for example, in the often competing claims of peace and justice?

General conclusions

- The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a normative advance of paramount importance in the current humanitarian and foreign policy debate. The R2P principle shifts the discussion from the legitimacy and legality of humanitarian interventions to the rights of the civilian population engulfed by conflicts and the responsibility of the state and the international community to ensure their protection.
- R2P faces accusations from its detractors, who argue it is just the latest instrument devised to further the agenda of the West, and also from sceptics, who argue that intervention might encourage secessionism and incite an increase in violence from armed groups. These accusations need to be addressed, firstly, by using the norm fairly and without double standards, which may require a reform of the UN Security Council, and, secondly, by adapting the norm to local contexts and not using it in incorrect settings (i.e. Iraq, Georgia, Burma).
- The protection of civilians has become an increasingly complex and difficult activity for the state and international community – international missions with unclear mandates, a focus on staff security, a blurring of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, the militarisation of humanitarian spaces. Protection objectives will never be fully achieved if the International Community only addresses immediate threats and fails to address the structural causes of conflicts (arms trade, resource driven conflicts, etc.)
- The preventive aspect of R2P is its most important dimension: it curtails human suffering before it takes place and has won round some of those nations sceptical of R2P. But protection also contains the potential to dilute the importance and conceptual clarity of the norm, particularly if we raise the threshold for intervention too high, include too many structural aspects or fail to define the most effective elements for prevention.
- In terms of response, external (military) intervention is the most controversial aspect of R2P and always a last resort. Policy makers and politicians making the decision to intervene should weigh up the impact on the media and public opinion. It is also important to use the same rule for intervention in all cases and have a clear plan with political objectives as well as an exit strategy.
- Reconstruction should not be contemplated as a return to the starting point of a post-conflict society. The International Community should take the opportunity to tackle the structural causes of conflict (socio-economic inequalities, impunity and injustice) using local capacities as well as long-term external assistance. In this regard, the UN Peacebuilding Commission should be given an appropriate mandate and resources to lead this task.
- Regional organisations, such as the EU and AU, can play a prominent role in the implementation of R2P. The EU is particularly well placed to push the R2P agenda forward, with a priority being to form its own rapid civilian deployment capacity.

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In 2005, the World Summit endorsed the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, which reconceives of state sovereignty as the responsibility to protect citizens from human rights atrocities, and most controversially, endorses international intervention as a last resort if states fail or refuse to comply with that responsibility.

However, implementation is proving more problematic, with sceptics in the developing world viewing R2P as an inadvertent incitement to armed uprising at best, or a “Trojan Horse” of Western imperialism at worst. Moreover, there is widespread feeling that some countries are resiling from previous commitments made in this regard.

On 9-10 March 2009, the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) and Intermón Oxfam, with the cooperation of the Embassies of Canada and the United Kingdom in Spain, brought together a number of experts to discuss R2P and its implementation, what can be done to facilitate that process, what obstacles it faces, and what R2P’s prospects are as an international norm of the future.

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