

Responsibility to protect

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What is it?

In his report to the 2000 General Assembly, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan challenged the international community to forge consensus around the so-called "right of humanitarian intervention": the question of when, if ever, it is appropriate for states to take coercive – in particular military – action, against other states for the purpose of protecting people at risk in that other state.

It was in response to that challenge that the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty was established by the Canadian government in September 2000. The result of the Commission's work is a report whose central theme is "The Responsibility To Protect" or R2P as it has become known: "the idea that sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe, but that when they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of states". (From the Responsibility To Protect website.)

Why does it exist?

After the crises and accompanying interventions of the '90s, it was clear that if intervention for human protection purposes was to be accepted – including the possibility of military action – it was necessary for the misnamed "international community" (ie governments) to develop certain consistent and enforceable standards. Indeed, a coherent international policy was felt to be "critical to the credibility and authority of the international community". (Kofi Annan at the launch of the "The Responsibility to Protect" report.)

What is the logic behind the R2P ethos?

According to the Commission, the obligation to ensure the equal protection of all citizens of a state is an intrinsic part of the concept of sovereignty. It therefore argued for a redefinition of sovereignty to include the obligation of the "international community" to intervene if necessary – and militarily if absolutely necessary – where a state ignores or violates its duty to protect its citizens from harm. In essence, the report established a just-cause threshold dependent on the scale of harm to a civilian population. The

report identifies three facets within of the R2P: the responsibility to prevent, responsibility to react, and the responsibility to rebuild.

What problems arise from the notion of R2P?

Military training and strategy is focused on winning wars and defeating enemies, and in particular in cases of inter-state conflict: it is not adapted to safeguarding human security in situations of civil conflict.

Whilst R2P is presented as a universal ethical imperative, in reality the doctrine would be applied extremely selectively and never against major powers.

R2P is simply a conceptual reframing of the "right to intervene" – in an address to the International Peace Academy Kofi Annan stated that "A central accomplishment of the 'Responsibility to Protect' report is its title – its restatement of the core issue at the heart of the debate on intervention. You have suggested a constructive shift away from debates about a 'right to intervene' towards the assertion of a 'responsibility to protect'. I admire your diplomatic skill in redirecting the debate, and – believe me – I wish I had thought of this myself."

Foot

Current operations

Over the next two pages you will find the latest maps and information produced by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping (UNDPKO).

Below are our additional notes to accompany these maps, plus information about the operations currently being led by other (ie non-UN) bodies.

In the first 40 years of its existence, the UN carried out 12 peacekeeping operations - five of which continue today. The biggest involved nearly 7,000 soldiers, deployed between Israel and Egypt after the Yom Kippur war of 1973; the smallest is in Kashmir, usually with fewer than 50 soldiers.

Since 1988, however, the UN has mounted a further 47 peace operations. This figure is a little exaggerated as what in reality were phases of an operation have been counted as complete operations - for instance in Angola there were UN troops there continuously from 1988 until 2002 but they are designated as four separate operations.

In addition to the UN peacekeeping operations, regional bodies - such as NATO, the European Union, the African Union or the Economic Community of West African States - often deploy forces in UN-approved operations.

Peace operations led by other bodies:

● **SFOR (Bosnia-Herzegovina)**. Since December 1996

Led by NATO but with non-NATO contributors

Currently 7,000 troops (peak 32,000 troops). Will be taken over by EU force (Althea) on 2 December 2004, with 7,000 troops; 400 NATO personnel (mainly US) will remain at NATO HQ in Sarajevo, plus an estimated 1,000 US troops (under a bilateral agreement with Bosnia-Herzegovina) at Eagle Base in Tuzla.

● **KFOR (Kosovo)**. Since June 1999

Led by NATO but with non-NATO contributors

Currently 18,500 troops, 4,000 police, (peak 50,000 troops)

● **ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) Afghanistan**. Since December 2001

Led by NATO but with non-NATO contributors

Currently 6,500 troops, deployed primarily around Kabul and in Kunduz (distinct from the US-led "Operation Enduring Freedom" – pursuing "terrorist targets")

● **AMIS (African Mission in Sudan)**. Since July 2004

Led by the African Union.

Initially 120 observers with 300 troops, now to be expanded to 3,320 personnel – 2,341 military (including 450 observers) and up to 815 civilian police.

NOTE: The African Union and ECOWAS (the Economic Community of Western African States) have taken the lead in various operations that subsequently came under UN auspices.

Further info

● **UNDPKO**

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko>

● **NATO** <http://www.nato.int/>

● **Citizens for Global Solutions**

<http://www.globalsolutions.org/> (lobby for more US involvement in UN operations).

● **PEP** <http://www.effective-peacekeeping.org> (lobby for improvement in UN operations).

● **Research guide**

<http://www2.spfo.unibo.it/spolfo/PEACEKEEP.htm> (links and bibliographies).

● **Politicalinformationdotcom**

<http://www.politicalinformation.com> (links to almost 1,000 related documents from range of sources).