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# R2P VS. WAR FOR PEACE

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**R2P vs. WAR FOR PEACE**

**INTRODUCTION**

The nuclear age made war between great powers too lethal.  The period after WWII saw, "…the division of the predominantly northern, industrialized nations into two mutually hostile armed camps, each afraid to risk nuclear war, but both almost too ready to confront one another indirectly, on the battlefields of the 'Third World.'"[1]  Limited wars and interventions of various kinds became the norm.  Participation in multi-lateral military interventions and limited wars has become increasingly common since the end of the Cold War.  This paper will question whether or not the world's methods for conducting coercive military interventions are effective.  It will compare two interesting theories that are diametrically opposed:  'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) and the notion that the world should 'Give War a Chance'.

This paper will explain that although the 'give war a chance' theory sounds harsh, cold hearted and war mongering, it is in fact far superior to the utopian but impractical R2P theory. Specifically, it is superior in terms of its ability to reduce the number of conflicts peace loving nations intervene in, but it also limits the length and scope of conflicts.  As a result, it is more apt to achieve quicker and longer lasting peace resolutions in most situations.  While allowing war to take its natural course isn't the right answer in every case, it is generally more appropriate in most cases than R2P's military interventions.  R2P has many admirable qualities, but alas, in the vast majority of cases it is unworkable.  First the essay will explore the history, virtues and problems of R2P.  Subsequently Edward Luttwak's cold hearted but realistic 'give war a chance' theory will be presented.  Reference to past coercive interventions made by the international community will be made to demonstrate and prove the validity of Luttwak's argument for non-

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[1] Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy – from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age.*  Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986, p 860.

intervention in regional conflicts.  Recent limited war interventions will be studied with a view to exposing how interventions under the auspices of R2P ultimately increased suffering and prolonged hostilities.

**R2P - BACKGROUND**

> *...if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to gross systemic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity?  ... Surely no legal principle – not even sovereignty – can ever shield crimes against humanity ... Armed intervention must always remain the option of last resort, but in the face of mass murder, it is an option that cannot be relinquished.*

Kofi Annan, United Nations General Assembly

The goal of R2P is to protect people from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.  The origin of parts of R2P's concepts can be traced back to the doctrine of 'just war' theory.  An earlier version or variant of R2P is the Genocide Convention of 1948.[2] Work by Francis Deng (United Nation's Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons) and Roberta Cohen (a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution) in the 1990s can be attributed to the recent development of R2P.  The idea was elevated by Kofi Annan in 1999 "who challenged the international community to develop a way of reconciling the twin principles of sovereignty (and protection of self-determination) and fundamental human rights."[3]  The Canadian Government accepted Annan's challenge and established the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS).  The ICISS wrote a report on R2P in 2001 which was essentially adopted by the United Nations (UN) at the World Summit in 2005.  Following a

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[2] Theresa Reinold, *The Responsibility to Protect – Much Ado About Nothing?*  Review of International Studies (2010), 36, p 55 and 61.

[3] Alex Bellamy, "Realizing the Responsibility to Protect." *International Studies Perspectives*.  (2009) 10, p 111.

period of intense debate, in April 2006 the Security Council reaffirmed its acceptance R2P by unanimously adopting United Nations Security Council Resolution 1674.[4]

R2P follows two basic principles. The first is that 'state sovereignty' implies responsibility. The primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself. The second basic principle is that when sovereign states are unwilling or unable to protect their people, the responsibility then falls to the broader international community. This is not a legal responsibility. It is meant to capture the international community's moral responsibility and offer a flexible approach to respond. This old and well known (yet difficult to attribute) quote captures the spirit of the second basic principle well: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing".

Following the core principles of R2P, military intervention for human protection purposes is deemed acceptable in two kinds of scenarios (Threshold Criteria). The first being to stop or avert large scale loss of life which is the product of deliberate state action, neglect/ inability to act, or in the situation of a failed state. The second being to stop or avert large scale ethnic cleansing by killing, forced expulsion, acts of terror or rape.[5]

### Problems with R2P

While R2P sounds like a righteous and moral idea, the difficulties the UN has had in their attempts to gain international consensus underline and expose its flaws. Regrettably, in accordance with my thesis, R2P briefs well in theory but is almost always unworkable. Questions of legality, process, intent, misuse and overall effectiveness surround R2P's coercive interventions. The *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* explained that although R2P makes a

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[4] *Ibid,* p 113.
[5] Canada. Thomas G. Weiss, Gail Thomas, and Don Hubert. *The Responsibility to Protect*. Report of the International Commision on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre, 2001. p 32.

strong case for the humanitarian and moral justification for action, the Security Council members were divided when discussing the NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999. Some Security Council members felt that that intervention created more harm than good and criticized the way NATO conducted the operation.[6] The ICISS report described R2P policy challenge and intervention dilemma well by saying that:

> "For some, the new interventions herald a new world in which human rights trumps state sovereignty; for others, it ushers in a world in which big powers ride roughshod over the smaller ones, manipulating the rhetoric of humanitarianism and human rights. The controversy has laid bare basic divisions with the international community."[7]

Only a few months after United Nations Security Council Resolution 1674 was adopted, a number of countries voiced concern about the need for further debate on R2P. The European Union, Canada, Japan, South Korea and several sub-Saharan African states defended R2P; however, Russia, China, Algeria, Philippines, Brazil, Egypt and India felt that concept was premature and required more discussion. Within the multi-lateral organization, it is exceedingly difficult to reconcile the requirement for coercive military intervention (to halt genocide and mass atrocities) with sovereignty. The nations who take issue with R2P want any decisions to intervene to be elevated to the Security Council (or the relevant regional organization). The key issue seems to be the concern that R2P, while meant to protect, can potentially be abused by the West, or others, to justify meddling within a sovereign state.[8] Much of their concerns were based around the incursion into Iraq in 2003. Many of the same concerns would be voiced again

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[6] *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, "The Responsibility to Protect: A CFP Condensed Introduction to the Report of the International Commision on Intervention and State Sovereignty". 14 Mar 2011, p 132.

[7] Canada. Thomas G. Weiss, Gail Thomas, and Don Hubert. *The Responsibility to Protect*. Report of the International Commision on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). Ottawa, Canada: International Development Research Centre, 2001, p 2.

[8] Alex Bellamy, "Realizing the Responsibility to Protect." *International Studies Perspectives*. (2009) 10, p 115 and 125.

due to actions taken against Libya in 2011 under R2P principles. The Libyan debacle will be discussed later on in this essay.

Despite the virtuous intent of R2P being praised and warmly accepted by many nations, it is evident that common acceptance in organizations like the UN is likely impossible in its current form. Theresa Reinold raises excellent questions regarding R2P's suitability as an immerging international norm. Despite rhetorical acceptance she identifies a number of fiercely disputed issues. She explains: "I posit that R2P cannot be considered a 'new norm' or an 'emerging norm' as it is frequently called, because the vast majority of states simply do not want to be legally bound to save strangers in remote regions of the world."[9]

Not only is R2P seen by many as a hegemonic tool that has been, and will continue to be, used to legitimize aggressive intervention, there continues to be other unresolved questions. During an R2P intervention for example, would the international community inherit the same responsibility that the host state has? Can or should states or coalitions continue to enforce R2P without Security Council approval or mandate? Security Council permanent members, China and Russia, maintain their traditional illogical positions regarding non-interference and posit that host nation consent should be sought. This is obviously problematic as intervention by the international community after invitation of the host nation is no longer an 'intervention' and defeats the fundamental purpose of R2P.

A final question that lingers, is R2P potentially to be seen as a legal duty or just an 'option' to intervene if other nations feel interested and motivated to do so?[10] The answer is likely that it would remain an 'option', as it has proven in the past. This 'option' would then be open for any state to volunteer rather than being a task for specific countries or regional groups.

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[9] Theresa Reinold, *The Responsibility to Protect – Much Ado About Nothing?* Review of International Studies (2010), 36, p 55.
[10] Ibid p 64.

Therefore, any R2P intervention a state wishes to participate in would have been determined from the onset with its own interests and aims in mind, but not necessarily the need of the people in crisis.  One country can be subjected to intervention fueled by various interests, while another less strategically important country that is in need of intervention could be ignored.  Some ask why the West would intervene forcibly in Libya while ignoring crisis in Burma for example?

R2P is as virtuous a model as it is utopian but it is incapable of reconciling the twin principles of sovereignty and human rights.  Furthermore, it requires impossibly ideal conditions within the UN.  The numerous and unique countries that make up the UN represent a tangled web of divergent interests.  R2P is too naïve and leaves too many unanswered questions to achieve consensus and move forward as an accepted standard or norm.  Now that R2P was been explained and exposed as unworkable, we'll review a drastically different and, at first glance, cold-hearted theory that proves superior to R2P.  The following sections will provide a synopsis of 'give war a chance' theory and prove the thesis statement declaring it superior to R2P.

**WAR FOR PEACE**

> *An unpleasant truth often overlooked is that although war is a great evil, it does have a great virtue:  it can resolve political conflicts and lead to peace.  This can happen when all belligerents become exhausted or when one wins decisively.  Either way the key is that the fighting must continue until a resolution is reached.  War brings peace only after passing a culminating phase of violence.  Hopes of military success must fade for accommodation to become more attractive than further combat.*

> Edward Luttwak, *Give War a Chance*

Luttwak explains that since the establishment of the UN wars fought between smaller powers have been interrupted, not permitted to 'run their natural course'.  He offers the view that the international community is not organized or prepared to resolve conflict.  Moreover, he asserts that involvement by the UN or NATO often prolongs human suffering and fuels hostility.  By interrupting small wars with imposed armistices and cease-fires the international community

inadvertently buys time for belligerents to reconstitute, recruit and prepare for their next opportunity to fight. "Imposed armistices, meanwhile-again, unless followed by negotiated peace accords-artificially freeze conflict and perpetuate a state of war indefinitely by shielding the weaker side from the consequences of refusing to make concessions for peace."[11] The Balkans illustrates some of Luttwak's points whereby Croats, Muslims and Serbs used imposed cease-fires as intermissions to regroup.

Following 'give war a chance' logic, it stands to reason that R2P military interventions could in fact temporarily suspend the fighting while fostering enduring hostilities. Luttwak contends that peace can only take hold once a war is actually over, not put on hold.[12] When the international community intervenes, it shields the weaker group from being defeated. As a result the weaker side is no longer forced to make concessions and sue for peace. As neither of the belligerents' survival is at risk due to the intervention, then neither is highly motivated to negotiate a lasting settlement. Without being able to visualize true stability and lasting peace in their future, their priorities continue to be focused on preparing for their next fight rather than rebuilding their societies, infrastructure and economies.[13] For war to be able to do its work (lead to peace), it needs an imbalance of power between opponents. An R2P intervention nullifies any imbalance or advantage thus preventing the development of a 'coherent outcome'.[14]

As a counter argument against Luttwak, one could point out that allowing war to take its 'natural path' to lasting peace is too one-dimensional and that the results could be inconsistent and have tragic consequences. The successful interventions in East Timor provide a rare example in favour of an R2P intervention. In the early 70s East Timor was a 'non-self-

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[11] Edward Luttwak, "Give War a Chance." *Foreign Affairs.* Published by the Council on Foreign Affairs. July/August 1999 Issue, p 2.
[12] *Ibid*, p 2.
[13] *Ibid*, p 2.
[14] *Ibid*, p 3.

governing' territory that was administered by Portugal. When Portugal looked to establish a local provisional government and popular assembly that would determine the status of East Timor, civil war broke out between those that wanted East Timor independence and those who advocated integration with Indonesia. Portugal became overwhelmed and withdrew. Indonesia intervened militarily (i.e.: invaded in 1975) and made East Timor one of their provinces in 1976.[15]

Talks were held between 1982 and 1998 pressuring Indonesia to allow 'popular consultation' in East Timor to determine whether or not they wanted independence. UN established UNAMET (United Nations Mission in East Timor) to oversee the transition period. When the majority of citizens voted in favour of independence from Indonesia, pro-integration militia (supported by Indonesia) began to attack, loot and burn throughout the country. As a result the UN authorized INTERFET (International Force for East Timor) to restore peace and security, protect and support UNAMET, and facilitate humanitarian assistance activities. UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor) was established to administer East Timor while it transitioned to independence. Early in 2000 UNTAET multidimensional peacekeeping force took over military operations from the 'non-UN' INTERFET. [16]

Less than two years later East Timor elected an 88 member assembly who wrote their new Constitution. 24 East Timor Ministers were sworn into office and replaced the transitional

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[15] Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Force_for_East_Timor
[16] United Nations. United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET) – Background.
http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmiset/background.html, p 1 and 2.

council created in the UN.  The new constitution was signed, a president elected, and the country

was 'born' on 20 May 2002.[17]

The international community's intervention clearly helped Timor-Leste.  While this

example supports the R2P rather than the 'give war a chance' theory, it is a rare example.  In

fairness to Luttwak, he clearly stated that war *can* lead to peace and resolve political conflict.  He

did not advocate non-intervention in every situation.

**Libya**

The military intervention in Libya was undertaken in the spirit of R2P theory.  After

seven months of intervention the West quickly, but prematurely, touted the action as a model

R2P intervention.  Yes, the Gaddafi regime was indeed toppled.  In hindsight, as we look at

Libya now we can confidently argue that the R2P intervention made a bad situation

exponentially worse.  Alan Kuperman writes that the NATO mission in Libya "significantly

worsened the humanitarian situation in Libya and its surrounding region".  He goes on to explain

that while claiming to follow R2P principles, NATO made the civil war in Libya persist six

times longer than had they not intervened.  Moreover, the intervention increased the overall

death toll in Libya by an estimated seven to 27 times.  Amnesty International states that human

rights conditions in Libya became considerably worse after the intervention than they had been

for the last ten years.[18]  Kuperman goes onto explain how the intervention not only made the

situation worse within Libya, but also surrounding areas.  He shows evidence that tension,

terrorism and humanitarian concerns have all increased in neighboring countries such as Mali,

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[17] *Ibid*, p 2.

[18] Hehir, A., Murray, R., Kuperman, A., *Libya, The Responsibility to Protect and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention.* Chapter 9 – "NATO's Intervention in Libya:  A Humanitarian Success?"  Palgrave MacMillan, United Kingdom, 2013,  p 212.

Niger and Burkina Faso due to the NATO intervention in Libya.[19]  Kuperman's analysis gives

credence to Luttwak's suggestion that, "It might be best for all parties to let minor wars burn

themselves out".[20]

On the other hand Kuperman does acknowledge the possibility that well into the future

the intervention could perhaps produce some benefits for Libya and its neighbors indirectly.  But

he maintains that "based on the humanitarian grounds originally invoked to justify it, NATO's

intervention in Libya has been a disaster".  He also differentiates between the situation in Libya

and genocides.  He goes onto explain that in situations where civilians are targeted intentionally

(i.e.: Rwandan genocide 1994), action to stop the genocide and remove the regime is absolutely

necessary.  In contrast in Libya, civilian casualties were typically caught in the cross-fire

between regime and rebel forces (not directly targeted by Gaddafi).  As a result he advocates

'international Samaritans' should show restraint when considering military interventions as

protecting civilians can lead to violent regime change, expanding the scope of chaos and

killing.[21]  The example in Libya again proves my thesis by demonstrating the validity of

Luttwak's theory.  By taking action to satisfy the international community's conscience,

intervention only widened the killing and amplified the suffering.

**CONCLUSION**

> *In tactics the means are the fighting forces…the end is victory.  The original*
> *means of strategy is victory-that is, tactical success; its end…are those objects*
> *which will lead directly to peace.*

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Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*

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[19] *Ibid,* p 213.

[20] Edward Luttwak, "Give War a Chance."  *Foreign Affairs.*  Published by the Council on Foreign Affairs. July/August 1999 Issue, p 2.

[21] Hehir, A., Murray, R., Kuperman, A., *Libya, The Responsibility to Protect and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention.* Chapter 9 – "NATO's Intervention in Libya:  A Humanitarian Success?"  Palgrave MacMillan, United Kingdom, 2013, p 213 and 215.

This essay looked at the theory, virtues and shortcomings of R2P. The paper has shown that while R2P is commendable and desirable, it's flawed in many ways and unacceptable to several influential countries. Libya showcases an ongoing and stark example of how R2P principles can cause great rifts within the international community and horrific damage within a country. The Libyan dictator was toppled by a Western military intervention that embodied many R2P principles. While R2P motives were humanitarian in nature they led to civil war, collapse of the state system and subsequently caused an enormous flood of refugees that the world continues to grapple with. As detailed in the previous section, the situation in Libya lasted much longer and cost exponentially more in lives, suffering and treasure than it would have had the West not intervened at all.[22] The world witnessed the same tragedy in Iraq and the current quagmire in Syria is likely to be an even worse debacle with the end state being far worse than the Assad regime that the West reviles and is trying to destroy.

Conversely this essay looked at the theory which argues war is typically better at bringing peace than R2P/ interventions. Edward Luttwak and his supporters offer unpopular but interesting, practical and workable insights while also offering harsh criticisms on the topic of military interventions. The first few sentences in the concluding paragraph (sub-titled *Make War to Make Peace*) in the infamous Luttwak article summarized the theory well:

> "Too many wars nowadays become endemic conflicts that never end because the transformative effects of both decisive victory and exhaustion are blocked by outside intervention… Policy elites should actively resist the emotional impulse to intervene in other peoples' wars – not because they are indifferent to human suffering but precisely because they care about it and want to facilitate the advent of peace."[23]

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[22] Philip Cunlife, From ISIS to ICISS: "A Critical Return to the Responsibility to Protect Report." *Cooperation and Conflict*, 2015, p 1.

[23] Edward Luttwak, "Give War a Chance." *Foreign Affairs.* Published by the Council on Foreign Affairs. July/August 1999 Issue, p 6.

This paper agrees that in most cases the international community needs to 'give war a chance' rather than 'kill with kindnesses' in the spirit of R2P. Admittedly, East Timor serves as an example to illuminate the fact that Luttwak's theory is not suitable in every situation. Had it not been for the UN's intervention into East Timor, the world would have witnessed much more suffering and human rights violations there, but the bottom line is that this was the exception, not the norm.

In closing, this essay offers an excerpt from the 'Powell Doctrine' and strongly advocates that western democracies adopt similar criteria in their foreign policy decisions. Before the Gulf War Colin Powell listed a series of questions he believed should be affirmatively answered before a military intervention is done by the United States. At any point when world leaders do not accept Luttwak's 'give war a chance' theory, they should then ask and answer these questions before taking action (as R2P advocates):

1. Is a vital national security interest threatened?
2. Do we have a clear attainable objective?
3. Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analyzed?
4. Have all other non-violent policy means been fully exhausted?
5. Is there an exit strategy to avoid endless entanglement?
6. Have the consequences of our action been fully considered?
7. Is the action supported by the American people?
8. Do we have genuine broad international support?[24]

This series of seemingly simple questions known as the Powell Doctrine are more pragmatic and realistic than R2P. When 'give war a chance' theory is rejected due to vivid news images spurring the global conscience, the Powell Doctrine offers a useful guide when considering forcible intervention. As the struggle between human beings and nations continue, intricate societal and regional dynamics will continue to compound problems. World leaders

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[24] Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powell_Doctrine

will be challenged to balance their desire to seek peace with protecting their nation's interest (and their own chances for re-election).

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