



Linnæus University

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Master thesis

Why Libya, but not Syria or Venezuela?

*A case study regarding Russia's inconsistent reaction to
The Responsibility to Protect doctrine*



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Abstract

By agreeing to The Responsibility to Protect doctrine (R2P) at the United Nations World Summit in 2005, and later adopting a resolution reaffirming the support, the Russian federation accepted a responsibility of the international community to protect populations of other states, if the state itself manifestly fails to protect its own populations. However, Russia has acted in an inconsistent way by exercising its commitment to the R2P principle occasionally. The purpose of this study is to give an answer to the question of why Russia has acted in an inconsistent way to The Responsibility to Protect doctrine. Analyzing the inconsistency puzzle through the realist, liberal and constructivist lens, questioning why Russia has accepted an R2P intervention regarding Libya to halt ongoing mass atrocities, but repeatedly has vetoed against R2P interventions regarding Syria and recently regarding Venezuela, the study concludes that a combination of the three approaches is needed to explain and understand Russia's inconsistent reaction. Second, it concludes that Russia acted inconsistently because President Medvedev was affected by, and agreeing with, international norms, thereby accepting an R2P into Libya, while President Putin was affected by, and wanted to hold on to the Russian identity. By rejecting R2P interventions in the Syria and Venezuela cases, Putin thereby secured Russian national interests, using a liberal narrative as a pretext for the actions.

Key words

Responsibility to protect, R2P, Intervention, Libya, Syria, Venezuela, Russian foreign policy, International affairs, Foreign policy analysis, realist, liberal, constructivist



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1 The Responsibility to Protect – a new doctrine

In 2005 at the United Nations (UN) World Summit,¹ a summit with the highest level of attendance by heads of state and government, a responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity was unanimously adopted.² The Westphalian notion of non-intervention into other sovereign states' affairs was thus complemented with a responsibility to protect the own states' population from mass atrocities, and if being unwilling or unable to fulfil this, the international community now had a responsibility to protect the populations of other states.³ In 2011, a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution to intervene under the R2P to halt the ongoing atrocities in Libya was unanimously adopted in the UNSC, it seemed like the new norm had gotten a foothold in the international community.⁴ The Libya resolution further came to represent a turning point in the post-Second World War history of interventions in the name of human protection, being the first time in history that the UNSC authorized military action with the expressed purpose of protecting the populations from atrocity crimes, without the consent of the state in question.⁵ For Alex Bellamy, one of the most preminent followers of the doctrine's development, the R2P "played an important role in shaping the world's response to actual and threatened

¹ The 2005 World Summit was a meeting that brought together more than 170 world leaders, discussing and taking decisions in the areas of development, human rights, security and reform of the UN

² UNSC Resolution, A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_60_1.pdf (accessed 30 December 2019)

³ Ibid.

⁴ UNSC Resolution, S/RES/1973, 17 March 2011, [https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1973%20\(2011\)](https://www.undocs.org/S/RES/1973%20(2011)) (accessed 20 December 2019)

⁵ Alex J. Bellamy & Steven McLaughlin, *Rethinking humanitarian intervention*, (London: Palgrave, 2018), p. 94



atrocities”⁶ in Libya, while Ramesh Thakur called the R2P a “gamechanger”, functioning “as a powerful new galvanizing norm”.⁷ However, states such as Russia have reacted inconsistently to the doctrine, vetoing several UNSC draft resolutions calling upon international interventions to protect populations in need, as for instance in Syria in 2011 and 2012.⁸ The focus of both the general and academic discussion thus turned to whether or not the doctrine was ever going to function in a consistent way. The discussion further intensified in 2019, when a draft resolution calling for unhindered distribution of humanitarian aid into Venezuela was, as in the case of Syria, vetoed by amongst others, the Russian federation.⁹ It made the UN Secretary-General caution that “there is a growing gap between our words of commitment and the experience of protecting vulnerable populations”,¹⁰ continuing by stating that it “therefore remains imperative to continue to advance the operationalization of the responsibility to protect”.¹¹

⁶ Alex J. Bellamy, “Libya and the responsibility to protect: the exception and the norm”, *Ethics and International Affairs* 25:3 (2011), p. 263

⁷ Ramesh Thakur, “Rebalancing interests in the shifting global order: R2P was the game-changer in the decision to impose a no-fly zone”, *Canberra Times* 2011-03-22, <https://www.retriever-info.com/Rebalancing-interests-in-the-shifting-global-order.com/?e=3> (accessed 30 December 2019)

⁸ Over approximately a two-year period, Russia vetoed three UNSC resolutions referring to the R2P doctrine, UNSC Draft resolution, S/2011/612, 4 October 2011, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2011/612> (accessed 30 December 2019), UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/77, 2 February 2012, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2012/77> (accessed 30 December 2019) and UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/538, 19 July 2012, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2012/538> (accessed 30 December 2019)

⁹ UNSC Draft resolution S/2019/186, 28 February 2019, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2019/186> (accessed December 2019)

¹⁰ United Nations General Assembly, A/73/898-S/2019/463, 10 June 2019, <http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/n1916893.pdf>, p. 1 (accessed 30 December 2019)

¹¹ *ibid.*



1.1 The rationale & contributions of the study

Russia has assumed and reaffirmed a responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocities but has, at the same time, reacted inconsistently to the doctrine.¹² The state has accepted a R2P intervention into Libya but has repeatedly vetoed against R2P interventions in Syria and recently also vetoed one regarding Venezuela. Since Russia has used its veto power to halt UNSC draft resolutions, the state can thereby be the sole state putting an end to the doctrine, negatively affecting populations at risk of being victims of mass atrocities. A puzzle that is of paramount significance to study is thus what underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction to the doctrine. An answer to the inconsistency puzzle would mainly cumulatively contribute to the R2P-research regarding Russia's approach to the R2P, but also cumulatively to the research regarding general inconsistent reactions to the doctrine. By extension, it would contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding what, if something, can be done if wanting the doctrine to function more consistently.

With the aim of explaining and understanding Russia's inconsistent reaction, the cases of Libya, Syria, and Venezuela are compared with each other. The puzzle is further analysed from the three most prominent International relations (IR) theories aiming at explaining and understanding foreign policy. Since aiming at diversely analysing the study's puzzle, using perspectives both from the positivist as well as the hermeneutic tradition, the realist, liberal, and constructivist lens are chosen. Using the approaches thereby also contributes to the IR-research in testing the theories ability to explain and understand not only the high-end foreign policy cases, Libya and Syria, but an up-to-date case in the form of Venezuela. To explain and understand the difference in

¹² UNSC Resolution, S/RES/1973 2011; UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2150, 16 April 2014, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2150> (accessed 30 December 2019)



outcome, a method-triangulation is applied. The written material analysed is thus complemented with interviews with an expert on Russian foreign policy, as well as a diplomat well familiar with the Venezuela case. By analysing Russia's actions on the international arena, the study finally contributes to the knowledge of not only Russia's role in international politics but of Russia's contemporary foreign policy.

1.2 Research questions

The overarching question of the study is what underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction to R2P interventions regarding the cases of Libya compared to that of Syria and Venezuela. The following research question is thus:

» How can Russia's choice to commit to The Responsibility to Protect doctrine in the Libya case, but not in the Syria or Venezuela case, be explained and understood looking through the realist, liberal and constructivist lens?

1.3 Demarcations

Other states have reacted inconsistently to the R2P doctrine, and China, like Russia, has veto power in the UNSC, and can thereby also put an end to the doctrine. However, the focus of this study is, given the scope of the essay, upon Russia. It is not to say other states' inconsistent reaction to R2P is less important to study but to claim Russia's reaction is *as* important to study. By using the realist, liberal, and constructivist approach when analysing the study's puzzle, the study further focusses *more* on how structures than agents affect foreign policy. Analysing the impact individuals have on foreign policy decisions is however, seen as important. However, given the time frame and



the scope of the study, the focus is mainly upon explaining and understanding the study's puzzle through structural theories. Moreover, other theories aiming at understanding international relations, such as the feminist and Marxist approach, have been excluded by the above-mentioned reasons.

Aiming at conducting a broad analysis, the depth has further had to stand back. The focus is thus upon the *main concepts* of the theories. The constructivist analysis is focused on understanding the study's puzzle based on structures, rather than agency. How language has been used in the creation of Russian identities has also been excluded. Even if the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism could have explained as to why Russia's foreign policy has changed over time, it has too been left out from the analysis. Lastly, the study's methodological demarcations are discussed under 2.4, "Methodological limitations & empirical demarcations".



2 Methods

Presented and discussed in this chapter are the methods used to explain and understand why Russia has reacted inconsistently to the R2P doctrine. It also presents the material used in the analysis, as well as how the theoretical concepts have been used in the analysis. The chapter ends with a discussion regarding methodological limitations and empirical demarcations.

2.1 Case study & most-similar design

George and Bennett define a case as “a phenomenon of scientific interest [...] that the investigator chooses to study”¹³ which, in this study is the inconsistent reaction to the R2P doctrine. To meet the aim of explaining and understanding Russia’s inconsistent reaction to The Responsibility to Protect doctrine, a *within-case analysis* is used. Esaiasson et al. describe it as a case study where the units of analysis are being compared within the same context.¹⁴ It corresponds with this study, where the context is Russia’s inconsistent reaction to the R2P doctrine, and Libya, Syria, and Venezuela are the chosen units. According to George and Bennett, the case study’s main strength is that it allows the researcher to investigate the puzzle in detail.¹⁵ The method is thus well adapted for analysing this study’s puzzle. Furthermore, the cases have been chosen using the logic of the *most-similar design*, in which the aim is to choose cases that are as similar as possible except on the variables of interest,

¹³ Alexander L. George & Andrew & Bennett, *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*, (Cambridge: Cambridge, Mass., 2005), p. 17-18

¹⁴ Peter, Esaiasson, et al., *Metodpraktikan: konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*, 3 ed. (Stockholm: Norstedts juridik, 2007), p. 121,122

¹⁵ George & Bennett 2005, p. 21



i.e., on the dependent ones.¹⁶ The idea is that an intensive study of the cases will “reveal [...] factors that differ across these cases”,¹⁷ these differing factors being the putative causes of the difference in outcome.¹⁸ Using the method, comparing the case of Libya with the cases of Syria and Venezuela, which are similar in falling under The Responsibility to Protect doctrine, but different in that a R2P intervention was accepted by Russia in the Libya case, but not in the Syria or Venezuela case, can thereby give an answer to the study’s inconsistency puzzle.

2.1.1 Case selection motivation

To begin with, the Libya and Syria cases are similar in that both states, due to a violation of human rights, have failed to protect its populations from mass atrocities.¹⁹ It makes the cases similar to each other in both qualifying for a R2P intervention to stop the atrocities. The cases are further different since an R2P intervention was accepted by Russia, and thereby implemented in the Libya case, while the opposite applies to Syria. However, to note is that the Security Council, and thereby Russia, have agreed to some resolutions aiming at protecting the populations of Syria. For instance, to a resolution to start a plan to eliminate Syrian Chemical Weapons and another granting access to humanitarian workers in Syria. The UNSC has also called for a ceasefire and political settlement in the state.²⁰ However, Russia has numerous times vetoed

¹⁶ John, Gerring, *Case study research: principles and practices*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 131

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ UNSC Resolution, S/RES/1973 2011; UNSC Draft resolution, S/2011/612 2011; UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/77 2012; UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/538 2012

²⁰ UNSC Resolution S/RES/2118, 27 September 2013, [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2118%20\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2118%20(2013)) (accessed December 2019), for instance UNSC Resolution S/RES/2139, 22 February 2014, [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2139%20\(2014\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2139%20(2014))



draft resolutions referring to the responsibility to protect the Syrian populations, protection they did provide for the Libyan populations. Over approximately two years, Russia vetoed three resolutions referring to the R2P doctrine. The 4th of October 2011, suggesting a Syrian-led political process addressing the concerns of the citizens, the 4th of February in 2012 expressing serious concern over the deterioration of the situation in Syria, calling for an end to all violence, and the 19th of July, suggesting the UNSC should condemn the Syrian authorities' increasing violence and violations of human rights.²¹ The motivation that the R2P has been implemented in an inconsistent way regarding the cases of Libya and Syria is thus based on the fact that Russia abstained, and thereby accepted intervention in Libya, but vetoed several UNSC resolutions referring to the R2P doctrine regarding Syria. Thus, the starting point of this study is that Russia has been reluctant to exercise its commitment to the R2P principle in the case of Syria.

The Venezuela case is further chosen for analysis since a draft resolution calling for the unhindered distribution of humanitarian aid to Venezuela was vetoed by Russia, as was the resolutions regarding Syria.²² However, at the time of the Russian veto, it was not yet confirmed that mass atrocities were ongoing in the state of Venezuela. On the other hand, reports by The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights beforehand confirmed that human rights violations were ongoing when the draft resolution was tried and vetoed.²³ The UN-praised R2P monitor *The Global Centre for The Responsibility to protect*, further claimed that the “[o]ngoing state-led violence

(accessed 30 December 2019), UNSC Resolution S/RES/2254, 18 December 2015, [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2254\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2254(2015)) (accessed 30 December 2019)

²¹ UNSC Draft resolution, S/2011/612 2011; UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/77 2012, and UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/538 2012

²² UNSC Draft resolution, S/2019/186 2019

²³ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Human Rights Violations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: a downward spiral with no end in sight” (Genève: United Nations, 2018)



in Venezuela leaves populations at risk of potential crimes against humanity”.²⁴ There is also an ongoing independent UN Fact-Finding Mission intending to assess the human rights violations in Venezuela.²⁵ It is thus fair to state that Venezuela had humanitarian problems falling under The responsibility to protect, as in the cases of Libya and Syria.

2.1.2 Most-similar design schemata

Case	Libya	Syria	Venezuela
<i>Similarity 1</i>	Resolution in the UNSC indicating a responsibility to protect	Resolution in the UNSC indicating a responsibility to protect	Resolution in the UNSC indicating a responsibility to protect
<i>Similarity 2</i>	Failure of the state protect its own populations against mass atrocities because of violations of human rights	Failure of the state protect its own populations against mass atrocities because of violations of human rights	Failure of the state protect its own populations against mass atrocities because of violations of human rights
<i>Similarity 3</i>	Qualifying for a R2P intervention	Qualifying for a R2P intervention	Qualifying for a R2P intervention
Difference in outcome	R2P implemented	R2P <u>not</u> implemented	R2P <u>not</u> implemented

²⁴ The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, *R2P Monitor* (New York: The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2019), p. 18

²⁵ UNSC Resolution, A/HRC/RES/42/25, 8 October 2019, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/RES/42/25> (accessed 30 December 2019)



2.2 Material

As Yin describes, using different types of methods to collect the material is fruitful for the validity of a case study, since it can help eliminate inconsistencies as well as strengthen the content of the collected material.²⁶ To explain and understand the difference in outcome between the three chosen cases, a method-triangulation was thus applied, analysing written material and interviews.

2.2.1 Written material

The theoretic analytic model (see 4.5) has been guiding what kind of material been used to answer the study's research question. The material considered the best to use for explaining Russia's inconsistent reaction based on the realist approach, and thereby the best to use finding out what interests Russia had in the analysed states, was further newspapers, reports from research institutes, utterances from Russian leaders, economic statistics and interview answers. Used as material for the liberal analysis, which aimed at analysing if Russia *referred to* liberal values were further meeting records regarding the vetoed UNSC draft resolutions. It was considered the best material to use since it has high status, being UN documents. At the same time, it is documents where Russia, in a relatively informal way, express why they vetoed the draft resolutions. Furthermore, since the constructivist theory aims at understanding how current situations are constructed, the constructivist analysis required a more theoretical approach than did the realist and liberal one. Empirical

²⁶ Robert K. Yin, *Case study research and applications: design and methods*, 6 ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018), p. 42-64



material was thus used to a lesser extent in the constructivist analysis. The main empirical material in the constructivist analysis was interview answers, why this choice is discussed more in the next section. Since adding important aspects, written material was however, used in the form of utterances from experts on Russia.

Moreover, primary sources can reduce the distance between the narrator and the story.²⁷ Since also being considered more credible than secondary sources, primary sources have therefore been used first-hand. Secondary sources have further been used when primary ones have not been available. Moreover, the interviews have been used to validate the content of these sources and vice versa.

2.2.2 Interviews

One of the interviews was done with a Swedish Defense official, and one with a diplomatic representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The first mentioned was chosen since being an expert on both historical and present Russian foreign policy thinking, and the second one, since having good insight into Russia's involvement in Venezuela. Both interviews were further of informant character because of the respective expertise the interviewees could provide to the study.²⁸ Inspired by Esaiasson et al., the interviews further contributed by clarifying uncertainties, by confirming the applicability of the written material, as well as to get a deeper understanding of the study's puzzle.²⁹ As mentioned, the interviews were especially valuable to the

²⁷ Esaiasson et al. 2007, p. 292

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 258-259

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 285



constructivist analysis, since craving expert comments to the analysis regarding what identities Russia had at the time of the analyzed cases. Since interviews with Russian diplomats would have contributed with an understanding of Russia's view on why they have reacted inconsistent to the R2P doctrine, several attempts to get in contact with Russian diplomatic representatives were made, these attempts were, however, without success.

Furthermore, in accordance with the ethical guidelines, the interviewees were offered anonymity.³⁰ Because of the sensitive nature of the questions, the Swedish Defense official asked to remain anonymous, as well as not to be paraphrased. Because the case of Venezuela is ongoing today, so did the Diplomatic Representative of Venezuela. The diplomat also asked to be e-mailed the citations used in the study before publication, which was credited. That transcriptions of the interviews cannot be included in the study further makes it less transparent, which implies that the reader of the study cannot make sure if she would make the same interpretations as the analyst, which in turn can lead to a questioning of the study's conclusions.³¹ However, because of the value the interviews bring to the study, they were conducted despite this fact. To be transparent, the guiding interview questions posed to the interviewees are included in the study's appendix.

The interview with the Swedish Defense official was further done in person, which is to prefer over a telephone interview, as done with the Diplomatic Representative. The risk of misunderstandings is lower when doing a personal interview, since being able to read the body language of the interviewee.³²

³⁰ Bill Gillham, *Forskningsintervjun: tekniker och genomförande*, (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008), p. 33

³¹ Alan Bryman, *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder*, 2 ed. (Malmö: Liber, 2011), p. 370

³² Esaiasson et al. 2007, p. 265-267



However, an advantage with both methods is that the questions can be repeated and explained, which is harder via, for instance, e-mail.³³ Since structure allows for the interviewer to pose new questions during the interview, the interviews were semi-structured and thereby guided by themes, rather than specific questions.^{34 35} When it was fruitful for the study to get a deeper answer from the interviewees, exploratory as well as follow-up questions were thus asked.³⁶ Another advantage of the semi-structure is further that it creates a more informal dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. To avoid interviewer effects, which is a disadvantage when doing interviews, I, as the interviewer, further aimed at having an objective tone when conversating with the informants since it otherwise could have distorted the informant's answers.³⁷ In an attempt to avoid the interviewees answering questions they had not been thinking about, or that were too complex, they were informed that they only had to answer questions they felt comfortable with.³⁸

2.3 Operationalization & analytic approach

To answer the study's research question, how Russia's choice to commit to The Responsibility to Protect doctrine in the Libya case, but not in the Syria or Venezuela case can be explained and understood looking through the realist, liberal and constructivist lens, key concepts of the theories have been explained. According to Esaiasson et al., it is further essential to give the

³³ *ibid.*, p. 266

³⁴ The Diplomatic representative were e-mailed the questions beforehand, which can have affected the persons answers.

³⁵ Runa Patel & Bo Davidson, *Forskningsmetodikens grunder: att planera, genomföra och rapportera en undersökning*, 4 ed. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2011), p. 81

³⁶ Steinar Kvale & Svend Brinkmann, *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun*, 3 ed. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014), p. 177

³⁷ Esaiasson et al. 2007, p. 265-267

³⁸ *ibid.*



concepts a theoretical definition, to clarify what should be examined.³⁹ To make it even more clear what the analyst will look for in the empirical material, they further state that the definitions need to be given operational indicators.⁴⁰ To be found under 4.5 “Theoretic analytic model” is thus this study’s operationalization of the theoretical definitions.⁴¹

Furthermore, *Theoretical definitions* in the model, regarding the realist and liberal approach, refers to what Russia’s choice to intervene under R2P or not is based on and supported by, building on the theories. Since the constructivist approach aims at understanding an event, rather than explain it, the *Theoretical definition* instead refers to how the processes behind Russia’s decision to intervene or not can be understood. *Analytical focus* further refers to the theories’ operational indicators, and thus what, based on the theories, is searched for in the material. Even if being challenging to replicate a qualitative study, explaining what interpretations the study bases the analysis on makes it possible.⁴² The theoretical definitions of the key concepts and the operationalizations are in this study further based on an interpretation of how the most prominent theorists of the perspectives explain the theories and how they should be operationalized. Furthermore, to be able to compare the results from the study’s chosen cases with each other, and later to other cases, the study’s analysis must, according to George and Bennett be done systematically.⁴³ Therefore, following George and Bennetts technique, the questions “asked” to the material (i.e., the operational indicators found in the analytical model) are general, as well as the same questions are asked of each case.⁴⁴ The analytical model thus also increases the validity of the study, since

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 58,59

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 59

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ George & Bennett 2005, p. 86

⁴⁴ *ibid.*



it contributes to a systematic analysis of the material, enabling to measure what is intended to be measured.⁴⁵ The model thus also contributes to a more reliable study, in that it makes it easier to not accidentally leave out any of the indicators from the analysis.⁴⁶ Moreover, the conclusions drawn from the study becomes more reliable.⁴⁷

2.4 Methodological limitations & empirical demarcations

Except for the replication challenge, a limitation with qualitative methods, and thus the case study methodology, is that the analyses and conclusions drawn from the chosen cases are not generalizable to other cases. However, the point of departure of this study is that it, as George and Bennett put it, “aspires to cumulative and progressive generalizations”.⁴⁸ Instead of claiming that the findings of the study, i.e., how one can explain and understand the inconsistent reaction to the R2P doctrine *is* valid for other states reactions, it *provides a brick to the wall* of understanding Russia’s inconsistent reaction, as well as general inconsistent reactions to the doctrine. Further, Esaiasson et al. suggest that more, and more in-depth empirical studies need to be conducted to draw conclusions beyond the cases analysed, which thus would have to be done if wanting to draw conclusions beyond the cases of Libya, Syria, and Venezuela, as well as beyond the case of Russia.⁴⁹ The main limitation of the most-similar design is further the difficulty of finding cases that are precisely similar except on the variables of interest.⁵⁰ According to Gerring, the cases, however, because of this, only need to be as similar *as possible*.⁵¹ To make it possible

⁴⁵ Esaiasson et al. 2007, p. 63

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 70

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 57

⁴⁸ George & Bennett 2005, p. 19

⁴⁹ Esaiasson et al. 2007, p. 134

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 115

⁵¹ Gerring 2007, p. 131



for other researchers to comment on the case-selection, the selection-process has therefore been made transparent. As already mentioned, a method-triangulation was further made since only using written material would not have created as deep of an understanding of the study's issue, as it does by adding expert interviews. Neither had only interviews worked well for the study, since the expert's answers would not have been put into a context or been backed up by documents. Using documents and interviews in a case study creates, as Gillham says, a general picture of the event.⁵²

To make the study more concise, methodological demarcations have further been made. Regarding the case of Syria, the focus of analysis is concentrated to approximately a two-year period (2011 and 2012). The demarcation was done since it represents a breaking point in Russia's approach towards the R2P, accepting an intervention in Libya in March of 2011 while vetoing one regarding Syria a few months later. It is thus seen as a period fruitful to analyze when aiming to explain and understand the inconsistent reaction towards the R2P. During the chosen period, the draft resolutions that were vetoed were chosen for analysis, since being the focus of the research question.

⁵² Gillham 2008, p. 220,221



3 Previous research

This study draws upon and contributes to mainly three fields of study: first-hand to the R2P literature, and especially to the puzzle of Russia's inconsistent reaction to the R2P doctrine. In this chapter, the academic discussion between the sceptics and proponents of the R2P:s practical application is therefore presented, discussed, and connected to this study. A discussion regarding how this study draws upon and contributes to the IR-research will also be presented, as well as how it draws upon and contributes to an understanding of Russia's role in international politics.

3.1 Sceptics, proponents & The Responsibility to Protect

The R2P research has since it was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005 been characterized by both sceptics and proponents. The criticism has mainly been focused on the problem of the feasibility of the doctrine. For instance, scholars such as Bazirake and Bukuluki argue that the doctrine function as an idea rather than a practical principle, referring to a growing controversy in the international community regarding how the R2P should be interpreted. Further, they claim that some states, including Russia, tend to hold on to Westphalian ideals focused upon the security of the state, thereby opposing interventions, opposite to other states which they claim are mainly focused on the security of the human, and thereby positive to interventions.⁵³ In the same vein, scholars such as Thakur and Cronogue argue that the NATO-

⁵³ Joseph Basigye Bazirake & Paul Bukuluki, "A critical reflection on the conceptual and practical limitations of the responsibility to protect", *The International Journal of Human Rights* 19:8 (2015)



led operation in Libya through an erosion of consensus contributed to the weakening of the R2P, while others as Menon and Kuperman claim the intervention should be seen as nothing as a failure of human protection, arguing that the situation in Libya has continued to be unstable post-intervention.⁵⁴

The proponents of the doctrine, however, suggest that the R2P has a future. Rotmann, Kurtz, and Brockmeier contest the claim that the doctrine should merely be an idea, claiming that the evidence of practice suggests that R2P has become “significantly less controversial”,⁵⁵ continuing that the growing controversy view rests almost entirely on the conflation of R2P with the debate over intervention in Libya.⁵⁶ In his 2015 article, Bellamy agrees with this view, presenting examples of when the R2P has been implemented, by stating that “the principle has been unanimously reaffirmed in its entirety no fewer than four times by the UN Security Council and has informed more than twenty-five other Security Council resolutions”.⁵⁷ He also claims that R2P in its first decade thereby has gone from “being a controversial and indeterminate concept seldom utilized by international society to a norm utilized almost habitually”.⁵⁸ Bellamy and Mcloughlin also contends the claim that the R2P intervention in Libya was a failure of human protection, claiming that “the

⁵⁴ Ramesh Thakur, “R2P after Libya and Syria: Engaging Emerging Powers” *The Washington Quarterly* 36:2 (2013); Graham Cronogue, “Responsibility to Protect: Syria, the Law, Politics and Future of Humanitarian Intervention Post-Libya” *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies*, 3:1 (2012); Rajan Menon, *The conceit of humanitarian intervention* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 14; Alan Kuperman, “Obama's Libya Debacle: How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure”, *Foreign Affairs* March/April 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2019-02-18/obamas-libya-debacle> (accessed 20 December 2019)

⁵⁵ Philipp Rotmann, Gerrit Kurtz & Sarah Brockmeier, “Major powers and the contested evolution of a responsibility to protect”, *Conflict, Security & Development* 14:4 (2014)

⁵⁶ Philipp Rotmann, Gerrit Kurtz & Sarah Brockmeier 2014

⁵⁷ Alex J. Bellamy, “The Responsibility to Protect Turns Ten” *Ethics & International Affairs* 29:2 (2015), p. 161

⁵⁸ *ibid.*



argument that the NATO-led intervention created more harm than good does not hold up, [and that] it is premised on an image of Libya prior to the Arab Spring civil war in 2011”.⁵⁹ They continue by stating that the situation in Libya had “already taken a turn for the worse when civil war broke out in the early months of 2011, from which there was no turning back”.⁶⁰ Even if Thakur, as mentioned, criticize the R2P, he should be seen as a proponent to the doctrine, since claiming that it “would be premature to conclude that R2P can be branded ‘RIP’”,⁶¹ claiming that the question is not *if* there will be interventions, but “whether an intervention will be ad hoc or rules-/based, unilateral or multilateral [...] divisive or consensual”.⁶²

As opposed to the critics, proponents of the R2P acknowledge challenges to the doctrine but tend to present suggestions regarding how these challenges can be countered, either by giving examples of how R2P could be changed or by suggesting that it should be thought of differently. The last mentioned is what Bellamy and Mcloughlin do in their most recent article. They suggest it was never the intention of the R2P to be implemented in a consistent manner, claiming that “the agreement made it abundantly clear that a duty of consistency in response to mass atrocities was not part of its intention”,⁶³ referring to that it solely states that the international community is prepared to take collective action, on a *case-by-case basis*. This, they mean, makes states’ able to “for themselves, on an entirely ad hoc and case by case basis [decide] how to respond to atrocity crimes”⁶⁴. In their 2018 book, they continue by stating that different situations require different actions.⁶⁵ However, important

⁵⁹ Alex J. Bellamy & Stephen Mcloughlin, “Human Protection and the Politics of Armed Intervention: With Responsibility Comes Accountability” *International Organization* 11:3 (2019), p. 354

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Thakur 2013, p. 62

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Bellamy & Mcloughlin 2019, p. 360

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 343

⁶⁵ Bellamy & Mcloughlin 2018, p. 220



to note is that this very study does not problematize that different situations require different actions in order to be solved in the best way. Rather, it problematizes the kind of inconsistency which is based on states' failure to do what they can to commit to the R2P doctrine, i.e., inconsistencies leading to a possible negative effect for populations in need of protection. That kind of inconsistency is something Bellamy and Mcloughlin also acknowledge, by suggesting that the inconsistent implementation of the R2P might not only be inevitable but necessary since “[a]ny measured response to mass atrocities will be based on a range of factors, including context, political will and capacity”.⁶⁶

Scholar's different views on the R2P further inform how the research community evaluates and accesses the doctrine, which contributes to this study in that it presents the challenges with the doctrine. Since the main challenge discussed is the inconsistent way in which the R2P is being implemented, this study aims at giving an answer to the question of what underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction towards R2P. An answer to the inconsistency puzzle would mainly cumulatively contribute to the R2P-research regarding Russia's approach to the R2P, but also cumulatively to the research regarding general inconsistent reactions to the doctrine. By extension, it would contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding what, if something, can be done if wanting the doctrine to function in a more consistent way.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 360



3.2 Explaining & understanding Russia's inconsistent approach

Hehir is one of several scholars that explains the inconsistency through the realist lens. By asking “[w]hat determinants influence the Security Council’s decision to intervene”,⁶⁷ he suggests the inconsistent reaction to intrastate crises will continue to be inconsistent, as long as other factors beyond the scale of the humanitarian crises exist.⁶⁸ The argument continues with Hehir claiming that “[h]istory amply demonstrates that the P5’s response to any particular alleged or clear breach of the law is entirely a function of the members’ respective interests”.⁶⁹ He also suggests that Russia abstained in the UNSC resolution 1973 to intervene in Libya because being affected by the League of Arab States (LAS) which he claims often has similar national interests as Russia, further claiming that “Syria illustrates that the international response to intrastate crises is still determined by interests and geopolitics, rather than principle”.⁷⁰ Similarly, Vladimir Baranovsky & Anatoly Mateiko agrees, claiming that “Russia has a clear and manifested intention to have a more energetic and even assertive position in external affairs, as well as a readiness to use a broad variety of means for protecting its interests”.⁷¹ Even if Averre and Davies also agrees, stating that “Russian approaches [are] undoubtedly explained by a desire to maximize its growing political influence and trade advantages to serve its legitimate foreign policy interests”, they do, even if not stating it themselves, belong to the smaller number of researchers that include the constructivist perspective analyzing Russia’s approach towards the R2P. For instance, they suggest Russia’s created identity matters, acting based on

⁶⁷ Aidan Hehir, “The Permanence of Inconsistency: Libya, the Security Council, and the Responsibility to Protect” *International Security* 38:1 (2013), p. 152

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 157,158

⁷¹ Vladimir Baranovsky & Anatoly Mateiko, “Responsibility to Protect: Russia’s Approaches” *The International Spectator* 51:2 (2016) p. 66.67



what gives them the most legitimacy in the international order.⁷² Claiming the R2P failures can stem from a will of guarding one's own states' decision-making sovereignty, Bellamy and McLaughlin's study can also be argued to have constructivist traits, in suggesting that Russia wants to decide for themselves when and how to respond to atrocity crimes. Not because of a lack of political will, but because of their identity as being against the West.⁷³ Furthermore, Baranovsky and Mateiko claim that negative assessments of humanitarian interventions under Medvedev's presidency became less pronounced and "disappeared altogether from the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept, which did not contain any judgment on R2P".⁷⁴ Without explicitly conducting a liberal analysis, it thus indicates that the scholars believed Russia took a liberal turn at the time of 2011-2012. As the constructivist lens is not used as often to understand Russia's inconsistent reaction towards the R2P, neither is the liberal one.

Furthermore, the previous IR-research provides to this study by giving a picture of how other scholars have explained and tried to understand Russia's inconsistent approach to the R2P. It contributes to this study by informing which IR-perspectives could guide the study. The choice is further to analyse the research questions from a realist and liberal approach since those theories explain foreign policy behaviour in different ways, and since being frequently used to explain actions in international relations. While the realist approach is often used to explain Russian behaviour, the liberal is not why looking through the liberal lens adds complexity to the analysis. Furthermore, the constructivist approach contributes to the study in that the theory aims at understanding the process behind Russia's approach towards the R2P, instead of explaining it. It

⁷² Derek Averre & Lance Davies, "Russia, humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect: the case of Syria" *International Affairs* 91:4 (2015), p. 814

⁷³ Bellamy & McLaughlin 2019, p. 343, 344

⁷⁴ Baranovsky & Mateiko 2016, p. 51



adds value to the study since the realist and liberal approach sometimes are criticized for being created to explain Western states' behavior, as well as for being a reflection of Western thinking about the "other", non-western state.⁷⁵ Adding to this, using the three IR theories contributes to the IR-research in testing the theories' ability to explain and understand the high-end foreign policy cases, Libya and Syria. The theories' are also tested on the up-to-date case of Venezuela, which has not yet been done in the same way as in this study. The study thus also tests the theories ability to explain and understand why Russia has reacted inconsistently towards the doctrine.

How Russia's response to R2P interventions is analysed can further be understood in the context of how scholars perceive Russia's role in international politics. To start with, recent articles describe Russia as trying to strengthen its political role in the international community. Scholars understand it as Putin actively, since the 2000's, is trying to regain Russia's lost status of being a great power, where the discourse is that they aim at gaining leverage in both its nearby area, as well as on other continents. Kroening, for instance, enhances that Vladimir Putin numerous times has expressed that he wants to re-establish a greater Russia in areas formerly controlled by the Soviet Union.⁷⁶ As references for the ambition of regional leverage, scholars further use actions by the Russian state in its near region, as for instance, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as their interference into other neighbouring states' political affairs.⁷⁷ That Russia is trying to gain leverage beyond its nearby area is instead exemplified with for instance, its

⁷⁵ Seth Sanjay "Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations" *Journal of International Studies* 40:1 (2011), p. 167-183

⁷⁶ Matthew Kroening, "Facing Reality: Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War" *Survival* 57:1 (2015), p. 53

⁷⁷ *ibid.*; Charles E. Ziegler, "Russia in Central Asia: The Dynamics of Great-Power Politics in a Volatile Region" *Asian perspective* 38:4 (2014)



recent involvement in the Middle East.⁷⁸ Adding to this, there are amongst scholars to some degree a consensus around the fact that Russia and the West, including the US, are functioning as two “blocks”, similar to the relations between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold war. Some further claim that the relation has worsened in recent years, again, enhancing the sanctions imposed on Russia because of the Crimea situation, as well as referencing to the recent withdrawal from the INF-treaty⁷⁹, which is usually called the treaty that started the beginning of the end of the Cold War.⁸⁰ The research community’s current understanding of Russia’s role in international politics is thus what this study draws upon when analysing the study’s puzzle. Moreover, the study cumulatively contributes to the knowledge about Russia’s role on the international arena, as well as to the knowledge of Russia’s contemporary foreign policy.

⁷⁸ See for instance Aron Lund, *Russia in the Middle East* (Stockholm: Utrikespolitiska Institutet, 2019)

⁷⁹ The INF Treaty (Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces) was a 1987 agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on the demolition of ground robots with ranges between 500 and 5 500 km. The agreement was the first to result in the scrapping of nuclear weapons (about 2,700) Ne.se, “INF-avtalet”, (accessed 30 December 2019)

⁸⁰ Anke Schmidt-Felzmann “The breakdown of the EU’s strategic partnership with Russia: from strategic patience towards a strategic failure” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29:1 (2016); Götz Neuneck, “The Deep Crisis of Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament: The State of Play and Challenges” *Journal of Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 2:2 (2019)



4 Theory

This chapter begins by presenting the for this study central concept of The Responsibility to Protect, and thereby what is meant by R2P-interventions, continuing by presenting and discussing the theories that will work as lenses analysing the material, aiming to answer the research question. At the end of the chapter, a theoretic analytic model is presented, showing the operationalization of the theories that will guide the analysis.

4.1 The creation and development of The Responsibility to Protect

The United Nations was established in 1945 with the goal of preventing conflicts between states. However, at the end of the Cold War, intra-state wars became more common than inter-state ones, creating a new challenge for the UN.⁸¹ The legitimacy of the principle of sovereignty, and its associated notion of non-intervention, that had been the centre of attention of the UN, was thus due to the atrocities in Somalia, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia in the early 1990's questioned. It was further discussed if and how the UN should be involved when states could, or would not, protect its populations.⁸² However, the UN was divided between those favouring humanitarian intervention, and those putting more emphasis on the principle of non-intervention into other

⁸¹ Global Centre for The Responsibility To Protect, *The Responsibility to Protect: A Background Briefing* (Stockholm: Global Centre for The Responsibility To Protect, 2017)

⁸² Bazirake & Bukuluki, 2015; John Janzekovic & Daniel Silander, *Responsibility to protect and prevent: principles, promises and practicalities*. (London: Anthem Press, 2014), p. 34



sovereign states' affairs,⁸³ with Russia adhering to the last mentioned.⁸⁴ Kofi Annan who was the Secretary General during the time further warned that if the UN did not agree to a political and legal framework for collective action, the organization could lose much of its legitimacy.⁸⁵

The discussion intensified even more when NATO in 1999 by an aerial bombardment answered to the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo without a UNSC resolution, pitting those believing the intervention was illegal against those posing that morality rather than legality should be the guiding logic.⁸⁶ In an attempt to circumvent the UN Charter and create a new norm, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was created, aiming at answering Annan's 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 affect every precept of our common humanity?"⁸⁷ The committee's answer to the question was presented in a report published in 2001, wherein the R2P was presented as an alternative principle "focusing not on the legal or moral "right" of outsiders to intervene but on the responsibility of all states to protect people at risk".⁸⁸

⁸³ The concept of sovereignty is grounded in the Westphalian peace of 1648, which set out the principle of today's international law that each state has exclusive sovereignty over its territory. The principle is also enshrined in Article 2(1) of the UN Charter. Moreover, there is a principle of non-intervention in international law that restricts the ability of outside nations to interfere with the internal affairs of other nations (see for instance Carolyn A. Dubay, *A Refresher on the Principle of Non-Intervention*, 2014, http://www.judicialmonitor.org/archive_spring2014/generalprinciples.html (2019-12-30))

⁸⁴ Global Centre for The Responsibility to Protect 2017

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Kofi A. Annan, "We the peoples' The role of the United Nations in the 21st Century" (New York: United Nations, 2000), p. 48

⁸⁸ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001)



The report was agreed upon by the twelve Commissioners (wherein one was Russian), and the R2P doctrine was unanimously adopted at the World Summit in 2005.⁸⁹ Even if Russia in debates during and after the 2005 World Summit expressed they were against introducing such “immature concepts” into UN language and building relevant documents and structures upon them, they, as well as all other member states, reaffirmed the doctrine in 2014.⁹⁰ Some adjustments were, however, made. First, the crimes that were to apply to the R2P were specified from human rights violations to mass atrocity crimes, defined as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Second, the criteria for military intervention suggested by the Commission to be followed was no longer there. Finally, the Security Council was made the only body that could authorize an intervention.⁹¹ Furthermore, the principle that eventually was adopted at the World Summit is divided into three pillars, stipulating that:

Pillar I: Each State has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from the four mass atrocity crimes.

Pillar II: The international community has, through the UN, responsibility to encourage and assist individual States in meeting that responsibility.

Pillar III: If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the UN Charter, including Chapter VII.⁹²

⁸⁹ *ibid.*; UNSC Resolution, A/RES/60/1 2005

⁹⁰ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.5577 (Resumption 1), 4 December 2006, [https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.5577\(Resumption1\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.5577(Resumption1)) (accessed 30 December 2019); UNSC Resolution, S/RES/2150 2014

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² UNSC Resolution, A/RES/60/1 2005



The essence of the R2P doctrine is thus that sovereign states themselves must act to prevent mass atrocities, but if it fails to do so, the international community has a responsibility to act. First, as stated in the World Summit Outcome document, by aiding through “diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means”.⁹³ For instance, the state capacity can be strengthened through economic assistance, or states can offer direct mediation. When such measures clearly have failed, the international community, however, has the responsibility to, through the Security Council, turn to coercive measures, such as imposing arms embargoes or sanctions. If it turns out that, as the Outcome states, “peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations”,⁹⁴ the Security Council can consider using military force.⁹⁵

4.2 The realist focus of national interests

Famously stated by Thucydides, often called the first realist theorist, the strongest actor tends to do as it suits them, while the weaker one must adjust to the situation to survive. Studying the debate in Sparta, he described that the Athenians clearly took a priority of self-interest over morality.⁹⁶ He thus left a legacy to today’s realists, that the human is a selfish creature, acting in its own interests. While there among realists is consensus around the fact that states in the international arena act in their own interests, there are different views regarding why. Classic realists, with Hans Morgenthau as one of the main

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian war*, trans. Rex Warner (London: Penguin Classics, 1974)



contributors, believe as Thucydides, that selfishness and search for power is rooted in an unchanging human nature. It has further made him draw the conclusion that dominance is the main cause of conflict among states, and power thereby an end for human beings.⁹⁷ Power is further for Morgenthau the ability to control other people, which in international relations translates to one state's power over another. He further claims that states calculate the costs and benefits of policies, trying to figure out which will maximize the state's power the most.⁹⁸ Moreover, Morgenthau claims that "various things can be associated with interest or power at different times and in different circumstances".⁹⁹ He does, however, claim that since protecting a state's foreign policy is a priority, it is important to be a strong military power.¹⁰⁰

What determines a state's power, is thus according to Morgenthau factors that count as military preparatory. Further, he thus argues that a state's access to natural resources such as oil is essential, since a self-sufficient state does not have to rely on other states in case of war. Moreover, resources can be used to create military equipment. Industrial capacity is further also seen as important, since it allows for the state to take care of the natural resources, again not needing to rely on other states. For the same reasons, a state is, according to Morgenthau, powerful if it is at the forefront in the technology area.¹⁰¹ Morgenthau also means that a state's power is determined by the degree to which the people of the own state support the nation's foreign policy, as well as to what degree other states look up to the own state's political philosophy.¹⁰² Even if agreeing that that geography does not determine a state's power as

⁹⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 25

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 5

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 8

¹⁰⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 7 ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2006), p. 122-143

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*



much today, because of technological advancements, he adds that it still can determine a state's power, in that it can regulate how easy it is to attack.

Neo-realists such as Kenneth Waltz, however, contend the thought that power is something inherent in human nature, guiding all human decisions, and thereby that power is the end for states.¹⁰³ Instead, he argues that the power struggle is a means for states, trying to stay secure against other states in the anarchic system. States' interests are thus for Morgenthau defined as power, while it for Waltz is defined as security.¹⁰⁴ Waltz further claims that states in the present structure of the international system have to take care of themselves in order to survive, guarding themselves against states that are or can become more powerful than the own. He further means that states, because constantly feeling insecure, not knowing how much power other states have, must get relative gains, which they do by accumulating more relative capacity, i.e., power.¹⁰⁵ First coined by Hertz and later picked up by Jervis, it can thus give rise to a phenomenon called the "security dilemma", which implies that one state's quest for security becomes another state's source of insecurity, leading to a military armament.¹⁰⁶ Because states' being uncertain of other states intentions, Waltz's further means that states are reluctant to cooperate, worrying that the results of the cooperation could favour other states more than the own states'.¹⁰⁷ Cooperation, and thereby a dependence on others do thus for neo-realists mean a threat to the own states' security.

¹⁰³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of international politics*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1979), p. 93

¹⁰⁴ Morgenthau 1948, p. 5; Waltz 1979, p. 93

¹⁰⁵ Waltz 1979, p. 93

¹⁰⁶ John H. Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma" *World Politics* 2:2 (1950), p. 157; Robert Jervis, *Perception and misperception in international politics*, (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1976)

¹⁰⁷ Waltz 1979, p. 107



Furthermore, Waltz specifies that the relative capacity of a state is measured by seven different criteria, similar to those of Morgenthau's theory; the size of the state's population and territory, its resource endowment, its economic capability, and military strength and equally by its political stability and competence.¹⁰⁸ He further suggests that states, in order to stay secure not only try to increase their economic capability and military strength, but also develop strategies on the international arena to strengthen the own state and weaken an opposing one.¹⁰⁹ Since a state's concern, according to Waltz, is not only to maximize its power but to maintain its position in the international system, he thus means it tries to balance its power against that of other states.¹¹⁰ According to Waltz, states thus not only strive to increase their power but aims at making sure other states do not grow too strong.¹¹¹

Even if contending the origins of power-seeking, realists are, however, generally sceptic about the relevance of morality in international relations, believing that morality can collide with successful political action. If a state claims to act morally, realists would thus claim it is solely used instrumentally, to justify a states' conduct. International politics, they believe, is thus about conflicting national interests and power, rather than based on moral order derived from the principles of justice.¹¹² Morgenthau further suggests, when discussing the relationship between realism and ethics, that universal moral principles "cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but [...] must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 131

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 118,127

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 198

¹¹² Julian Korab-Karpowicz, "Political Realism in International Relations", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/realism-intl-relations> (accessed 30 December 2019)



time and place”.¹¹³ The principles, he means, must be accompanied by prudence, as he cautions “there can be no political morality without prudence; that is, without consideration of the political consequences of seemingly moral action”.¹¹⁴ Although Morgenthau thinks ethics *should* be a part of politics, he thus believes politics *cannot* be subordinated to ethics.¹¹⁵

4.3 The liberal focus of international law

While the liberal school agrees with realists that states exist under anarchy, they contend that the only outcome of the anarchy is a contest between states for power or security. Immanuel Kant was one of the first theorists proposing the thought that morality both could and should guide foreign policy.¹¹⁶ He thus inspired today’s liberals and neo-liberals, in contradiction to realists and neo-realists, to believe that progress (meaning peace) in relations between states is possible. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in 1977 presented a theory that has become a fundamental thought for neo-liberals.¹¹⁷ Accepting Waltz’s theory that states are self-interested actors who rationally pursue their goals, they, however, suggest that international and non-governmental organizations, as well as multinational corporations, have an impact in forming international politics. By creating interdependence, i.e. reciprocal effects among actors through international transactions such as flows of money, goods and people, they suggest the probability of cooperation among states increases. As the joint

¹¹³ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 2 ed., (New York: Knopf, 1954), p. 9

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 12

¹¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*, (Königsberg: F. Nicolovius, 1795)

¹¹⁷ Robert O. Keohane & Joseph S. Nye, *Power and interdependence: world politics in transition*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977)



values and interests make states not want to fight each other, the theory suggests that the interdependence leads to peaceful international relations.¹¹⁸

That every human has innate human rights and that those should be applied universally is further a normative thought in the liberal approach. To reach this and the other liberal values of peace, economic growth, and liberty, as well as to overcome conflicts of interest between states, the liberal perspective further put an emphasis on the importance of regional and international agreements and organizations. Robert Keohane describes institutions as helping to enhance the cooperation in that they create a framework telling states how they can and can't behave.¹¹⁹ This thus limits the negative impacts of the international anarchy, in that it creates predictability in the international arena about how states will act, making states being able to focus on long term cooperation instead of short-term relative gains, making them being able to trust each other, instead of being suspicious.¹²⁰ Strong institutions are thus seen as facilitating more cooperation. According to Jack Snyder, a prominent American political scientist specialized in international relations, international law is vital for liberals for the same reason. They suggest it can make it easier to sustain international cooperation, since making states able to interact in a more structured way.¹²¹

Furthermore, while liberals agree that individual human rights should be protected, what divides them is whether states should intervene in other states or not, to secure those rights were not respected. Kant proposed arguments against non-intervention, claiming that free and equal citizens within a defined

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Robert O. Keohane & Joseph S. Nye, *Power and interdependence*, 3 ed., (New York: Longman, 2001)

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories" *Foreign Policy* 145:1 (2004)



territory could for themselves work out what their way of life should be, thereby emphasising political independence.¹²² Similarly, John Stewart Mill condemned interventions made to spread ideas, arguing it would undermine the authenticity of a states' domestic struggle for liberty.¹²³ He also criticised interventions for not providing anything permanent, since the people would have a hard time keeping the liberty.¹²⁴ Mill and Walzer further agreed that states themselves should decide if wanting an intervention or not.¹²⁵ Since not having the full picture of the situation, Walzer, however, suggest it would be hard to decide whether or not a state wants assistance. Finally, he also states that “[n]ot every injustice that justifies a domestic revolution justifies a foreign intervention”,¹²⁶ keeping to his thought that non-intervention is to prefer.

However, both Mill and Walzer present exceptions justifying a disregarding of the non-intervention principle. Mill further puts forth a suggestion like the R2P doctrine. He suggests it should be legitimate to disregard the non-intervention principle if the local government is engaged in oppression against its people, making them suffer, suggesting the reasons for non-intervention thereby has ceased to exist.¹²⁷ Similarly, Walzer claim that non-intervention is to prefer, however, only as long as the violations are not as gross as they “shock the moral conscience of mankind”.¹²⁸ He, however, adds that the

¹²² Immanuel Kant in Hans Reiss, *Kant's political writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 93-130

¹²³ John Stuart Mill in Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Essays on politics and culture*, (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1973), p. 381

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 380; Michael Walzer, “The Moral Standing of States”, in *International Ethics*, Charles R. Beitz et al., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 221

¹²⁶ Walzer 1985, p. 221

¹²⁷ Mill 1973, p. 383

¹²⁸ Michael Walzer, “Just and Unjust wars: a moral argument with historical illustrations”, 3ed., (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 107



interveners should have a morally defensible motive, as well as it should function as a last resort.^{129 130}

4.4 The constructivist focus of identity formation

Alexander Wendt who is one of the core constructivist researchers in the field of international relations, argues that a struggle for power and self-help does not, as realists claim, follow logically from anarchy, nor that there is a special route to human progress as claimed by the liberal theory.¹³¹ Instead, he famously claims that “anarchy is what states make of it”,¹³² grounding his statement in a belief that phenomena as identities, ideas, norms, culture and language effects state interests and thus how they behave.¹³³ Since those phenomena are believed to be socially constructed, i.e. formed and given meaning by the interaction with the people around, a central thought following from this logic is thus that a states’ interests not only are constructed, but can change from situation to situation, and thereby can be about other than material interests, as realists claim. What follows from anarchy can thus for instance be a permanent state of war, a more or less permanent world peace, or a struggle for power and self-help.¹³⁴ Constructivists thus go beyond the focus of the material reality, also focusing on the effect of ideas and beliefs in international politics.

¹²⁹ Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 88,160

¹³⁰ The discussion regarding Mill and Walzer is inspired by Michael W. Doyle, “A Few Words on Mill, Walzer and Nonintervention” *Cambridge University Press* 23:4 (2009)

¹³¹ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics” *International Organization* 46:1 (1992) p. 396

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 407

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ *ibid.*



The theory further aims at understanding how identities, ideas, norms, culture and language forms a state's interests, and thus more often than the other way around, understand how structures affect agent's behaviour. The identity, i.e. the states' understanding of itself in relation to others, is further something that according to constructivists always is under construction.¹³⁵ To understand how a state's interest is formed, constructivists thus tend to take into account states and its agent's cultural, historical, political and social contexts, since it can have an effect on the construction of the identity. A thought connected to this is according to Hopf that actors will not only do a materialistic cost-benefit calculation when deciding their action in international relations, as realists and liberals assume, but act in a way that is most appropriate given the identity of the actor.¹³⁶ Wendt further claims that because of the perceived identity, states tend to act differently towards friends than towards enemies, since enemies are threatening but friends are not.¹³⁷

Building on Anthony Giddens' work, constructivists further tend to believe that states prefer stability to change, this, since humans tend to prefer stability instead of uncertainty and anxiety.¹³⁸ The theory thus suggests that states act to keep a stable situation.¹³⁹ To change the outcome of anarchy, which as mentioned according to constructivist is possible, Wendt thus claim is difficult.¹⁴⁰ Once agents follow the identities of the state they turn into structures and are institutionalized. Further, Wendt argues they become codified into rules, such as formalized law, as well as into norms, such as

¹³⁵ Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" *International Security* 23:1 (1998), p. 175

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ Wendt 1992, p. 396

¹³⁸ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991)

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Wendt 1992, p. 399



custom or “the rules of the game”.¹⁴¹ Agents, i.e. policy makers, can further become socialized into following the structures and norms, sometimes in a habitual way.¹⁴² Rules and norms are thus according to Bull important for constructivists, in that they provide guidance for agents on how to behave.¹⁴³

Constructivists further base their theory of foreign policy actions on another of Giddens’ theories, structuration, which suggests that agents and structures are mutually constituted, i.e. that structures influence agents, and the other way around.¹⁴⁴ Connected to this, there is a dilemma haunting the constructivist theory. By focusing on understanding why there are consistent actions, it has a hard time understanding why there is change in foreign policy. It is a dilemma since practice is what makes change hard, while it at the same time is what makes it possible. Checkel explains it as a form of codetermination; that practice is both the source of stability and of change.¹⁴⁵ Suggested by Flockhart, it is however possible to distinguish between *foreign policy as a practice* and *foreign policy as action*. She means that foreign policy is not only decided upon routine connected to identity, but that agents can aim to achieve a goal, which they try to achieve through conscious decision making.¹⁴⁶ Depending upon the goal, the actor can thus choose to either try to maintain stability, or change the status quo. Hopf however claims that the theory favours structure, since claiming that agent’s in their daily practice reproduce their

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² Wendt 1992, p. 399

¹⁴³ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 52

¹⁴⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984)

¹⁴⁵ Jeffrey T., Checkel “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory” *World Politics* 50:1 (1998), p. 346

¹⁴⁶ Trine Flockhart, “The problem of change in constructivist theory: Ontological security seeking and agent motivation” *Review of International Studies* 42:5 (2016), p. 819,820



own constraints. However, the theory still suggests that agents, such as policy makers, can be the ones contributing to change.¹⁴⁷

The main divide in the constructivist theory is further between the conventional and critical constructivism, where the critical is similar to the postmodern approach in focusing on language as the main phenomena guiding behaviour.¹⁴⁸ Believing actors have foreign policy goals and work actively to achieve those, however places Flockhart amongst the conventional constructivists, which is in the middle of the rationalist (to which both the realist and liberal approach belong) and the postmodern approach.¹⁴⁹ It is also this study's starting point. The conventional approach thus, like the rationalist one, suggest that there exists a material reality. However, it also draws upon the postmodernists approach, believing that social realities such as identity, culture, norms and language also matter when trying to understand state actions.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Hopf 1998, p. 180

¹⁴⁸ Johan Eriksson, "Konstruktivism", in *Internationella relationer*, red. Jakob Gustavsson & Jonas Tallberg, 3 ed. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014), p. 101

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*



4.5 Theoretic analytic model

<i>Approach</i>	Realist	Liberal	<i>Approach</i>	Constructivist
<p>Theoretical definitions:</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>Russia's choice to accept an intervention under R2P or not is based on and supported by:</i></p>	<p>Acting in accordance to the Russian states national interests to increase Russia's national power or balance their relative power against that of other states to stay secure. To get relative power, rivalry between Russia and other states but the analysed one can occur, and Russia protects its interests in the form of military resources, alliances, key strategic areas as well as they protect the Russian economy</p>	<p>Following international law. Therefore, Russia refer to the importance of interstate cooperation through organizations, of upholding human rights, of self-determination as well as of legitimate governments</p>	<p>Theoretical definition:</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>The processes behind Russia's decision to intervene or not can be understood by:</i></p>	<p>Looking at how structures and norms, based on Russian identities, have influenced agency as well as how agents have affected the outcomes</p>
<p>Operational indicators/analytical focus:</p>	<p>Does Russia have interests in the state in the form of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic investments -Trade relations -Military alliances -Military bases -Leverage -Relative power situations 	<p>Does Russia refer to the importance of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Following international law -Cooperation between states and through the UN -A protection of human rights -Self-determination -Legitimate governments 	<p>Analytical focus:</p>	<p>In the analysed case;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How historical, cultural, political, and social contexts can be understood as having created the Russian identities -How norms and structures that can be said to align with the identities have been followed and thereby reinforced, or changed by Russia/Russian foreign policy makers



5 Analysis

This chapter starts with a presentation of the analysis based on the three perspectives and ends with an exposition of how the theories can explain and understand, and thus give an answer to the research question what underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction to the R2P doctrine.

5.1 Through the realist lens

5.1.1 Libya

In Libya at the time of the R2P intervention, Russia had several economic interests. The value of the trade affairs between the two states amounted to \$1 billion dollars between the years 2000 and 2009, while Russia's total exports in 2010 were worth \$400 billion, and Libya's imports the same year worth \$10.5 billion.¹⁵¹ Russia thus had trade relations with Libya worth protecting. The state-run Russian natural gas company Gazprom had further invested \$200 million in energy exploration in Libya from the year of 2007 to 2011. The oil firms Gazprom Neft and Tatneft also had exploration and extraction contracts worth billions of dollars, as well as new deals where sealed in 2011,

¹⁵¹ Guy Anderson & Jonathan Hargreaves, "Libya Briefing: The Economic Interests of the Major Foreign Powers", Jane's defence weekly 2011-03-24. https://login.proxy.annalindhbiblioteket.se/login?url=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=JDW& (accessed 2020-01-03); World Integrated Trade Solution, *Russian Federation Trade Summary 2010*, 2010, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/RUS/Year/2010/Summarytext> (assecces 2020-01-03)



to expand already existing development projects.¹⁵² Moreover, Russia had also invested in Libya's infrastructure, signing a \$3 billion contract to build a high-speed rail link through its northern coastline.¹⁵³ Adding to this, Russia in 2008 waived Libya's Soviet-time debt, in exchange for arms contracts. Since the Russian federation approved the R2P intervention in 2011, they thus got financial setbacks characterized as "lost opportunity costs". New lucrative arms contracts being signed with the Gaddafi-regime were lost with the overthrow of the regime.¹⁵⁴ According to Sergei V. Chemezov, the then director of the Russian state company in charge of weapons exports, the Russian state could have received \$4 billion dollars for the contracts.¹⁵⁵ Finally, Russia did not have a military alliance to protect in Libya, nor did they have any military bases in the state.

5.1.2 Syria

At the time of the Russian vetoes (2011 to 2012) against UNSC draft resolutions referring to the responsibility to protect the Syrian populations, the Russian state had, as during the time of the Libya resolution, several interests in the state. The trade between the states was in 2010 worth \$1.1 billion dollars, placing Russia at fifth place over Syrian import countries.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Russia

¹⁵² Tom Balmforth, *Russia Set to Lose Billions in Libya*, 2011, <https://oilprice.com/Geopolitics/Middle-East/Russia-Set-To-Lose-Billions-In-Libya.html> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Andrew E. Kramer, "Unrest in Libya and the Middle East Is Costing the Russian Arms Industry", *The New York Times* 2011-03-04, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/05/world/europe/05russia.html> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁵⁶ Howard Amos, "Billions of Dollars of Russian Business Suffers Along With Syria", *The Moscow Times* 2011-09-02 [Available through Mediearkivet] (accessed 2020-01-03)



accounted for 78% of Syrian arms imports between 2007 and 2011.¹⁵⁷ Russia also had contracts for future arms deliveries to Syria worth \$4 billion dollars.¹⁵⁸ Russia also had interests in Syria's oil industry, with several of its firms involved. For instance, Stroytransgaz was in 2012 developing five gas fields, and building a gas processing plant, while Taftnet had a joint venture with the Syrian General Petroleum Corporation, for exploration in an oil field.¹⁵⁹ Even if Russia and Syria did not have a pronounced military alliance at the time, Russia had interests in keeping close ties with their longtime ally, since being their last foothold in the Middle East.¹⁶⁰ The state also had, and still has, a naval military base to protect in Syria, located in the town of Tartus, just outside the former Soviet Union area, as well as they in 2011 had access to the Syrian airbase Khmeimim.¹⁶¹

5.1.3 Venezuela

As in the other two cases, Russia has interests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. To start with, Russia has invested plenty of capital into the oil industries of the Venezuela, with Rosneft, the largest oil producer in Russia, today being Venezuela's largest oil trader.¹⁶² From 2014 to 2016 the Russian

¹⁵⁷ Paul Holtom, Mark Bromley, Pieter D. Wezeman & Siemon T Wezeman, "Trends in international arms transfers, 2011" (Stockholm: Stockholms internationella fredsforskningsinstitut 2012), p. 8

¹⁵⁸ James O'Toole, "Billions at stake as Russia backs Syria", *CNN Money* 2012-02-10, https://money.cnn.com/2012/02/09/news/international/russia_syria/index.htm (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁵⁹ Dominic Dudley, *Moscow defiant over Syria*, 2015, <http://www.domdudley.com/news-analysis/2015/02/03/moscow-defiant-over-syria> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁶⁰ Swedish Defense official, interview, the 22nd of November 2019

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*

¹⁶² Robin Emmott & Andrew Osborn, "Kremlin backs Venezuela's Maduro, while West turns up heat", *Reuters UK* 2019-01-24, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-venezuela-politics-russia/russia-calls-moves-to-oust-venezuelas-maduro-illegal-ifax-idUKKCN1PI0PZ?il=0> (accessed 2020-01-03)



government further made a \$6.5 billion loan to the Petroleos de Venezuela, and in April of 2018, an oil-for-debt repayment agreement was signed between the two states.¹⁶³ Moreover, Russia has interests in the Venezuelan oil industry, since Venezuela not only is an OPEC country, and thereby a strong oil state, but because it is the largest oil producer in the world.¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ If Russia were to succeed in putting the oil price up, it could thereby benefit Russia's strained economy¹⁶⁶. As of July 2019, Venezuela further owes Russia \$1.1 billion to Rostneft for investments into the Venezuelan oilfield development.¹⁶⁷ According to the Diplomatic representative of Venezuela, the total debt to Russia is nearly \$17 billion, which can be but in relation to its total BNP of \$80 billion.¹⁶⁸ Russia has also invested in the Venezuelan military industry, with Venezuela owing \$10 billion for the purchase of Russian fighter jets.¹⁶⁹ Further, the two states do not have an outspoken military alliance, however, the joint naval exercise in the Caribbean Sea in 2008, as well as Russia's temporary placement of two strategic bomb planes in Venezuela in December of 2018 to support the Maduro-regime, indicate they are willing to

¹⁶³ Barclay Ballard, "Russia's stagnating economy", *World Finance* 2018-07-18, <https://www.worldfinance.com/markets/russias-stagnating-economy> (accessed 2020-01-93)

¹⁶⁴ The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is an organization which aims to "coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its Member Countries and ensure the stabilization of oil markets in order to secure an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consumers, a steady income to producers and a fair return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry. See more on https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/23.htm

¹⁶⁵ Swedish Defense official, interview; Diplomatic Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Interview the 27th of December 2019

¹⁶⁶ Swedish Defense official, interview

¹⁶⁷ Maria Grabar Anton Kolodyazhnyy & David Evans, "Venezuela's PDVSA debt to Russia's Rosneft down to \$1.1 billion in second quarter", *Reuters* 2019-08-21, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-rosneft-debt/venezuelas-pdvsa-debt-to-russias-rosneft-down-to-1-1-billion-in-second-quarter-idUSKCN1VB1DI> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁶⁸ Diplomatic Representative, interview

¹⁶⁹ Sebastien Roblin, "Venezuela Got a Loan for \$10 Billion from Russia to Pay for Fighter Jets (It Can't Pay It Back)" *The National Interest* 2019-08-17, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/venezuela-got-loan-10-billion-russia-pay-fighter-jets-it-cant-pay-it-back-73746> (accessed 2020-01-03)



protect each other from a common enemy.¹⁷⁰ Finally, the Venezuelan coast is important for Russia also since functioning as a strategic military outpost that can be used against the US in case of conflict.¹⁷¹

5.1.4 The realist perspective explaining Russia's inconsistent reaction

According to the realist perspective, a state act in accordance to its own interests, either to increase its power or to balance its relative power against that of others states to stay secure. However, Russia had several interests in Libya at the time worth protecting, which they did not. Accepting an intervention into Libya in the name of R2P meant great economic losses for Russia, the state can thus be said to not have acted in accordance to its interests. Thus, it did not aim at increasing its power or balancing its power against that of other states. However, adhering to the thought of bounded rationality, the president at the time, Dmitrij Medvedev, was perhaps not aware that the intervention would mean a great economic loss for Russia, but of the thought it would lead to more gains, and thus more power. Disputing this argument is however that the president had close communication to then prime minister Vladimir Putin, who at the time was against the resolution, claiming it was defective and flawed as it “allows for everything”,¹⁷² referencing to that the resolution authorised all necessary measures to protect the Libyan

¹⁷⁰ Levy Clifford & Simon Romero, “Russia and Venezuela Confirm Joint Military Exercises”, *New York Times* 2008-08-09, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/09/world/americas/09venez.html> (accessed 2020-01-03); Andrew Osborn, “Russian nuclear-capable bomber aircraft fly to Venezuela, angering U.S.”, *Reuters* 2018-12-11, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-russia-airforce/russian-nuclear-capable-bomber-aircraft-fly-to-venezuela-angering-u-s-idUSKBN1OA23L> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁷¹ Swedish Defense official, interview

¹⁷² BBC News, “Medvedev rejects Putin ‘crusade’ remark over Libya”, *BBC News* 2011-03-21, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-12810566> (accessed 2020-01-03)



populations.¹⁷³ Also, Chemezov, the director of the Russian state company in charge of weapons exports, who was a close ally to Putin, months before the resolution officially warned that the UN arms export prohibition imposed upon Libya with UNSC resolution 1970 would cost the Russian state about \$4 billion in current and future contracts.¹⁷⁴ Medvedev should thus have known about the possibility of losses for the Russian state resulting from resolution 1973. Adhering to rationality, Medvedev and Putin might have had a greater plan with accepting the R2P intervention. In an attempt to create more legitimacy for the Russian state, thereby getting more international leverage and relative power, it is possible that the leaders wanted to please the international community by making them believe Medvedev was a moderniser, being on the West's side, while they also wanted to please the Russian traditionalists, making Putin represent the Russian domestic politics. However, even if the "greater-plan" theory could be valid, the liberal approach offers a more solid explanation to why Russia's and Medvedev accepted an R2P intervention into Libya, as well as the constructivist approach can be used to understand the choice (see 5.4 "What underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction to the R2P?").

Furthermore, according to Waltz, states not only strive to increase their own relative power but tries to make sure other states do not grow too strong. By accepting the intervention, Russia was however working together with those states. The then US defense secretary Robert Gates praised Russia for not blocking the resolution, calling it evidence of extraordinary progress in US-Russia ties.¹⁷⁵ A result of the acceptance of the resolution was further that it

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Kramer, *The New York Times* 2011-03-21

¹⁷⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Media Availability with Secretary Gates enroute to Russia, from Andrews Air Force Base*, 20 March 2011, <https://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4788> (accessed 2020-03-20)



opened up for US and Western influence in the region. Based on the analysis, the realist perspective thus performs poorly in explaining why Russia accepted an intervention in Libya.

However, the realist perspective better explains Russia's choice not to commit to The Responsibility to Protect doctrine in Syria or Venezuela. In both cases, Russia can have vetoed the UNSC draft resolutions since fearing they would lose the value of the investments made into the states, as well as the military-strategic areas. The fear can further be grounded in a suspicion that the intervention would mean regime change, since happening when Russia accepted an R2P intervention into the state of Libya.¹⁷⁶ A regime change would further mean losses for the Russian state since the investment contracts both in Syria and Venezuela were and are signed with the sitting regimes, leaving no guarantee for them to be followed by a new regime. Russia thus preferred stability to change. Furthermore, a change to a perhaps more liberal regime would mean a loss of power for Russia in that the international liberal order would be strengthened, and the authoritarian side be weakened.¹⁷⁷ To veto the resolutions was thus the most logic choice for Russia, being a state that did not want to lose power or relative power in relation to liberal states. Adding to this, it was important for Russia not to lose contacts with Syria, since at the time being Russia's last contact with the Middle East, or Venezuela, being Russia's last contact in South America. A loss of leverage for Russia would mean a loss of power and relative power, since it could mean more Western influence in the regions, possibly threatening the security of the Russian state.

¹⁷⁶ Swedish Defense official, interview

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*



5.2 Through the liberal lens

5.2.1 Libya

Looking through the liberal lens, it is possible, contrary to what the realist analysis suggests, that Russia accepted a R2P intervention in accordance to the Russian state's interests. The then President Medvedev can have been of the belief that Russia, in the long run, would reach the interests by cooperating with other states. One indication of such a liberal thinking is Medvedev's reply to a comment made by the then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Putin resembled the R2P resolution regarding Libya with "medieval calls for crusades",¹⁷⁸ further comparing it in a negative way to the invasion of Iraq.¹⁷⁹ Instead of agreeing with Putin, Medvedev however condemned the statement, claiming such comments could "lead to a clash of civilizations".¹⁸⁰ It can be interpreted as Medvedev wanting cooperate with liberal states, rather than clash with them. It could be based on a thought that the national interests of Russia would be met if building a good relationship with the Western states. Another indication that Medvedev was on a liberal path is that Russia, on a UNSC meeting on the situation in Libya made clear they aimed at protecting the Libyan population from mass atrocities, while at the same time emphasizing their commitment to "the common humanitarian values".¹⁸¹ Russia also referred to the importance of upholding international law, claiming that their "position regarding the clear unacceptability of the use of force

¹⁷⁸ Gleb Bryanski, "Putin likens U.N. Libya resolution to crusades", *Reuters* 2011-03-21, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-russia/putin-likens-u-n-libya-resolution-to-crusades-idUSTRE72K3JR20110321> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6498, 17 March 2011, <https://undocs.org/es/S/PV.6498> (accessed 30 December 2019)



against the civilian population of Libya remains unchanged”¹⁸² and that “[a]ny attacks against civilians and other violations of international humanitarian law and human rights must immediately and unconditionally cease”.¹⁸³

Two Russian sources further reported about a statement made by Medvedev, indicating that the intervention, and thus the cooperation through the UN, was a conscious choice. Medvedev said “I don’t think the resolution is wrong [...] that is why flapping one’s wings now and saying that we did not know what we were doing would be wrong: we did it on purpose, and such were my instructions to the Foreign Ministry. And they have been fulfilled”.¹⁸⁴ He further stated that the resolution “generally reflects our understanding of what is going on in Libya”,¹⁸⁵ referring to that “[e]verything that is happening in Libya was caused by the outrageous behavior of the Libyan leadership and the crimes that were committed against its own people”.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, he also fired the Libyan ambassador for agreeing with Putin on the issue.¹⁸⁷ Finally, in the Libya case, Russia did not refer to the importance of states’ self-determination or that a state has to solve the conflicts themselves to get a legitimate government.

¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Marzia Cimmino, “Moscow’s Perspectives on War in Libya” (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011)

¹⁸⁵ Sputnik News, “Russia not to participate in no-fly zone to operations in Libya – Medvedev”, *Sputnik News* 2011-03-21, <https://sputniknews.com/world/20110321163131709/> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁸⁶ Sputnik News, “Russia not to participate in no-fly zone to operations in Libya – Medvedev”, *Sputnik News* 2011-03-21, <https://sputniknews.com/world/20110321163131709/> (accessed 2020-01-03)

¹⁸⁷ Tom Parfitt, “Sacked ambassador stokes Russian tension over Libya”, *The Guardian* 2011-03-24, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/24/sacked-ambassador-russian-tension-libya> (accessed 2020-01-03)



5.2.2 Syria

In the Syria case, Russia also referred to liberal values. In a Security Council meeting discussing the first of the draft resolutions¹⁸⁸ which Russia vetoed, their then UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin claimed Russia vetoed the resolution because wanting to show respect for “the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria as well as the principle of non-intervention, including military, in its affairs”.¹⁸⁹ Regarding the third one,¹⁹⁰ they made clear that they “[...] simply cannot accept a document, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, that would open the way for the pressure of sanctions and later for external military involvement in Syrian domestic affairs”.¹⁹¹ They thus indirect referred to the importance of following international law, which postulates that each state has exclusive sovereignty over its territory. By enhancing the principle of non-intervention into other states affairs, Russia further also indirect referred to the importance of Syria’s self-determination. Moreover, Russia also referred to the self-determination principle. Regarding the first draft resolution, they suggested “inviting all to an even-handed and comprehensive dialogue aimed at achieving civil peace and national agreement by reforming the socioeconomic and political life of the country”,¹⁹² referencing to that the Syrians themselves should reach a solution by dialogue between the opposition groups and the Syrian government.¹⁹³ They further also referred to an agreement with alleged Syrian groups not wanting foreign intervention, stating that Russia “are continuing to work with constructive patriotic groups of the Syrian opposition who are concerned about the fate of their country and who have said that they want no

¹⁸⁸ UNSC Draft Resolution, S/2011/612 2011

¹⁸⁹ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6627, 4 October 2011, <https://undocs.org/S/PV.6627> (accessed 30 December 2019)

¹⁹⁰ UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/538 2012

¹⁹¹ UNSC Meeting, S/2012/538 2012

¹⁹² UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6627 2011

¹⁹³ UNSC Draft Resolution, S/2011/612 2011



foreign interference in their internal affairs”.¹⁹⁴ A focus on the importance of Syrian self-determination is also evident by Russia stating they did not want regime change, but a political settlement.¹⁹⁵

Further, Russia has also expressed that “[w]e must bear in mind the fact that a significant number of Syrians do not agree with the demand for a quick regime change”,¹⁹⁶ further stating that “[t]he best way to end the crisis is to refuse to provoke a confrontation and to bring together all responsible members of the international community so as to induce the parties to launch an inclusive intra-Syrian political process”.¹⁹⁷ While the statements refer to a believe that the best way to produce a legitimate government is for Syria to solve the problem as much as possible on their own, it at the same time refer to the importance of cooperation between states and/or through the UN.¹⁹⁸ The importance of cooperation between states and/or through the UN is also referred to by Russia stating they “are prepared to develop a genuinely collective and constructive position for the international community”¹⁹⁹ and that “[t]he people of Syria deserve peaceful change, with the support of the international community”.²⁰⁰ Two other statements can also be interpreted as referring to the importance of cooperation between through the UN. First, referencing to that the Russian delegation voted against the draft resolution submitted, Russia claimed they “greatly regret such an outcome of our joint work in the Security Council”.²⁰¹ Second, they made clear that the thrust of their resolution, created as a response to the one vetoed, ”is to bring the

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6711, 4 February 2012, <https://undocs.org/S/PV.6711> (accessed 2019)

¹⁹⁶ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6627 2011

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Russia only refers to cooperation between “responsible” states, which in this context most likely only refer to the ones often agreeing with Russia in the UNSC, such as China

¹⁹⁹ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6627 2011

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6711 2012



members of the Security Council together to further back the Kofi Annan peace plan and to extend the mandate of the Supervision Mission in Syria”.²⁰²

Russia also referred to the importance of protection of human rights. Referencing to the R2P intervention into Libya, they claimed that “[t]he demand for a quick ceasefire turned into a full-fledged civil war, the humanitarian [...] consequences of which transcend Libyan borders. The situation in connection with the no-fly zone has morphed into [...] a blockade of humanitarian goods”,²⁰³ further stating that such “models should be excluded from global practices once and for all”.²⁰⁴ Finally, they also stated that “[i]n the Security Council, we have actively tried to reach a decision for an objective solution that would truly help to put a prompt end to violence [...] in Syria”,²⁰⁵ enhancing their commitment to the humanitarian cause.

5.2.3 Venezuela

In the UNSC meeting records regarding the veto of the draft resolution in Venezuela, Russia has also referred to the importance of following international law.²⁰⁶ To start with, they stated that the US draft resolution was “legally illiterate”, claiming that the “concern for the humanitarian situation in the country [was] merely a smokescreen” aiming at “remov[ing] one President of a sovereign country from office and install[ing] another”.²⁰⁷ They also

²⁰² UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6810, 19 July 2012, <https://undocs.org/S/PV.6810> (accessed 30 December 2019)

²⁰³ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6627 2011

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

²⁰⁵ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.6810 2012

²⁰⁶ UNSC Draft resolution, S/2019/186 2019

²⁰⁷ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.8476, 28 February 2019, <https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.8476> (accessed 30 December 2019)



claimed that “[o]ur American colleagues seem to have forgotten what international law is” and that “[a]ll they have left in their diplomatic arsenal is ultimatums, sanctions and threats of the use of force”.²⁰⁸ In the Russian draft resolution, created as a response to the vetoed one, they further suggested that the Security Council should urge the settlement in Venezuela “in full respect of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to self-determination of the Venezuelan people”,²⁰⁹ which can be interpreted as Russia enhancing the importance of following international law, which as mentioned before postulates that each state has exclusive sovereignty over its territory. Further, they make a distinction between following a rules-based order, and international law, by stating:

This is probably the clearest and most direct case we have seen of the implementation of the infamous concept of humanitarian intervention, an intervention with humanitarian components and under humanitarian pretexts. That is the so-called rules-based order, rather than international law, that our Western colleagues are proposing and constantly talking about.²¹⁰

The statement makes clear Russia prefers the international law. At the same time, they enhance their commitment to the protection of human rights. In one statement, they say that “Russia [...] were delivering humanitarian aid to the Venezuelan people freely and without any problems”,²¹¹ a fact that is confirmed by the news agency Reuters.²¹² They further also refer to the importance of protecting human rights, by stating that they “emphasize that

²⁰⁸ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.8476 2019

²⁰⁹ UNSC Draft resolution, S/2019/190, 28 February 2019, <https://undocs.org/S/2019/190> (accessed 30 December 2019)

²¹⁰ *ibid.*

²¹¹ *ibid.*

²¹² Polina Devitt, “Russia helping Venezuela with wheat supplies, says foreign minister” *Reuters* 2019-03-01, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-russia-wheat-idUSKCN1QI4EC> (accessed 2020-01-03)



any international assistance should be based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence and the consent of the country's legitimate Government".²¹³ By that statement, they can also be said to refer to the importance of the self-determination of Venezuela, in deciding the country's future.

Commenting on the draft resolutions "[ca]lls for the start of a peaceful political process leading to free, fair, and credible presidential elections" in Venezuela, Russia further questions the call by asking the question "[i]s that world democracy in action?".²¹⁴ It can be interpreted as Russia questioning the US's interpretation of democracy, believing their interpretation, which puts an emphasis mainly on self-determination is more legitimate. Russia further in their alternative draft resolution suggests that the Security Council should express "further concern over the attempts to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela", clearly referring to the importance of Venezuela's self-determination. They also explicitly state that the settlement in Venezuela should come "in full respect of its sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to self-determination of the Venezuelan people".²¹⁵

Moreover, Russia, by stating that their alternative draft resolution was "designed not to encourage political intrigue and regime change but to provide Venezuelans with real help in their efforts to normalize the situation in their country",²¹⁶ is of the belief that Venezuela would get a legitimate government only by solving the situation themselves. Russia has further also

²¹³ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.8476 2019

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁵ UNSC Draft resolution, S/2019/190 2019

²¹⁶ UNSC Meeting, S/PV.8476 2019



referred to the importance of cooperation between states and through the UN. Commenting on the unwillingness of the West and the US to cooperate with Russia to find a solution to the Venezuela issue, Russia said that the “whole scheme is a propagandist public-relations stunt dictated in large part by domestic political concerns” and that they were “sorry that the Security Council has been dragged into it once again”.²¹⁷ The statement can be interpreted as Russia being concerned about the dilution of the Council, and thereby indicate that they find cooperation between states and through the UN as important. A final statement indicating that Russia finds cooperation through the UN as important, is their claim that “[i]f the United States really wanted to help the people of Venezuela, it would be operating officially through any of the United Nations-accredited agencies there”,²¹⁸ said in the context of Russia blaming the US for trying to aid the Venezuelan people without consent from the UNSC.

5.2.4 The liberal perspective explaining Russia’s inconsistent reaction

The liberal perspective offers a solid explanation as to why Russia chose to accept an intervention into Libya; the then President Medvedev can have been of the believe that Russian national interests could be reached if creating a good relationship with Western states, perhaps leading to future cooperation with those states. To some degree, he can thus have believed in the liberal values, and that those could be reached by agreeing with the Western states to intervene under the R2P to stop the ongoing atrocities. That Medvedev was still the president of the Russian federation when the two first draft resolutions²¹⁹ regarding Syria was vetoed can thus be seen as a puzzle; following the rationale above, a R2P intervention should have been accepted

²¹⁷ *ibid.*

²¹⁸ *ibid.*

²¹⁹ UNSC Draft Resolution, S/2011/612 2011; UNSC Draft resolution, S/2012/77 2012



into Syria too. However, Medvedev and Putin had decided beforehand they would not compete against each other in the upcoming presidential elections to be held in March of 2012.²²⁰ In September of 2011, ten days before the first veto, Medvedev officially announced that Putin would be the one running for president.²²¹ It is thus fair to believe that the soon to become president, Putin, had a great deal of influence over the decisions. In all vetoes against the draft resolutions regarding Syria, as well as the one regarding an R2P intervention in Venezuela, in contrast to the Libya case, Vladimir Putin can thus have had the most influence over the decisions, not the liberal Medvedev. Even if Russia do refer to several liberal values when explaining why they vetoed the Syria and Venezuela draft resolutions, the realist and constructivist perspectives offer an explanation and understanding as to why Russia did not accept the R2P interventions into Syria and Venezuela, by suggesting that Russia strategically used a liberal narrative when explaining their choices. This is further discussed in under chapter 5.4, “What underlies Russia’s inconsistent reaction to the R2P?”.

5.3 Through the constructivist lens

It can be argued that the historical, cultural and political context stemming from the Soviet time has affected the identities of Russia. According to the Swedish Defense official, the West failed to include Russia into the European and transatlantic security architecture after the fall of the Soviet Union.²²² As a way of Russia trying to understand who they were after the fall, it can thus be argued that they became concerned with holding on to the idea of the Soviet

²²⁰ BBC News, “Russia’s Putin set to return as president in 2012”, *BBC News* 2011-09-24, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-15045816> (accessed 2020-01-03)

²²¹ *ibid.*

²²² Swedish Defense official, interview



identity. It can further be argued that the thought about the “Russian civilization” being distinct from the “Western civilization”, and thus the thought that the West was the other, opposite from the self, since the fall of the Union has been characteristic for the main part of the Russian history of identity, up to this day. Furthermore, the social context also matters, regarding the Russian identity formation. Vladimir Putin and his regime can be argued to actively work to enhance and create the Russian identity. Putin was hired by the Russian Committee for State Security, KGB, immediately after finishing his university degree in 1975, and in the middle of the 90’s he was openly against the “reformer” Gorbachev.²²³ It can have made Putin internalize the Russian identity early on, affecting his future decisions. According to the Swedish Defense official, this narrative was enhanced by Vladimir Putin during his first and second presidential round of 2000 to 2008.²²⁴ However, it was not until around 2011-2014 that the “Russia versus West”-identity became more evident in Russia’s foreign policy.²²⁵ According to the Swedish Defense official, Russia at that time securitized the Russian identity, creating a discourse where the identity was portrayed as a critical issue for the survival of the own state.²²⁶ It would guard Russia from, in Kremlin’s view, Western led national uprisings, such as the one of 2011/2012 inside the Russian state, as well as (also according to the Kremlin) Western created color revolutions abroad, as the one in Ukraine in 2014. At the time of 2011/2012, the start of Putin’s third presidential round, Russia thus started to act out on the idea of once again becoming a great power, as during its glory days as the Soviet Union.²²⁷ It can be argued that the idea was to distance Russia from the West,

²²³ World Freedom Foundation, *Putin direkt: samtal med Vladimir Putin*, (Västerås: Samtid, 2001); Swedish Defense official, interview; Peter Baker “Mikhail Gorbachev Brought Democracy to Russia and Was Despised for It”, *The New York Times* 2017-09-06, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/06/books/review/william-taubman-gorbachev-his-life-and-times.html> (accessed 20 December 2019)

²²⁴ Swedish Defense official, interview

²²⁵ *ibid.*

²²⁶ *ibid.*

²²⁷ *ibid.*



NATO (whose historic enemy was the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact), and the US, while at the same time trying to become a player to count on globally. Adding to this, they might have wanted to take on the identity of a great power that oppose liberal values connected to regime change. Finally, according to Nico Krish, a professor in international law at Harvard Law School, Western states has since the Cold War assumed that Russia should accept their interpretation of what the law should contain. However, he means that Russia the recent ten years has been trying to reshape international law, going from norm takers to norm makers.²²⁸ This can further be seen as a part of the identity construction of Russia as a great power on the international arena, as well as another way of following the structures and norms of being the antipole against the West.

5.3.1 The constructivist perspective on Russia's inconsistent reaction

By vetoing the draft resolutions regarding Syria and Venezuela, which all where suggested by the US and supported by several Western states, Russia, with Putin as the front man, thus followed the structures and norms that aligned with the identities of Russia as being separated from the West. With that, they thus reproduced the idea and the identity of Russia as a great power. It also reproduced the international intersubjective understanding of great powers as states which are to decide when interventions into other states are to be used. Both Syria and Venezuela have further had good ties to the Soviet Union, and later Russia, since mid-1940's.²²⁹ According to the Diplomatic Representative of Venezuela, Russia and Venezuela have also had close ties the last 20 years.

²³⁰ It can be thereby be argued that it has become a norm to support these states

²²⁸ The Graduate Institute Geneva, *Russia and international law*, Youtube, 27 April 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgmqpjZ21XM> (accessed 2020-01-03)

²²⁹ Swedish Defense official, interview

²³⁰ Diplomatic Representative, interview



through fail and foul. Connected to this, it is also, according to the Diplomatic Representative, important for Russia to protect the now sitting authoritarian Maduro regime, since it demonstrates to the Russian population that the authoritarian model that Russia identifies themselves with, and not the democratic one, is working also elsewhere in the world.²³¹ If non-governmental groups succeed in overthrowing the regime elsewhere, Putin might fear it could happen in Russia too, threatening the Russian regime's identity.

According to the Swedish defense official, Medvedev was an economic liberal and to some degree believed in liberal values.²³² That Russia accepted a R2P intervention into Libya, can further in this context be seen as a try for change by the then President Medvedev. Despite being criticized for politically being to alike Putin by the national protestors opposing the Putin-regime, they had faith in him reforming the state of Russia into a more liberal one. According to the Swedish defense official, Western states also lobbied Russia and Medvedev not to veto the resolution.²³³ A combination of Medvedev being affected by the Western, liberal identity and the growing R2P norm, and of his willingness to position himself in the upcoming national presidential election, can have spurred him to change the status quo by via Libya present his idea of the Russian identity, i.e. a more liberal one. Medvedevs decisions to accept an R2P intervention into Libya was most likely one of the factors that urged Putin to return as Russia's president, noting that Medvedev did not act in line with Russia's perceived identity and thereby interests. The structures and norms, together with conscious decision making by Putin thus navigated the ship of

²³¹ *ibid.*

²³² Swedish Defense official, interview

²³³ *ibid.*



Russia onto the, according to Putin, right course again, later vetoing the draft resolutions regarding Syria and Venezuela.

5.4 What underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction to the R2P?

This study raised the issue what underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction to the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, further asking the question why the state accepted an R2P intervention into Libya, but rejected several suggested to protect the populations in Syria, and one recently regarding human rights violations in Venezuela. Based on the analysis, the realist perspective gives a solid explanation as to why Russia did not exercise its commitment to the R2P doctrine in the Syria and Venezuela case, however, it performs poorly explaining why Russia accepted an R2P intervention into Libya. Since the then president of Russia, Medvedev, most likely knew about the many interests Russia had in the state, and that those in all probability would be lost with the intervention, he should not, looking through the realist lens, have accepted an intervention into the state, which he did. Using the liberal and constructivist approach, however, it is possible to give an answer to the question and an understanding of why Russia accepted an intervention into Libya. From the liberal perspective, it is possible, contrary to what the realist analysis suggests, that Russia and Medvedev accepted an intervention into Libya having the Russian state's interests as top priority. It suggests Medvedev had a liberal thinking scheme, accepting the intervention since being of the belief that those interests would be met in the long run if cooperating with other states, which was a fact when accepting the West's request for a R2P intervention. Looking through the constructivist lens further adds an understanding of Medvedev's decision, suggesting that he might both have been affected by the Western, liberal identity and the growing R2P norm. It also suggests that Medvedev



made a conscious decision when accepting an intervention into Libya, since having a plan of Russia identifying as a more liberal state.

Adding to this, even if the realist approach, based on the analysis, offers a valid explanation as to why Russia vetoed the draft resolutions regarding Syria and Venezuela, the liberal analysis suggested that Russia explains their reactions by referring to liberal values. It can be interpreted as Russia vetoing the resolutions because wanting to uphold liberal values, instead of wanting to secure their interests. However, returning to the realist perspective, Russia might solely have used a liberal narrative as a pretext for pursuing their own interests. Following this thought, Russia, with Putin as the engineer oppose interventions in the name of protecting humans. He refers to the importance of upholding international law, and of self-determination not because believing it creates legitimate governments, or that it is the will of the Syrian people, but because wanting to secure Russia's economic and military strategic areas. At the same time, the liberal narrative is used because fearing the West would gain more power, conducting a military intervention under the R2P doctrine into Russia in the future. Following the same logic, Russia refers to the importance of cooperation through the UN, as well as express their concern about the legitimacy of the organization not because believing in the importance of cooperation between states, but because not wanting to lose their power position in the UNSC, since it would mean a loss of relative and absolute power for the Russian state. Similarly, Russia's choice to export wheat to Venezuela can be a part of the liberal narrative, making it seem like they are committed to protecting the populations of Venezuela. The constructivist approach further adds to the understanding of why Russia vetoed R2P interventions into Syria and Venezuela, by suggesting that Russia followed, and thereby reinforced the structures and norms that aligned with the identity of Russia being separated from the West, reproducing the idea and



identity of Russia as a great power, as well as reproduced the international intersubjective understanding of great powers as states which are to decide when interventions into other states are to be used. Combining the realist and constructivist approach, the vetoes was about weakening the other and strengthening the self. Moreover, the constructivist approach creates an understanding as to why it is more valid to interpret Russia as using a liberal narrative, rather than genuinely wanting to uphold the values; an identity of Russia is to be an antipole against liberal values.



6 Theoretical & empirical conclusions

A conclusion of this study is that a combination of the three approaches is needed to explain and understand Russia's inconsistent reaction to the R2P doctrine. Looking through the liberal and constructivist lens, Russia accepted an intervention into Libya due to the international liberal norms affecting an actor, Medvedev, ready to become affected by liberal thoughts at that very moment. The actor already planned for a more liberal future for the Russian state. Looking through the realist and constructivist lens, Russia did not accept an intervention into Syria and Venezuela since wanting to secure their many interests in the states, which can be understood in the context of Putin being affected by the structures and norms of the Russian identity, as well as him wanting to align with that identity.

Based on the analysis, the realist approach thus needed assistance to explain why Russia accepted an intervention into Libya, as well as the liberal perspective added to the analysis by indicating that Russia referred to liberal values when explaining why they vetoed the draft resolutions in the Syria and Venezuela cases. However, again, the realist perspective was useful, suggesting Russia might solely have used a liberal narrative as a pretext for pursuing their own interests. Moreover, the constructivist approach added a depth to the analyses, creating an understanding as to why it is more valid to interpret Russia as using a liberal narrative, than genuinely wanting to uphold the values. It also contributed with a deeper understanding of what might lie behind Russia's actions, something that would have been lost without the approach, perhaps leading to less pragmatic suggestions regarding what to do if wanting to make the doctrine function in a more consistent way. However, since the constructivist analysis suggests that Medvedev was affected by



international liberal norms, and Putin by Russian, future studies could investigate how Russia could produce two such different leaders, both being raised in authoritarian Russia. Turning back to the study's puzzle of what underlies Russia's inconsistent reaction to the R2P doctrine, an empirical conclusion and the answer to the research question based on the comparison of the three cases, is thus that international and national norms and agency as well as the importance of interests and identities underlie the inconsistency.

Furthermore, at the beginning of this study, it was argued that an answer to the inconsistency puzzle would contribute to the R2P research regarding Russia's approach to the R2P. To get a clearer picture if the importance of interests and identities counts for Russia's overall approach to the R2P doctrine, similar studies would have to be done on other cases where Russia has accepted or rejected R2P interventions. What would be fruitful for future studies is thus to use this study's theoretic analytic model, applying it to other cases, to see if similar conclusions can be drawn. However, based on the analysis of both the Syria and Venezuela cases, the Putin regime acted in accordance with Russian interests and identity, balancing their relative power against that of Western states. It is thus fair to believe they base their decisions on similar grounds also in other R2P cases. By giving a contribution to the research community regarding Russia's approach to the R2P doctrine, the study has further contributed to the research not only about Russia's inconsistent reactions to the R2P doctrine, but regarding inconsistent reactions to the R2P in general. Again, applying the same theoretic analytic model to other states that act inconsistent to the doctrine, for instance applying it to the case of China, would contribute even more to that field of study. Furthermore, by suggesting that Russia's interests and identities are of importance for Russia in their international relations, the study has thus also contributed to an increased understanding of Russia's role in international politics, confirming the broader



research community's perception of who Russia is on the international arena.²³⁴

Moreover, this study was set out to contribute to the ongoing academic discussion regarding what, if something, can be done if wanting the doctrine to function in a more consistent way. Even though a lengthy discussion is beyond the scope of this study, the reader will be left with some thoughts on the topic. Thus, turning back to the constructivist theory, it suggests that anarchy is what states make of it. Following this thought, there is a possibility that Russia's approach to the R2P doctrine will change, but to make such a change happen is hard. As the Libya case suggests, even if someone, like Medvedev, would like change, it is hard to implement because of the norms and structures. Moreover, the active choices of the now sitting Putin regime make it even harder, a regime that according to the present Russian constitution can sit until the year 2022. However, the doctrine can instead be adjusted.

In 2011, Brazil, one of the states that also has criticized the R2P presented the concept of Responsibility While Protecting (RWP), parts of which Bellamy and Mcloughlin still advocates as "solutions" for R2P to be implemented in a more consistent way.²³⁵ First, they agree with the fact that anything that can assist the Council in creating a shared understanding of the situation is welcomed, since it can help build a united approach. However, even if the West and Russia were to agree about "what is going on" in the state in question, the problem of differing views on how to respond to it would, based on this study's analysis, persist. Russia would still not accept an intervention

²³⁴ See 3.2 "Explaining and understanding Russia's inconsistent approach"

²³⁵ Bellamy & Mcloughlin 2019



if their interests, relative to the West's were to be hurt, as well as if it would not align with their constructed identity. In other words, the problem in the case of Russia is not that they do not understand what is going on in the state in question, but rather that they do understand how to respond to it to benefit their own state and identity. Second, Bellamy and Mcloughlin agree that accountability measures adopted by the Council in the past could be adopted in the context of R2P, for instance making the Council able to rule out certain courses of action in the resolutions.²³⁶ To get Russia onboard, it could be a good idea, since it could rule out regime change. However, a challenge beyond that populations might not be protected if the regime is the villain, is that Russia could be suspiciousness against the West, vetoing a resolution because believing the West would find a way to make the intervention an advantage for them. Third, Bellamy and Mcloughlin, as well as Janzekovic and Silander agree that a focus should be upon preventing atrocities, as do this study.²³⁷ However, there is consensus around the fact that it would be challenging. Janzekovic and Silander claim that “[t]he notion of ‘prevention’ is complex and multifaceted, and there is no preventive silver bullet” further stating that “[h]ow to prevent violence is perhaps the biggest challenge facing the international community”.²³⁸ Moreover, the most recent report of the UN Secretary-General regarding R2P recommended several actions focused on preventing rather than protecting, such as addressing hate speech and protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations.²³⁹ However, more research on how to prevent atrocities is needed.

Moreover, a final thought regarding what can be done if wanting the doctrine to function in a more consistent way, assuming that Russia is willing to protect

²³⁶ *ibid.*

²³⁷ Bellamy & Mcloughlin 2019; Janzekovic & Silander 2014

²³⁸ *ibid.*

²³⁹ UNGA, A/73/898-S/2019/463 2019



other states' populations from mass atrocities, is that the UNSC should focus on making sure the R2P intervention does not clash with Russia's interests and that it does not undermine their identity. What could be discussed is thus if the focus of the UNSC should be to be opened about the member states interests when discussing how to respond to ongoing atrocities; trying to circumvent the interests could lead back to a focus on protecting populations from mass atrocities, which should be the main focus of the doctrine. It would still follow what was agreed upon in the R2P agreement at the World Summit in 2005, where, as Bellamy and Mcloughlin states, it made clear that states should take collective action on a case-by-case basis, which can be interpreted as the response does not have to be exactly the same in all cases.²⁴⁰ What can be further discussed is however if the West and Russia would be willing to respect each other's different interests, since it would mean that none of the parties, or both parties, would win on it. It can also be discussed if it is possible in international relations for no one to win, or both to win equally. Lastly, even if this study does not go as far as Bellamy, calling the R2P a shared principle, it does agree with the fact that discussing how to implement the concept in the hardest cases is a testament to how far R2P has come.²⁴¹

Finally, to get an even deeper understanding of why Russia is reacting inconsistently to the R2P doctrine, other studies could analyze how international organizations affect the outcomes, since that is something this study only touches upon, and other studies mention as important factors regarding the inconsistent reaction to the Libya and Syria cases.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Bellamy & Mcloughlin 2019

²⁴¹ Alex J. Bellamy, *The responsibility to protect: a defense*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 148-149

²⁴² See for instance Hehir 2013 and Bellamy 2011



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7.2 Interviews

Swedish Defense official, Stockholm, personal interview, 22nd of November
2019

Diplomatic Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,
telephone interview, 27th of December 2019



Appendix

Guiding interview questions

Theme: According to the realist perspective of international relations (IR) states' in order to gain more power, or to protect their own nation from collapsing follow their national interests. Russia's choice to accept a R2P intervention is therefore, according to the realist perspective, based on whether the intervention (a) can increase the relative power of the state and/or (b) the intervention contributes to the maintenance of the security of the own state or not. Thus, in order to achieve security for one's own state (to survive), the state can try to balance its relative power vis-à-vis other states.

Question: What interests worth protecting did Russia have in Libya, Syria and Venezuela? What other states do Russia want to balance its power against?

Theme: According to the liberal IR approach, it is important for states to comply with international law, and for states to cooperate through organizations such as the United Nations, as well as to uphold human rights.

Question: Did Russia accept a R2P intervention in Libya/did Russia veto the draft resolutions regarding Syria and Venezuela because they were keen to uphold international law and protect human rights? If yes, in what way, if no, in what way is that evident?

Theme: According to the constructivist approach, states and those governing the country tend to maintain their own state's perceived identity, for example,



when foreign policy decisions are made, as well as they tend to be affected by norms and structures.

Question: What identities in relation to other states can Russia be said to have had at the time of 2011/2012 and 2019, and what kind of norms and structures can have affected the leaders?

Question: By accepting an intervention or by vetoing a draft resolution, how has Russia departed or maintained its identities?

Final question: What else would you like to share with me, relevant to the topic?