



Security Decay and the Responsibility to Protect in Africa: Historical Context, Implementation Issues and Humanitarian Urgency in the Ongoing War in Cameroon

Ishmael Adjei | adishcare15@gmail.com | [ORCID](#) | Department of Political Science and International Relations, Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir-Türkiye
Tekang P. Kwachuh | ptkwachuh04@gmail.com | [ORCID](#) | Department of Political Science and International Relations, Anadolu University, Eskisehir-Türkiye

e_AOPL Journal of Social Sciences

Volume 3 | Number 2

Received:
12.12.2025

Accepted:
22.12.2025

Published:
31.12.2025

https://africaopl.org/e_aopl-journal-of-social-sciences/

	Nyarugenge-Rubangura House, 3325+28X, Kigali, Rwanda		info@africaopl.org
	+250 788 861 433		www.africaopl.org

Abstract: The codification of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in 2005 by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) at the World Summit, enshrined by the United Nations, has become one of the new dilemmas in security, humanitarian intervention and the Sovereignty of States. The human catastrophes in Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica and others underscored the need for global intervention to avert future acts of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Thus, R2P became the new buzzword in international humanitarian interventions; the hasty implementation and reverberations in the cases of Libya and Syria signalled that the R2P was in a grave quandary. The first section of this paper presents the historical ancestry of R2P, while the second part discusses R2P's implementation on the African continent, considering the Libyan case. Part three delves into the theoretical analysis using the English School alongside the pluralist and solidarity perspectives, and the next section seeks to determine why R2P has been compromised in the case of Cameroon. This is followed by an examination of the international consequences of the non-applicability of R2P in Cameroon and, finally, an assessment of the future of R2P on the African continent. The article reveal that the 2005 UN World Summit was a historical turning point for R2P; the rising civilian casualties in Libya prompted the speedy implementation of the R2P. France's status at the UNSC is what is murdering R2P in Cameroon because of the lack of any meaningful resolution. Increased humanitarian needs, deaths and refugee upshots flowing mostly into Nigeria are consequences, and finally, R2P's future rests on acting within the set norms. This article adds to the continuing debates over the role of R2P in international relations and humanitarian assistance.

Keywords: Ambazonia, Cameroon, Southern Cameroons, R2P, ICISS, United Nations

Introduction

Prior to and after the formation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, issues surrounding Human Rights (HR) protection became very critical. However, encumbrances, thudding with the sovereignty of the state, and the schisms during the cold war fractured a smooth follow-up of human rights. Brosig (2012, 1-2) stresses that the tragedy of the holocaust influenced the international community to adopt the UN Charter quickly. In Article 1 (para. 3) of the Charter, the UN made it obligatory for each member state to promote and encourage respect for human rights. Soon thereafter, on December 9, 1948, and a day before the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the UN adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In Article 1, the UN defines genocide as “a crime under international law which they [UN members] undertake to prevent and to punish”. In Article 8, the Convention calls on UN members to take “appropriate [action] for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide”. While the adoption of the UDHR marked the beginning of the drafting and implementation of several human rights conventions within the UN system and in different regions of the world. The snail pace in the development or enactment of provisions on the protection of individuals or groups against worst human rights violations, such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity underscored the urgent need for an effective mechanism to address such atrocities. Erameh and Idachaba (2017, 1) noted that in the periods before and during the cold war, intervention in the affairs of a state by another state or a group of states was strictly regarded as a violation of the non-intervention principle. During the cold war era, human rights were in a state of comatose despite the malfeasance that were committed.

A plethora of events that systematically ghast the world in the 1990s consisted of the Rwanda genocide (1994) and Srebrenica (1995), that could have been prevented by the international community, culminated in outrageous human rights violations, thus exposing the fragility of the international and human security arrangements. Going through a litany of penance patterning to the holocaust, Rwanda and Bosnia, the legal institutionalisation of the Rome Statute in 1998 and the 2002 inauguration of the International Criminal Court tailored towards prosecuting culprits of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes signalled a significant mile step. Many supporters perceive responsibility to protect as a timely doctrine that would help re-haul the existing UN system without changing it much. Nevertheless, years after its adoption, many are

still arguing if there is a need for it due to the lack of clarity which has led many to question its scope and application. Many are of the notion that the doctrine hinders nations from taking actions or breaches the basic tenets of international law by allowing intervention in a state's internal matters. The debate on the subject is not clear since R2P is part of soft law as it has been unanimously adopted by the General Assembly Resolution. If successfully implemented, R2P could help the UN in preventing "genocides, crimes against humanity, war crimes and mass atrocities" from taking place. The UN as it stands was established in response to the tragic events of WW2 that shocked the conscience of our common humanity (Tamvada 2010, 9).

Cameroon is a country in the Central African sub-region which Germany annexed in 1884 and administered strictly until 1916, when it was defeated in WW1 (Dze-Ngwa 2015). After the end of WW1 Germany lost, thus culminating to the partition of Cameroon between Britain and France. Britain got the land that is now known as British Southern Cameroon (Dze-Ngwa 2015) and territory was administered as a United Nations Trust Territory in 1946. In 1922, the British split British Cameroon into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons and ruled both as an integral part of Nigeria (Nfi 2011). Due to new waves of anti-colonial chants and the call for decolonization and independence especially in Africa, the UN requested all colonial masters to grant their colonies independence. The question of reunification came up, and British Southern Cameroons voted on February 11, 1961, to join La Republique du Cameroun and on October 1, 1961, the country became the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Delancey et al. 2010), with two distinct identities: English and French. For about 9 years now and counting, there has been an armed conflict in Cameroon in its two English-speaking regions, of the Northwest and Southwest. A peaceful protest that began in late 2016 of students, civil society organisations expressing their grievances on the educational, legal, political, and socio-economic situation in the two main regions quickly deteriorated. By the end of 2017, the two regions had seen the rise of a non-state armed groups, turning the situation into an armed conflict that has had a huge impact on the people living in the two English regions. A conflict in which civilians are not protected and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is not followed (Itoe 2025, 115).

The belligerents' actions do not distinguish between civilian properties and military objectives, thereby entangling civilians in the conflict. Since 2021, the state military has reportedly killed innocent civilians' multiple times (Schumann & Willis 2023). The 2023

report from the US Department of State states that both the separatist fighters (the non-state armed group) and the state military have intentionally killed civilians in the two areas of the conflict. This study underscores that the state of Cameroon, which holds the principal responsibility to protect its citizens, has markedly failed to execute this obligation in its two English-speaking regions. International Humanitarian Law states that governments are mainly responsible for making sure that their people are safe and sound during armed conflict (UN Security Council 2006). The war that started in 2016 in the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon shows how the government has failed to protect civilians, as shown by reports on human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings and people being forced to leave their homes (Human Rights Watch 2020).

R2P has metamorphosed to be a very critical philosophical dictum globally since its tenets seeks to ostracised mass atrocities, crimes against humanity, genocide. However, in most countries particularly in Africa where conflicts are rampant, R2P faces a lot of stress due to its inapplicability and security decay orchestrated by the major powers. The unending violence and mass atrocities committed in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2016 signals one of the clearest forms of such security dilemma. The independence of La Republique du Cameroun on the 1st of January 1960 and the subsequent gaining of independence of Former British Southern Cameroons on October 1st, 1961, was followed by the formation of a Federation in 1961 led to the abrogation of the Union in 1972. Thus, historical and political discontents in Cameroon, the eminent discrimination and the marginalisation of the Anglophones is rooted in the conflict.

Historical ancestry of R2P

In 1999 at the UN General Assembly, former Secretary General Kofi Annan posed undoubtedly critical and deep question to the world leaders. As stated, "...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?" (ICISS 2001, vii). With its relevance, the question appealed to the concern of the Government of Canada and other actors. This paved the way for a major premise in the establishment of an International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS). In December 2001, ICISS proposed a framework to seek support from the Secretary General and the international community to find new common ground (ICISS 2001, viii) to deal with grave mass atrocities.

Erameh and Idachaba (2017, 2) emphasised that, though first muted in 2001, the concept of R2P gained greater prominence in 2005 following the outcome at the United Nations World Summit Document. The Summit unanimously adopted R2P as a guiding principle to intervene in civil conflicts where respective states fail to protect its citizens. It also empowers states, regional organisation and international institutions to play a key role in the R2P process. While the authority to employ last resort and intervene militarily rest solely on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the general assembly. The concept, was however adopted by large numbers of states in 2009 and since the adoption of R2P, it has been invoked during the post-election violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe crises. However, Libya remains the real first theatre where the doctrine was fully invoked through Resolution 1970 and 1973 respectively. The R2P in this scenario has come up as one of the most sophisticated doctrines of global politics (Pant 2012, 4; Adjei 2018, 191). It obliges states to respect, protect and implement the instruments of human rights (ICISS 2001, XI). The concept has created strong waves in the international political discourse. Some argued that the idea of military intervention is a threat to the sovereignty of any nation. Particularly with UNSC as a centre point in addressing such intervention, it was also feared that the implementation of R2P would bear serious consequences to the weak nations in the name of humanitarian intervention (Focarelli 2008; Pant 2012, 7).

Bellamy (2012, 11-12), in line with the genealogy of R2P, stated that the UNSC reaffirmed the principle in Resolution 1674 (2006). After an admittedly long struggle, the UN General Assembly agreed on a resolution to continue considering the principle (A/63/308, 7 October 2009) and its implementation in 2009. The UNSC reaffirmed the principle again in 2009 (Resolution 1894), and the UN established a Joint Office for the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect. Meanwhile, Brosig (2012, 2) held that in reality, though, the notion of 'sovereignty as responsibility' had entered the 'protection discourse' in the early 1990s. However, it was in 2001 that the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) produced its seminal report, which is now known as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). This report, with its emphasis on sovereignty as responsibility, significantly influenced the international discourse on humanitarian interventions and the limits of the principle of non-interference in situations where a state is unable or unwilling to protect its population from genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing.

According to the ICISS report, R2P encompasses three pillars, namely:

- i. The responsibility to prevent: to address both the root causes and direct causes of internal conflict and other man-made crises putting populations at risk.
- ii. The responsibility to react: to respond to situations of compelling human need with appropriate measures, which may include coercive measures like sanctions and international prosecution, and in extreme cases military intervention.
- iii. The responsibility to rebuild: to provide, particularly after a military intervention, full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, addressing the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt or avert.

Furthermore, the ICISS developed the so-called 'precautionary principles', which aim at curtailing potential misuse of military interventions, foreseeing the politically highly contested content of R2P. The four principles are:

- i. Right intention: The primary purpose of the intervention, whatever other motives intervening states may have, must be to halt or avert human suffering. The right intention is better assured with multilateral operations, clearly supported by regional opinion and the victims concerned.
- ii. Last resort: Military intervention can only be justified when every non-military option for the prevention or peaceful resolution of the crisis has been explored, with reasonable grounds for believing lesser measures would not have succeeded.
- iii. Proportional means: The scale, duration and intensity of the planned military intervention should be the minimum necessary to secure the defined human protection objective.
- iv. Reasonable prospects: There must be a reasonable chance of success in halting or averting the suffering which has justified the intervention, with the consequences of action not likely to be worse than the consequences of inaction.

This ICISS report attempts to reconcile the existing tension between state sovereignty and the need to remedy the situation of those facing the worst human rights violations. Still, R2P remains one of the most contested norms internationally. In legal terms, it was

never codified to the same extent as classical human rights law since it does not have legal quality. Nonetheless, R2P received significant political acceptance through its integration into the World Summit Outcome Document adopted by consensus in 2005.

Article138: Each individual state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through appropriate and necessary means. We accept that responsibility and will act in accordance with it. The international community should, as appropriate, encourage and help States to exercise this responsibility and support the United Nations in establishing an early warning capability.

Article 139: The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, to help protect populations from war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organisations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We stress the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and its implications, bearing in mind the principles of the Charter and international law. We also intend to commit ourselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out.

Article 140: We fully support the mission of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide (Hanns Seidel Foundation et al. 2012, 14-15). It was a response both to a series of mass atrocities – in Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and elsewhere – and to substantive disagreement about what ought to be done in response by the international community. It is worth noting that, in the 1990s, some states had sought to stretch the bounds of peacekeeping, a practice established in the early 1960s, and normally mandated by the

UN Security Council (UNSC), to encompass something akin to ‘peace enforcement’, in which international forces tried to make peace by disarming local combatants, rather than simply ensuring peace agreements were kept (Hall 2018, 174) citing Jane Boulden (2001). “Today, the responsibility to protect is a concept, not yet a policy, an aspiration, not yet a reality. Curbing mass atrocities will neither be easy nor quick. There is no certain blueprint for getting the job done. We are all novices in this field” (Ban Ki Moon 2008).

With the backing of Kofi Annan, the HLP’s thinking on R2P helped frame the discussion about sovereignty, human rights, and intervention at the 2005 World Summit meeting, convened to debate UN reform, the Millennium Development Goals, terrorism and several other issues. Ultimately, the World Summit Outcome Document endorsed R2P, but not after considerable negotiation and modification to what had been proposed by the ICISS and HLP. As Bellamy notes, the Permanent Five (P5) on the UNSC – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – were divided among themselves. China and Russia took a conservative view, arguing that the UNSC was already sufficiently empowered by the Charter and opposed the idea that R2P might be used as a means to circumvent a P5 veto. By contrast, France and the UK argued that interventions not authorised by the UNSC due to a P5 veto ought to be permitted in certain circumstances. The US, for its part, was concerned about the prescriptiveness of the ICISS and HLPs’ conceptualisations of R2P, which they feared might ‘constrain,’ as Bellamy puts it, ‘it is right to decide when and where to use force’ (Hall 2018, 174 citing Bellamy, 2005). Resolutions 1970 and 1973 on Libya and 1975 on Côte d’Ivoire used R2P language to lay out the UNSC’s responses to the conduct of President Muammar Gaddafi’s government and President Laurent Gbagbo’s use of force against civilians supportive of his political opponents. UNSCR 1973 was particularly significant because it not merely imposed a no-fly zone but also authorised the use of ‘all necessary measures’ to protect civilians under Chapter VII (Hall 2018, 177).

In 2009, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Adviser on R2P, Edward Luck released a report titled ‘Implementing Responsibility to Protect’ in the sixty-third session of UN General Assembly, which came up with a ‘three-pillar strategy’. Pillar one suggested on the ‘protection responsibilities of the State.’ Pillar two highlighted on the ‘international assistance and capacity building’ and pillar three projected on the ‘timely and decisive response’ through the Security Council in a manner consistent with

Chapter VI (pacific measures), Chapter VII (enforcement measures), and Chapter VIII (regional arrangements) of the UN Charter 18, in situation where a state has manifestly failed to protect its population from the four crimes viz. genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

Methodological framework

This article makes use of qualitative data collection technique in its research design in the collection of data emanating mostly from secondary sources. The data collected were derived from journals, articles, websites, legal UN documents and alongside U.S. State department reports on the situation in Cameroon, among others. The article analysed those documents that focused on R2P symbiotically and its application on different cases especially in Africa and also provided an insight on past and current debates surrounding R2P. More so, it espoused the thoughts of the architects of R2P doctrine. Within Africa, the rationale for using Cameroon as our case study is based on the country's unique identity, geostrategic position, its bi/dual colonial history, longevity of the conflict, and lack of the applicability of R2P in Cameroon. Meanwhile if it were other African states the enforcement of R2P via the security council would have taken action(s) by adopting resolutions ranging from political and economic sanctions to no-fly zone, among others. A cardinal justification why RSP doctrine in Cameroon has failed event though it has not been applied is because of the role of Paris as a permanent member with a veto power at the UN Security Council which makes it impossible for the case to be fully heard and a resolution to be passed. Also, Biya's government has warm tidings with lobbyists across the globe hence downplaying the intensity of the conflict internationally making it to be seen as an internal affair of the state.

The English School

The English School of thought is the theoretical framework of this paper and it utilises both the pluralist and solidarist perspectives synthetising it with R2P in the Former British Southern Cameroons scenario aka "Ambazonia". The English School of thought emerged in the field of International Relations in the 1970s. This theory's analysis is based on three concepts: the international system, international society, and the world society. The international system is based on Hobbesian and Machiavellian principles, which focus on power politics among states. The international society, on the other hand, is rooted in Grotian ideas, which emphasise shared interests and the institutionalisation of identity. In contrast, the world society originated from the Kantian

school, which focuses on individuals, non-state organisations and the global population. The international society is the most developed section of the English School. It lies on the principle that there is a society of states (Buzan 2001, 471-475). The English School expresses pluralist ideas and this is based on an international society, which is grounded in institutions, rules, interests and values (Little 2000, 395).

The English School is dominated by two main versions: the pluralist and solidarist versions. In the pluralist view, issues are conceptualised through the realist direction of rationalism. This version of the school view states' sovereignty in terms of "political difference and distinctiveness". In this regard, international society is considered to have a minimal scope based on the international order in an anarchical society (Buzan 2001, 478). In other words, this version of the school does not disregard anarchy, however, it emphasises that despite states' self-interest, they play a crucial role in maintaining order through cooperation. The pluralists also argue that humankind differs, and as such, their religious views, ethnic, and linguistic traditions differ. These differences, according to the pluralists, are contained in a society that allows for the greatest possible independence of states, which can, in their form of government, express those differing conceptions of the good life. This conception of society is structured towards promoting peaceful societies. To promote a peaceful society, pluralists stress against breaching national sovereignty because, to the pluralists, such action is dangerous for states to cooperate (Linklater 2005, 97-98). In view of that, pluralists confine to states sovereignty agreement, promote diplomacy and non-intervention (Buzan 2001, 478). In sum, pluralist society focuses on coexistence principles to respect, equality and freedom for each other.

The solidarist on the other hand, argues that the society of state should be more prone to causes of human rights and perhaps, emancipation as opposed to the right of states to political independence and non-intervention of the states' internal affairs. Also, solidarism pays attention to the revolutionist side of rationalism which focuses on shared moral norms necessary for understanding international orders. Such intervention is considered necessary based on human rights and justice for the vulnerable. However, the solidarists does not specify clearly when to apply force and the limitation on the use of force (Buzan 2001, 478). According to Linklater, solidarism is 'premature' because there is no consensus on whether state interventions should be made in response to human rights violations (Linklater 2005, 93). Additionally, solidarists focus on individuals,

norms, and values to help explain and understand the world. It is worth noting that the English school differs from realism; however, it does not deny the primacy of the state in international affairs. The solidarist societies, as noted by Linklater, share common moral principles. According to the English school, the 'primacy of basic social order' refers to the idea that social norms and values are the foundation of international relations, shaping state behaviour and interactions (Linklater 2005). The norms that guide states' activities are also coded in international law. This has made some critics to question how international laws should rule over sovereign states.

Moreover, the English school emphasise that the most stable and secure societies are the ones dominated by togetherness and sense of cooperation. In this regard, vibrant institutions and norms are essential to harmonise societies and institutions as noted, promote rules and mechanisms to maintain orderliness (Linklater 2005). Arguably, international law provides legal measures to ensure orderliness in international affairs, and the Ambazonia situation is not an exception; however, the theory fails to point out that enforcement problems about international law will create disorder. Also, the English School exposed IR researchers to broader dimensions in analysing international issue and recognises that there is anarchy in the international arena does not mean disorder and confusion. As critical as it is for the Anglophone regions of Cameroon's case, it is expected that the international community gives the primary attention in addressing the confusion and atrocities associated with the conflict since the theory is limited on how it gives concrete measures on states' sovereignty and human rights violations, the people two Anglophone regions of Cameroon remain in the dilemma of survival and justice since the inapplicability of R2P has fallen short of its grandeur motifs especially looking at how the conflict has progressed into its nine year and counting.

Analytically, the scenario in Cameroon presents a critical situation where the international community should prioritise the protection of minorities who are of the two Anglophone regions. In this light, the international norms are supposed to strengthen justice for the vulnerable and recognise conditions that promote peace and solidarity among states and societies. In terms of justice, English speaking regions of Cameroonians are denied political, legal, and socio-cultural rights, hence the call for autonomy geared towards the establishment of peace. The English school in this sense help to understand the dilemma as far as the tension within in the conflict in Cameroon's English-speaking regions is concerned. International institution such as the UN and AU

is called upon to use constructive diplomatic measure to ensure conflict and peace building. Such constructive measure can be done through effective dialogue between the Cameroonian government and the leaders of the Southern Cameroons independence movement. Although the case of the Anglophone region of Cameroon is rooted in history of territorial divisions of the British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon during the colonial era, safeguarding and understanding the critical concerns of the Anglophone minority are crucial in establishing lasting peace. The mechanism for ensuring peace should focus on better integration and identity preservation.

R2P's implementation: A reflection on Africa

With the failure to act in Rwanda, the tide shifted on a positive dimension when mapping how R2P has been rigorously implemented on the African continent, particularly in the most recent past, with Ivory Coast and Libya coming into play. Since 2005, Libya and Côte d'Ivoire have been the two cases in which the UNSC has invoked the non-consensual provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter to mandate the international community to 'use all necessary means to enforce the protection of civilians. In the case of Libya, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) undertook a military campaign to implement UNSC Resolution 1973 (2011), aimed at protecting civilians protesting the Gaddafi regime (Brosig 2012, 5). The failure to intervene or slow intervention in internal armed conflicts that occurred in the 1990s, despite the accompanying complex humanitarian emergencies, led to the introduction of the African Union Constitutive Act of 2000 by African leaders and the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) at the international level. Even though Africa leaders did not use the concept of responsibility to protect, the language of Article 4 (h) and (j) of the aforementioned Act suggests that the AU was also concerned about the move from noninterference to not in - the difference in member's states affairs. At a regional level, the African union constitutive act resonated in this regard (Erameh & Idachaba 2017, 2).

The R2P 'lens' was used to guide the international community's diplomatic response to post-election violence in Kenya in 2008, but faltering efforts to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Darfur – widely seen as a spectacularly failed test case for R2P – led to more suggestions that the principle was 'dead'. However, R2P was trusted to the fore in 2011 as the UNSC took measures to resolve humanitarian crises in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire. Some member states complained that the UN/France in Côte d'Ivoire and NATO in Libya had exceeded their mandate to protect civilians in those countries. In the sense

that the actions of the external powers were considered as a use of force to change regimes in the two countries. The architects pledged to take a harder line in future by resisting efforts to apply coercive measures on states that fail in their responsibility to protect their own populations. According to those who continue to predict R2P's demise, one of the consequences is the international community's failure to find a meaningful consensus on the situation in Syria. In short, the functionality and legitimacy of the UN and its agencies chiefly focus on its amplitude in protecting humanity from the four deathly atrocities whether or not the UN has the mandate to successful implement R2P. The African continent has seen the implementation of R2P executed by the UNSC in the case of Libya and France's role in Ivory coast. Regarding humanitarian intervention, it has become a source of debate, both when it has been carried out in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and when its inapplicability failed such as in Rwanda.

The NATO intervention in Libya sparked much debate, especially among international relations scholars while some concern themselves with the justification for NATO's action, others focus on the legality of the intervention. In contrast, others have focused on the means, intentions, and outcomes of these interventions and from a constructivist perspective, James Pattison draws on the just cause principle as outlined in the ICISS document to justify the Libya intervention. As he puts it, "Ghaddafi regime had shown its readiness to massacre his people through the initial killing of 1,000 to 10,000 people (Erameh & Idachaba 2017, 3). Nobody today questions the basic principles that states have a responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, and that when they fail to do so, the international community should take action to provide protection. It is the question of finding international consensus on how best to realise these goals in the inherently difficult and complex situations that confront us today (Hanns Seidel Foundation et al. 2012, 13).

R2P and the conflict in Cameroon's Anglophone region

Globalization has drastically changed the world we live crisscrossing the internal matters of a state's action thus culminating to international interreference. Thus, state sovereignty has ceased to be an exclusive matter within its jurisdiction from political, economic, legal, and socio-culturally. Furthermore, the nature of wars has dynamically changed since the twentieth century; between states, to within states, and often states are perpetrators of human rights violations of their citizens. Primarily established for

peace and security concerns, the UN is now more concerned with human security issues within states. Nevertheless, national sovereignty posits a great challenge (Tamvada 2010, 12). The conventional wisdom holds that the adoption of R2P in Africa would help promote the protection of civilians, but some sceptics do not subscribe to such an assertion. In the case of R2P's applicability in Africa, it does not make political power responsible but rather allows those with power to act in a politically irresponsible manner, at the cost of democracy and, often, peace. R2P can promote political irresponsibility due to two factors: first, it tends to reduce all politics in Africa to the issue of adequate protection capacity; second, it makes the legitimacy of the African state subject to determination by the "international community" according to vague moral standards. The lack of accountability to those whose rights are supposedly being protected by African citizens is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed. Moralization and externalisation of African politics undermine democracy and set the stage for African and Western political actors to avoid having to justify their actions politically or to face the consequences of their actions.

They concluded that political power will only be made responsible when it is held accountable by those who are subject to it. To this end, he proposes replacing sovereignty as responsibility with popular sovereignty as a way of democratising the R2P discourse even if at the cost of R2P itself (Erameh & Idachaba 2017, 5). The non-applicability of R2P principles in the ongoing war in Cameroon's English-speaking regions is plagued by a number of negative consequences, including:

- Escalation of violence and gross human rights violations: Without the protection of the international community, individuals and communities in the two English speaking regions of Cameroon continue to be vulnerable to extreme violence, abuse, and exploitation orchestrated by Biya's security forces and by the Southern Cameroons defence forces.
- Lack of accountability: Without the application of R2P, those responsible for human rights violations and acts of violence may not be held accountable for their actions at home and abroad since the justice system in the country is unable to hold those to account and thus, the ICC is required to get the actors on both sides of the radar to account.
- Deteriorating humanitarian situation: The absence of R2P has resulted to an exacerbated and already dire humanitarian situation in the two regions of

Cameroon, causing further suffering of the people with some internally displaced and others as refugees.

- Weakened international cooperation: The systematic failure in the implementation of R2P in the ongoing war waged on the Anglophone regions of Cameroon by the Biya's regime is eroding international trust and cooperation in addressing conflicts and protecting human rights as the conflict continuous for about a decade and counting.
- Ineffectiveness in resolving conflicts: The non-applicability of R2P would hinder efforts to resolving the conflict in Cameroon, bringing lasting solutions and peace to that part of Africa. It should be noted that the failure of the Grand National Dialogue held by the government of Cameroon and also a purported dialogue and mediation process organised by the Government of Canada, the initiator of R2P has not led to any fruits in regards to quenching the flames of the conflict thus signalling a bad fate of Biya's regime in embracing an international dialogue and mediation with the Southern Cameroons leadership in prison and the diaspora.

The inapplicability of R2P in Cameroon has significant implications of the country and on the people of Former British Southern Cameroons. Such a failure highlights the importance of ensuring the effective implementation of R2P in conflicts zone where respective states have ignored or supported the violation of human rights against minority groups.

Findings and discussions

In terms of the findings, a fraught landscape of R2P doctrine in the African scenario with a specific focus on Cameroon is pivotal. To begin, it maps out that the foundational doctrine of R2P as a normative norm at the World Summit in 2005, because of the failure of the international community to act in both the conflict in Rwanda and Srebrenica, thus depicting a deflection from state sovereignty to sovereignty as a state's responsibility. Furthermore, the hastiness and the speedy evocation of military intervention in Libya all in the name of R2P under UNSC Resolution 1973 was discussed. However, it starkly contradicts the inapplicability of these set norms of R2P in Cameroon despite the Biya regime's failure in protecting the civilian population from a wide range of atrocities, violence, targeted and extrajudicial killings alongside the displacement of the population in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

More so, another major finding this article pinpoints are the root causes and the inconsistent nature of R2P norms, but also the geopolitical bias in terms of its enforcement. It highlights the UNSC and the veto power held by P5 members, thus culminating towards the choking of R2P politically. The paper posits that France's colonial pact with Cameroon and its veto power contributes gigantically to downplaying any succinct UNSC Resolution in the conflict in Cameroon making R2P doctrine inert. This political polarisation of R2P defeats the legality and unique autonomy of the institutions charged with its implementation because its activation aligns with interests and aspiration of great powers as against the fundamental goal of human security and humanitarian doctrine.

In addition, the article revealed that the selective bias in the non-enforcement in the case of Cameroon in terms of R2P mechanisms has culminated to security gaps thereby ushering in waves of violence, deteriorating human suffering, destruction of properties, and massive refugee influx mostly into Nigeria. The prevalence of the conflict has seen the enactment and utilisation of barbaric counter-insurgency and secessionist violence thus compromising the security of civilians by the state security forces. This reluctance by the international community has gigantically demonstrate that the civilian population have been abandoned in the midst of the belligerents to faint for themselves regarding their survival.

Moreover, with the applicability of the English School as our theoretical lens, the paper reveals that the conflict in Cameroon unveils a dichotomous line between pluralist and solidarist thoughts in the international society. The upholding and respect of sovereignty and non-intervention by the pluralist scholars has been championed by states with the likes of Cameroon as it enjoys support from allies triumphantly over collective human rights doctrine as held by the solidarist school of thought. This friction stands unresolved and leaves the denizens in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon in a political limbo for survival and justice. This work therefore concludes that the R2P's future in Africa is an opaque and oblique one since it runs into danger as the norms guiding it is set for rejection because of its selective and corrosive bias in its enforcement. This interest-ridden norm would downplay its legitimacy exposes and the core values shattered due to false and bias operationalisation.

Per the discussions on the inapplicability of R2P in Cameroon, this paper lays the foundational interconnectedness of three themes which range from, R2P as a normative

thought in today's sovereign-centric system, the African dilemma in regard to R2P been selective, and the prospects of R2P in preventing mass atrocities. First, the Cameroon-Libya contrast strongly highlights R2P's "soft law" dilemma. It has attained tremendous rhetorical unanimity, but its operationalisation is tied to Westphalian sovereignty. The UNSC is a political forum where strategic interests intersect, as the conversation shows. The paper's identification of French veto power as the blocking mechanism is a microcosm of a systemic flaw: R2P uses individuals who may be actively involved in or benefiting from regional political dynamics. This raises the question: can a principle meant to transcend politics work when activated politically? Also, the paper discussed the complicated role of African regional organisations. Article 4(h) of the African Union's Constitutive Act suggests a possible way for more legitimate and culturally sensitive action to take place. The paper concluded that the African Union is "ineffective" in Cameroon, showing that there is still a gap between what people want and what politicians are willing to do on the continent. This raises questions about how well African countries work together, how past colonial powers have affected AU member states, and how hard it is to reach an agreement against an existing government. The discussion centres also on the clash between the idealistic opinion of "African solutions to African problems" and the real-life broken political situation on the continent, where the principle of non-interference is often implemented by the UNSC.

Moreover, the paper highlights the two belligerents involved in the conflict in Cameroon especially with the Biya's security forces unleashing full force on the civilian population. With the high handiness of the Cameroon security forces on unarmed civilians, the military response pillar by the international community under the doctrine of R2P is paralyzed. Also, as the conflict continuous the utilisation of diplomatic pressure, sanctions targeting the main actors on the ground, creating humanitarian channels, and calling for the investigation of war crimes, crimes against humanity among others by the international Criminal Court is absent. The authors discussed and underpinned the need for an all-inclusive political dialogue as against the previous one-sided Grand National dialogue that has failed to produce any concrete remedy to the conflict but exacerbated it. Since the conflict is founded on historical political, economic and socio-cultural grievances and marginalisation, a robust solution would tackling the foundational identity and finding a political solution to the conflict, a duty that entails the coming on board of

the government of Cameroon, the Anglophone leadership and the international community as facilitators through a conflict and mediation process.

In a nutshell, R2P norms and its implementation is undergoing a monumental shift due geopolitical bias in its applicability and inapplicability. The inapplicability of R2P in Cameroon does not outlaw the norms but challenges the primary basic functionality of R2P. R2P has thus become a normative benchmark in human security on the global front as a framework geared at mobilising humanitarian and diplomatic resources is subjected to naming or shaming by both advocates and critics. The architects of R2P may have been inspired by the need to rescue humanity from the atrocities of conflict, however the uncomfortable illumination of the norm is been expose by gaps in its implementation all thanks to geopolitical interests, selective bias in its implementation, and the lack of resources among others leaving R2P as a lame-dog concept.

Conclusion and recommendation

This article elaborately exonerates the genealogical evolution, the English school of thought, the contested enforcement, and profound humanitarian effects of R2P principle, paying a particular attention on the raging conflict in Cameroon's English-speaking regions. The paper chartered that while R2P was founded as a normative response to past mass atrocities like in the case of Rwanda and Srebrenica, its enforcement is heavily contested due to politisation and selective bias. The paper unpacked a stark contrast of R2P which was invoked in the Libyan situation, yet the bias nature of R2P is conspicuously inapplicable in Cameroon in-spite of hard-core evidence of war crimes, mass atrocities, and the failure of the government of Cameroon to protect its civilian population. This disjunction arises due to geopolitical interests with the role of France in Cameroons' internal affairs and veto power at the UN Security Council. This double standard discredits R2P's credibility and jeopardizes the core debates that exist between state sovereignty and international humanitarian obligations.

The Cameroonian scenario in the case of the ongoing war in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon epitomises the dire effects of the selective inapplicability of R2P, thus culminating to increase violence, humanitarian attention and attrite international order. The paper earmarks that R2P's future in Africa hinges on the depolarisation and depoliticisation in its enforcement while validating frequent action under a set of legal and established norms. In a nutshell, the doctrine of R2P has metamorphosed from an "aspirational" dictum to becoming a relevant international tool in the study of human

security and the global community must act politically while uniformly prioritising the protection of civilian over neocolonial strategic interests.

Given the inapplicability of R2P in the case of the conflict in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, this study suggests that there should be an increase in peace and conflict negotiations mechanism due to the failure of the failure of the Grand National Dialogue. In addition, there should be an increase in humanitarian aid to meet the dire needs of internally displaced persons and refugees across neighbouring countries. Finally, the UN, AU, regional organisations, and civil society should collaborate in terms of capacity building mechanisms that seek to support solutions geared at justice, peace, stability, and security efforts.

References

Adjei, Ishmael. 2018. "The Concept of Responsibility to Protect and the Libya Intervention." *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 7 (9): 188–93. <https://doi.org/10.21275/art20191062>.

African Union. 2000. *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, Article 4(h). Lome, Togo.

African Union. 2000. *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, Article 4(j). Lome, Togo.

African Union. n.d. *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, Article 4(h). http://www.africaunion.org/root/au/AboutAu/Constitutive_Act_en.htm#Article4.

Bang, Henry Ngenyam, and Roland Azibo Balgah. 2022. "The Ramification of Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: Conceptual Analysis of a Looming 'Complex Disaster Emergency.'" *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 7 (1): 6. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-022-00114-1>.

Bellamy, Alex J. 2005. "Responsibility to Protect or Trojan Horse? The Crisis in Darfur and Humanitarian Intervention After Iraq." *Ethics & International Affairs* 19 (2): 31–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2005.tb00499.x>.

Brosig, Malte. 2012. "Responsibility to Protect: The GIBSA Perspective." In *The Responsibility to Protect – From Evasive to Reluctant Action? The Role of Global Middle Powers*, 1–10. Johannesburg: Hanns Seidel Foundation, Institute for Security Studies, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and South African Institute of International Affairs.

Buzan, Barry. 2001. "The English School: An Underexploited Resource in IR." *Review of International Studies* 27 (3): 471–88. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210501004715>.

Delancey, Mark D., Rebecca Neh Mbuh, and Mark W. Delancey. 2010. *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*. Historical Dictionaries of Africa, no. 113. Lanham, MD; Toronto; Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press.

Dze-Ngwa, Willibroad. 2015. "The First World War and Its Aftermath in Cameroon: A Historical Evolution of a Century, 1914–2014." *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science* 3 (2): 78–90.

Erameh, Nicholas Idris, Enemaku Umar Idachaba, and University of Ibadan. 2017. "Nato Intervention in Libya and Its Consequences on Global Security." *Political Science. Global Journal of Human-Social Science* 3–3: 1–17. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>.

Evans, Gareth, and Mohamed Sahnoun. 2002. "The Responsibility to Protect." *Foreign Affairs* 81 (6): 99–110. Published November 1, 2002.

Evans, Gareth. 2008. "The Responsibility to Protect: An Idea Whose Time Has Come ... and Gone?" *International Relations* 22 (3): 283–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117808094173>.

Evans, Gareth. 2009. "The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All." *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 20: 7–13. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25735145>.

Hall, Ian. 2018. "India and the Responsibility to Protect." In *New Directions in India's Foreign Policy: Theory and Praxis*, 172–194. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108562850.010>.

Hanns Seidel Foundation, Institute for Security Studies, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and South African Institute of International Affairs. 2012. *The Responsibility to Protect – From Evasive to Reluctant Action? The Role of Global Middle Powers*. Johannesburg: HSF, ISS, KAS & SAIIA.

Hehir, Aidan. 2010. "The Responsibility to Protect: 'Sound and Fury Signifying Nothing'?" *International Relations* 24 (2): 218–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117809366205>.

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. 2001. *The Responsibility to Protect*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Itoe Sidoine Emilia. 2025. "Civilian Protection in Armed Hostilities: An Analysis of the Conflict Situation in the Two English-Speaking Regions of Cameroon." *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)* 9 (2): 151–159.

Linklater, Andrew. 2005. "From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation." *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (1): 196–97. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s153759270560014x>.

Little, Richard. 2000. "The English School's Contribution to the Study of International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 6 (3): 395–422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066100006003004>.

Luck, Edward C. 2006. *UN Security Council: Practice and Promise*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203969335>.

Luck, Edward C. 2008. *The United Nations and the Responsibility to Protect*. Policy Analysis Brief. Muscatine, IA: The Stanley Foundation. <https://www.stanleycenter.org/publications/pab/LuckPAB808.pdf>.

Luck, Edward C. 2009. *Remarks to the General Assembly on the Responsibility to Protect*, July 23. New York: United Nations.

Melzer, Nils. 2019. *International Humanitarian Law: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Coordinated by Etienne Kuster. Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross.

Nfi, Joseph. 2011. "The Question of Insecurity in the Southern Cameroons Reunification Debate." *Leeds African Studies Bulletin* 73: 53–66.

O'Brien, Patricia. 2008. *Responsibility to Protect: Address by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs at the United Nations Torino Retreat*. New York: United Nations.

Pant, Manoj. 2012. *R2P in the Asia Pacific Region*. Brisbane: Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, University of Queensland; San José: University for Peace.

Sahnoun, Gareth Evans and Mohamed. 2022. "The Responsibility to Protect." *Foreign Affairs*, September 3, 2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/responsibility-protect>.

Tamvada, Subramanya Sirish. 2010. "Whose Responsibility? Responsibility to Protect and the Role of the Security Council." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, January. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1677016>.

Thakur, Ramesh, and Thomas Weiss. 2009. "R2P: From Idea to Norm—and Action?" *Global Responsibility to Protect* 1 (1): 22–53. <https://doi.org/10.1163/187598409x405460>.

United Nations General Assembly. 2005. *World Summit Outcome Document*, A/60/L.1, paras. 138–140. September 20.

United Nations. 2004. *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*. Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. New York: United Nations.

United Nations. 2005. *2005 World Summit Outcome*. UN General Assembly Resolution 60/1, paras. 138–139.

United Nations. n.d. *Charter of the United Nations*. <https://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/>

United States Department of State. 2023. *Cameroon 2023 Human Rights Report*.
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.