

# Revisiting the UN's Role in Maintaining Peace and Security in the 21st Century

## Norm Contestation and Changing Power Dynamics

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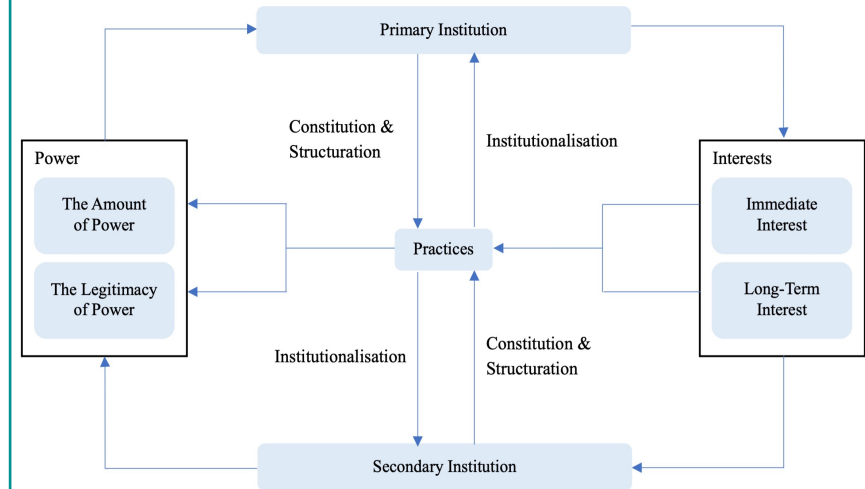
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### Research Question & Argument

- This research seeks to address two questions:
  - How do the norms invent by the UN shape international order?
  - How do changes in state interests and power lead to the wax and wane of these norms in international society?
- This research argues that understanding the role of these norms is critical in analysing the UN's efforts in maintaining international peace and security in contemporary world politics. These norms enable the UN to develop an agency to shape some of the fundamental institutions exist in the international society, which in turn both constitute states' identities and imposing structural pressures on their behaviours. Though this importance has been noted by recent theoretical development in the English School (Navari and Knudsen, 2019), their conceptions of *power* and *interest* need to be further crystalised. This research thus also outlines a pattern by which the UN facilitates global governance and advances general understanding on the role of international organisations in international relations.

### Theoretical Framework

- Concept of international society (Bull, 1979; Buzan, 2004; Holti, 2004)
- The structural and constitutional functions of institutions (Wendt and Duvall, 1989)
- The relationship between primary and secondary institutions: problematic
- Framework derives from Navari and Knudsen (2019) and Spandler (2015)
- Constructivism: norm's life cycle (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998)
- Legitimacy in international society (Clark, 2007)



### Background

- Reflecting upon the recurrent civil war and mass atrocity in the 1990s (e.g., Rwanda, Yugoslavia), the UN's efforts in maintaining international peace and security in the 21st century started with a new conception of *protection* (Bellamy and Williams, 2011). For instance, the Women Peace and Security Agenda (2000), Responsibility to Protect (2005), Human Security and Development (UNDP), etc.
- Rationalism-informed studies have general difficulty in providing satisfactory explanations to this phenomenon. Realists argue international institutions are the embodiment of order kept by great powers and serves their interests (Mearsheimer, 2019: 11). Neoliberal institutionalists argue that international institutions reduce the uncertainty and encourage transparency in interstate negotiation and help states overcome the problem of relative gain that prevents them from cooperation (Keohane, 1998: 86)
- According to Wendt and Duvall (1989), the agent-centric focus and rational-choice logic of these two theoretical traditions made them ignore *the constitutional function of international institutions*, thus they can only see one side of the Moon

### Methodology

- Case study: treating norms as the diagnostic evidence and using *Process-Tracing method* to investigate the wax and wane of the Responsibility to Protect
- Supplemented by *textual analysis* on UN Documents and policy statements to uncover states' interests regarding the practices of R2P, and on press correspondence to uncover public opinion which could indicate the legitimacy of power

Timing	Wax		Contestation		Wane
Cycles	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4	Cycle 5
Events	2005 World Summit	UNSC's practices	2011 Libyan Crisis	BRICS's opposition	2013 Syrian Crisis
Theoretical Studies	Practice → Distribution of power & legitimacy (a) → Changes in primary institutions (a)	Primary institutions (a) → state interests (a) → Practice → Distribution of power & legitimacy (a) → Primary institutions (a)	Practice → Distribution of power & legitimacy (b) → Changes in primary institutions (b)	Primary institutions (b) → state interests (b) → Practice → Distribution of power (b) → Primary institutions (b)	Enhanced primary institutions (b) → State interests (b) → Practice
Empirical Studies	The institutionalisation of R2P shifted the international order towards human right over sovereignty	Multiple UNSC's practices on R2P consolidated the power & legitimacy of the West	The intervention generated wide criticism on the R2P and the international order that legitimised it	The BRICS's conceptions of R2P, de-legitimised the Western conception and changed international order	The restored balance between sovereignty and human right leads to the UNSC's stagnation during the Syrian Crisis