

**Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect: Can Brazil Save the United Nations? Estado (Brazil) 5 August 2013** The United Nations is a twentieth century body struggling with twenty-first century problems. (...)

(...) Those who seek an extreme makeover for the world body tend to focus upon the permanent membership of the Security Council, the post World War Two guarantor of international peace and security.

In the sixty-eight year history of the UN, Brazil has spent twenty years on the Security Council. Only Japan has been elected as many times. This experience, coupled with Brazil's undeniable economic ascendancy, supports its claim for a permanent seat. (...)

Brazil's campaign for permanent membership must project a vision of the UN in the twenty-first century that is about enhancing universal human rights and confronting global problems. These are not fringe concerns. The promotion of human rights is fundamental to Brazilian foreign policy and is enshrined in Articles 1 and 55 of the UN Charter. Function may follow form, but at the moment the debate on Security Council reform lacks acuity.

In this context Brazil's support for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) could prove crucial. (...) However, in the aftermath of the controversial 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya, Brazil led the UN debate about how to protect civilians without lurching towards "regime change." Brazil's argument that intervening powers also have a "responsibility while protecting" has not helped mobilize the divided Security Council with regard to Syria, but it has raised important questions about the methodology and motivations of civilian protection operations.

To ignite a debate is not enough. Brazil should actively support the Accountability, Coherency and Transparency (ACT) diplomatic initiative of Switzerland and others. Of particular importance is their recommendation that the permanent members of the Security Council should not use their veto in mass atrocity situations. It may come too late to save the people of Syria, but this will not be the last time the Security Council has to face a situation where one of its permanent members is the ally of a brutal regime intent on murdering its own people.

It would also be a mistake to underestimate the emerging power of civil society with regard to UN reform. Once marginal players in global politics, the top dozen NGOs now have a combined budget of approximately \$US 3 billion and employ thousands of humanitarian and human rights workers. The most professional organizations, like Human Rights Watch or Medicines Sans Frontiers, can be powerful allies. (...)

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