

**New project: Global Norm Evolution and the Responsibility to Protect** Global Public Policy Institute  
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*The Global Public Policy Institute is developing a project on Global Norm Evolution and the Responsibility to Protect. The project description is outlined below:*

Joining the United States, Europe and Russia as major powers, countries like Brazil, China, India and South Africa are demanding greater influence on the global order. As a result, global norms such as sovereignty and non-intervention are evolving in an increasingly contested way. The debate about a “responsibility to protect” civilians from mass atrocities is a prime example of this dynamic. To examine this process of norm evolution, researchers at seven academic institutions in Europe, Brazil, China and India are collaborating in a two and a half year project called Global Norm Evolution and the Responsibility to Protect.

The Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) is the lead institution for the project (...). The project launched in November 2012 and lasts until mid-2015. The research consortium includes partners from Oxford University, Frankfurt University, Peking University, Fundação Getulio Vargas in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi and Central European University in Budapest. (...)

## **SHIFTING COALITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

By focusing on “norm evolution,” we highlight the potential for changes in norm interpretation over time as well as the convergence and divergence between alternative interpretations of norms supported by different constituencies. In contrast to the simplistic image of “the West against the Rest,” we observe shifting positions and coalitions both within the West and among other groups, for example the BRICS, the African Union and IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa). (...)

## **THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT**

This research project focuses on the evolution of a “responsibility to protect” civilians from mass atrocities. This incipient norm challenges the traditional understandings of sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs and thereby the foundations of the global order. (...) Since then, mass atrocities in Darfur, Kenya, Libya, Syria and elsewhere have raised questions about the rights and obligations of states and the international community to protect civilians from mass atrocities. These exposed diverse interpretations, attitudes and practices toward the evolving norm of a responsibility to protect.

## **NORM EVOLUTION: NON-LINEAR AND OPEN-ENDED**

Common theoretical approaches on global norms have been largely western-centric, linear and teleological, holding that norms ultimately emerge from the West and become universally accepted. In this scholarship, non-western actors are marginalized. Their inputs and influences do not receive sufficient attention.

The project employs the concept “norm evolution” to underscore the open-ended, non-linear aspects of this process. The responsibility to protect is a prime example of an evolving global norm whose fate is uncertain. We reject the widespread notion that one particular interpretation of it is on a path toward legal codification. To the contrary, it remains to be seen how different interpretations of a responsibility to protect will evolve, if any particular interpretation will gain traction as a universal legal principle at all, and how it will change during this process. (...)

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

For the period from 2005 to 2012, the project asks two basic research questions:

1. How and why did the interpretations, attitudes and practices of major powers with regard to a responsibility to protect change?
2. How did the interaction between major powers (“normative conflict”) shape the evolution of the global norm?

We are undertaking two sets of case studies based on these two questions, distinguishing between major powers as individual actors in global norm evolution and how their interactions shape the evolution of the norm. In the first set, we will examine Brazil, China, India, Russia, South Africa as well as the EU and the United States. For the interaction case studies, we examine nine “critical junctures” that sparked debate about either the substance of the norm or its applicability and implications in a particular international crisis. The nine critical junctures are: the 2005 World Summit and the 2009 General Assembly debate on R2P and the crises in Darfur (since 2003), Kenya (2007-2008), Georgia (2008), Myanmar (Cyclone Nargis, 2008), Côte d’Ivoire (2010-11), Libya (2011) and Syria (2011-ongoing).

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The project was started in November 2012 and will run for two and a half years. (...) We expect to publish a first set of working papers by the end of 2013. The end result will be two volumes,

one for each set of case studies, and several journal articles.

[Read the full project proposal.](#)