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There has been a lot of talk over the past two weeks regarding the United Nations' "**Responsibility to Protect**" - the **responsibility** of a state **to protect** its citizens from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing.

The two paragraphs (138 and 139) on the **responsibility to protect** in the U.N.'s 2005 Summit Outcome document have sat for almost three years with little activity toward implementation. (...) [A]s usual, the biggest challenges stem from key U.N. member states.

() Let's take a quick look at some of the issues with member states. First, there are developing states that won't even admit that the **responsibility to protect** is a concept. Rather, it is merely an idea. There are other states that tend to focus solely on the use-of-force aspect, which should be used only as a last resort. (...) And then some states try to invoke the concept when the facts supporting their argument are in dispute, such as when the United Kingdom invoked it in relation to the intervention/invasion of Iraq.

More difficult yet is when a humanitarian crisis is so large that it threatens a large percentage of a state's population and the nation's government turns down external assistance as was recently done by the military regime in Myanmar, also known as Burma. (...) Particularly as China has veto power on the U.N. Security Council?

Then we add in the international experts. Many can't even agree on what does or doesn't fit into the U.N. paragraphs. (...)

Others disagree with the limited take on the concept included in the U.N. document. (...) Why does this matter? Because the United Nations requires agreement from its member states to act, particularly among the permanent five members of the U.N. Security Council that hold veto power - the United States, China, France, the UK and Russia.

(...) Until the political will exists to create an international norm and then enforce it, the **Responsibility to Protect** will remain words on a page. (...)

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