Obama’s Adoption of the Responsibility to Protect: A Constructivist Analysis

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Abstract

This paper will seek to demonstrate how the use of constructivist theory can best explain the decision by Obama to adopt and implement the emerging norm of R2P. Through this constructivist lens, it will be argued that the adoption of the emerging norm of R2P is part of Obama’s attempt to radically redefine American identity within the international system. This need to redefine American identity stems in part, from the perceived ‘moral crisis’ following the actions of the Bush Jnr. administration. In order to return America back to its core liberal values, Obama has attempted to fully implement the ideas of R2P both on the international stage and domestically. From a constructivist perspective, this paper will demonstrate how the fundamental ideas stipulated by R2P, are intrinsically tied to what Obama views as key US values. It is therefore vital for Obama to adopt the emerging R2P norm, in order to uphold US ideals and rebuild American identity. This move also represents a return to the idea of the US as both an exceptional and exemplarist state. Furthermore the paper will argue that Obama’s intervention into Libya represented a significant attempt to legitimise the emerging R2P norm, whilst also redefining America’s image in the international system. The rhetoric behind the US intervention is thus founded upon the exceptional nature of US identity, which Obama is attempting to uphold. Following these events it has also been crucial for Obama to commit further to this policy through the introduction of PSD-10, acknowledging the need for domestic and international policy to interact in order to radically over haul US identity.

Keywords: R2P, Constructivism, Obama, US
Introduction

‘Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different’. ‘When our interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act’ Barack Obama (2011b)

As President Obama insinuated in his address to the nation on Libya, March 28th 2011, he believes in the exceptional nature of the US, empowering it with a defining moral code in regard to mass atrocity crimes. Moreover, one can also acknowledge that Obama is not only calling upon a moral responsibility for the US to intervene in Libya, he is also attempting to legitimise the core premise of the responsibility to protect (R2P). As this paper will examine, this adoption of R2P by Obama is highly symbolic, not just in regards to US intervention, but to its overall identity. In order to understand the motives behind Obama's adoption of R2P, we must therefore examine the social construction of this new US identity, and its relationship with R2P.

The Responsibility to protect was formally introduced through a report by the Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in December 2001 (ICISS 2001). The core concept behind the R2P, being that all governments have an obligation in which to protect their populations from mass atrocity crimes, genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (Adams 2012: 11). R2P therefore challenges the traditional concept of sovereignty and attempts to re-work its definition, whilst also extending it to make states take responsibility for protecting their own citizens from harm (Stark 2011). In this definition, sovereignty carries with it clear moral responsibilities and in order to exercise sovereignty, states must uphold humanitarian responsibilities (Wheeler & Egeron 2008:116). Human individuals rather than the state are therefore reframed as the primary focus of security (Bellamy 2006: 144). When a state is unable or unwilling to carry out this responsibility, the international community has a responsibility to protect populations and prevent such crimes from occurring (Stark 2011). The actions to protect the population against these crimes are taken through the provisions of the UN charter and as such R2P has been reaffirmed in Council resolutions 1674 (2006) and 1894 (2009) (Bellamy & Williams 2011: 827). R2P was henceforth summarised to incorporate 3 key pillars of responsibility: firstly, the primary responsibility of the state to protect its population from mass atrocity crimes; secondly the responsibility of the international community to assist states in their efforts to do so; and finally the responsibility to take collective action if national authorities fail to prevent
populations from mass atrocities (Gerber 2011: 28-29). The creation of these pillars allowed the expectations of global efforts to shift more heavily towards prevention (Gerber 2011: 29). This decision also highlighted a consensus on the need to change the UN's normative framework, in line with the changed reality of threats and victims (Thakur 2011: 12). Following its introduction, R2P was unanimously endorsed by member states at the UN World Summit in September 2005; however, it is important to note that this endorsement adopted by the General Assembly, was far more restrained than the vision of the earlier ICISS report (Glanville 2012: 11). Several states expressed concern to the endorsement of a concept that could facilitate self-interested interference by powerful states, in the domestic affairs of the weak (Glanville 2012: 11). The US under the Bush Administration, focused particularly on its potential to constrain national security policy and their decisions over when and where to use force (Bellamy 2005: 36). This resulted in a failure to specifically act upon the principles of R2P, in the case of any humanitarian crises during the Bush administration. One may therefore question, why there has been such a considerable shift in policy towards the emerging R2P norm by President Obama, in direct contrast with the previous administration. This paper will seek to demonstrate how an analysis of this change, must be undertaken through the application of constructivist theory.

The central argument of this paper therefore being that the adoption of R2P by Obama cannot be isolated form the concept of US identity. It is Obama's need to radically redefine US identity that requires him to adopt the principles of R2P and implement these on the international stage, as well as domestically. In order to analyse this proposition, it is critical to explore how concepts of identity have interacted to forge this significant shift in US policy. From a constructivist perspective, one must acknowledge that US identity shapes foreign policy decisions. It is subsequently the ideas that American's holds, that then create the basis of American national interest (Schmidt 2012: 13). In this regard American policy is therefore susceptible to change due to the malleability of ideas and interests (Schmidt 2012: 13). As Reus-Smit argues, understanding how specific actors develop their interests is crucial to explaining a wide range of international political phenomenon (2009: 221). It is clear that Obama brought with him ideas and values about the role of American identity when he became President, as did key individuals he selected to join his administration. Obama's understanding of what is good and appropriate therefore creates a need to accept certain norms, helping to inform the overall behaviour of the state (Finnermore 1996: 2).
Secondly this paper will directly analyse the influence of the previous Bush administration, highlighting the way in which specific foreign policy decisions, created an overall discrediting of the US image internationally. The creation of this ‘moral crisis’ in American foreign policy by the Bush Administration must be viewed as crucial to reaffirming Obama’s need to adapt US identity. Under the Bush administration, there was arguably little regard for the international fallout from the use of unilateral force, as well as the severe discrediting of American moral values (Deudney & Meiser 2012: 36). It can certainly be argued that the actions of the administration meant ‘America's claim to be a beacon of freedom in a dark world has been dimmed by Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib and the flouting of the Geneva Conventions amid the panicky unipolar posturing in the aftermath of September 11th’ (The Economist 2008). In terms of the US role in humanitarian intervention, the actions of the Bush administration in Iraq can be claimed to have disabled the ability of the US to build consensus around other attempts to intervene in humanitarian crises (Bellamy 2005: 38). The adoption of the emerging R2P norm by Obama will be shown to represent a significant discrediting of the previous approach by the Bush administration, highlighting the new critical role the US must play in this foreign policy area.

Moreover, it will be argued that actions by the Bush administration, created the further need and responsibility for Obama to return the US back to its identity, of not just an exceptional state but also an exemplarist state. This return of the US to its role as an exemplarist state ultimately creates an obligation to uphold key moral values. As the chapter will explore, these key moral values require the US to change the way it interacts with the international community. Henceforth it is argued that the fundamental principles stipulated by the emerging R2P norm are principles that a new exemplarist US state must also uphold and implement. This process is understood in terms of Obama’s attempt to improve the image of the US internationally, as well as its overall identity.

Thirdly, this paper will examine how the adoption of R2P by Obama has directly influenced US behaviour both internationally and domestically, and how this behaviour is based upon a redefinition of US identity. Due to the scope of this assignment, the paper will focus predominantly on 2 defining actions by the Obama administration in the international and domestic spheres specifically. These are the Libyan intervention 2011 and the introduction of the Presidential Study Directive on mass atrocity prevention (PSD-10). In the case of Libya, it will be argued that the need by Obama, to redefine US identity has radically transformed
the way in which the US conducts intervention and interacts with the international community. Regardless of other core national interests that may have been at play in the decision to intervene in Libya, it will be argued that Obama ultimately took this decision based upon the need to redefine the way America conducts its foreign policy in regards to intervention. The intervention will be shown to demonstrate a distinct endeavour to construct a multilateral power sharing approach to intervention, founded within the structures of the UN and international law.

Finally, this paper will conclude that Obama's attempt to radically redefine American identity is only able to become fully salient through the implementation of R2P's principles domestically, as well as internationally. As a holistic approach to constructivism will demonstrate, identity formation at both domestic and international levels is a continuous process in which both identities interact (Bozdaglioglu 2007: 142). It is the process of this integrated interaction, which allows one to explain the systematic change in regard to mass atrocity prevention in the US. To begin this discussion, the use of a constructivist analysis will be presented, in order to underline its significance in helping to analyse the fundamental premise of this paper.

2. Constructivism and the emerging R2P norm

This chapter will demonstrate the strengths of using a constructivist analysis in order to explain the motivations behind the actions of state actors. Through the use of a normative approach one can assess the importance of actor’s engagement with intersubjective norms (Reus-Smit 2008: 406). It can therefore be argued that the adoption of specific norms by actors, signals an attempt to legitimise this action in accordance with their own identity (Finnermore 1996). Based upon this assertion, the chapter will indicate the way in which constructivist theory will be applied to the discussion of Obama's adoption of R2P, highlighting the significance of values and identity. Secondly the social construction of R2P itself will be examined, acknowledging the crucial role of norm entrepreneurs in redefining the concept of humanitarian intervention. It will be argued that the actions of these norm entrepreneurs were instrumental in creating and defining the concept behind R2P. Moreover, through an identification of the challenges faced by the emerging R2P norm, it will be possible to underline the lack of clarity that surrounded R2P prior to Obama's election as President. This factor will be presented as significant in the process leading to Obama's adoption of R2P under his presidency.
2.1 Constructivist methodology
As Onuf first highlighted, the fundamental idea behind constructivism is that all human beings are ‘social beings’ and that without our social relations we would therefore not be human (1998: 59). Critical to this premise is the concept that we make the world what it is, ‘from raw materials provided by nature, through doing what we do with each other and what we say to each other’ (Onuf 1998: 59). Our interactions ultimately allow for the social construction of our world (Onuf 1998). In accordance with this premise it is vital to understand constructivism as forming the basis for an effective critique of the more traditional theories of neorealism and neoliberalism. For neorealists such as Waltz, ‘state behaviour varies more with differences of power than with difference in ideology, in internal structure of property relations or in governmental form’ (1986: 329). In this sense national interest reflects material power, in which states must provide self-help, in order to survive in the anarchy of the international system (Baldwin 2002: 59). This approach is mirrored to some extent by neoliberalism, which also tries to explain the behaviour of states with reference to the material structure of the international system (Thomas 2001: 10). In contrast, neoliberals such as Keohane also argue that hegemony is ‘related in complex ways to cooperation and to institutions such as international regimes’ (1984: 46). Consequently, neoliberals emphasise how international institutions and cooperation can exist despite the absence of a hegemon (Powell 1994: 327). As such, the materialist approach of both theories simply reduces everything to a matter of what is observable, to this extent social processes (such as culture value and norms) are simply an ‘indirect function of the material dimension’ (Whyte 2012). Constructivists on the other hand are able to acknowledge the limitations of these theories, highlighting their reliance on a materialist understanding of international politics and focus on predetermined interests (Bokhari 2002). The international system is therefore seen to be made up of social relationships as well as material capabilities, allowing for social relationships to give meaning to material capabilities (Griffiths et al 2008: 52). Because of this, constructivism is able to provide a more social and idea based comprehension, whilst also providing a technique for investigating the often complex correlations between ‘agentic and structural forces’ (Finnermore 1996: 27). Constructivists must therefore assess how actors come to have certain interests, in order to inform their understanding of the way actors behave (Reus-Smit 2008: 406).

As Finnermore argues, in order to explain state behaviour using a constructivist framework, attention must be placed on the ‘mutually constituted character of agents and structure’
(1996: 25). Actors and structures are therefore ‘intimately connected’; actors create structures, whilst at the same time social structures create and empower actors (Finnermore 1996: 30). This can be acknowledged through the way social structures themselves help in providing states and actors with direction and goals for action, it is the values that they embody and the rules they define that channel behaviour (Finnermore 1996: 28). Actors allow themselves to conform to these values not just because of a rational assessment of cost, but also through the socialisation process that makes them accept specific values, rule and roles (Finnermore 1996: 29). It is shared ideas, expectations and beliefs about appropriate behaviour that ultimately give the world structure, order and stability (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 894). In this sense we must understand what shapes these factors and what consequences this has on the actions of actors in the international system. As this paper will demonstrate, it is the socially constructed beliefs and values of Obama which have created a need to accept the emerging norm of R2P, stemming from a requirement to fundamentally adapt US identity to meet a standard of appropriate behaviour (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998). From this constructivist perspective one must further analysis the role of norms and normative structure within this process.

2.2 The role of norms and normative structure

Reus-Smit states that constructivists ‘see actors' interests as being shaped through their social identities which are constituted through actors' engagement with the intersubjective norms of society’ (2008: 406). It is norms therefore, that are crucial in helping to understand the motives behind actors and their perceived identity within the international system. Norms can be defined as ‘a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity’ (Payne 2001: 37). They form the intentions and understandings of actors and reinforce the sense of ‘legitimate social purpose’ (Ruggie 1998: 38). Norms also focus on the way in which interests in the international system change through the examination of social interaction (Finnermore 1996: 3). This social nature of the international system allows the creation of normative understandings among actors that are then able to coordinate values, expectations and behaviour (Finnermore 1996: 3). When states make use of justifications they can be seen to be drawing upon these shared values and experiences, held by other actors (Finnermore 1996: 4). The way in which states use justifications for their actions makes it possible to understand what internationally held norms are and the way in which these change over time (Finnermore 1996: 4). The adoption of a specific norm by an actor therefore signals an attempt to legitimise this action in accordance with his/her own identity (Finnermore 1996).
In the case of Obama's adoption of R2P, it will be later highlighted how he has drawn upon American values to legitimise the emerging norm as fundamental to US identity.

The role of individuals in changing state behaviour is therefore crucial, in which one must also acknowledge the importance of an actor bringing with them their own beliefs and values. This desire to follow norms based on the individual has subsequently led to a range of debate, in which the behavioural logic that drives norm-conforming has attempted to be analysed (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 912). Rational choice approaches to norm analysis have highlighted that norms are simply conformed to because it helps individuals get what they want and is therefore only an attempt to maximise utility (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 912). As such, simply focusing on the maximisation of utility presents a far too simplistic picture of the behavioural logic process of individuals. Olsen has therefore acknowledged that conforming to norms is often linked to a ‘logic of appropriateness’ (Olsen 2007: 3). As defined by Olsen ‘to act appropriately is to proceed according to the institutionalised practices of mutual understanding of what is true, reasonable, natural, right and good’ (2007: 3). Hence it is possible to argue that conforming to norms is linked to an understanding of what behaviour is good, desirable and appropriate (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 912). In this sense, obligation and responsibility may be a powerful motivation for actors and play a crucial role in underpinning many aspects of world politics (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 912). In order to understand the choice of actors, one needs to have a deep understanding of social norms and rules rather than simply looking at utility maximisation (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 913). As will be demonstrated, this approach will allow for critical analysis of the motives behind the move to adopt R2P and the role of the actors involved in this process.

To take full account of the fundamental changes that occur in state identity and social structures it is also crucial to make use of a holistic approach to constructivism. This allows for a more concrete and historical method in contrast to a systemic approach. A systemic approach focuses entirely on the role of international interaction and fails to introduce domestic political culture into the process. It therefore can only provide a relatively static conception of the state and the international system. In contrast, a holistic approach is greater concerned with the dynamics of international change through examining domestic as well as international structures, highlighting their importance in forming a single global order. This social interaction between domestic and international spheres helps to determine rules and structure in the international system and allows for a greater understanding of normative
change within the system (Price & Reus-Smit 1998: 269). The behaviour of states is therefore the product of the mutual intellectual norms at the domestic and international levels and it is through this interaction that states are able to produce new definitions of self (Mahdi 2010: 12). This method of analysis will be vital in order to understand the relationship between the policies implemented by Obama at the domestic and international level, which legitimise the ideas of R2P. It is the interaction between domestic and international spheres that allows Obama to more radically redefine American identity in the international system. However, in order to analyse this process, it is critical to understand how the emerging norm of R2P was socially constructed.

2.3 The emergence of the R2P norm

Through the use of this constructivist framework and normative analysis, it is possible to greater understand the motives behind humanitarian intervention and specifically the creation of the R2P. To begin, it is important to reiterate the weakness of some of the more traditional IR approaches, in attempting to understand changes in humanitarian norms over time. Realist and liberal approaches fail to fully investigate interests as they infer interests as being already assumed and specified before analysis begins (Finnermore 1996: 3). As Waltz argues, ‘states have to do whatever they think necessary for their own preservation’ indicating that it is only material self-interest that is driving states to intervene (1979: 109). Secondly these theories are unable to account for the fluidity and transformative nature of the international system as well as changes that occur over time, due to their static nature (Finnermore 1996: 2). This static nature is emphasised by the argument that states decisions are based upon their need to survive, which therefore conditions their behaviour (Waltz 1979: 105). As Wheeler also states, realism is based on the contention that states will not intervene for primarily humanitarian reasons because they are essentially motivated by self-interest (2000: 30). Through assuming that state goals are solely determined by material self-interest, realism is unable to fully assess reasons behind humanitarian intervention by states and the fluidity of change in the international system. This is demonstrated by the US decision to intervene in Somalia 1992. The absence of any geo-strategic or economic advantages to be gained for the US highlights that intervention needs to be explained through a greater reference to norms (Finnermore 1996). Henceforth the use of a constructivist approach that highlights the role of international norms makes it possible to analyse state interests and motivations and their change over time (Finnermore 1996: 2). It is through this framework that decisions by states to intervene can be understood, whilst also allowing for greater scrutiny of the changing
normative context in which the action occurs (Finnermore 1996: 1). The justifications that states use for their interventions are examples of them ‘articulating shared values and expectations’ which are not just held by themselves but other decision makers and public within states (Finnermore 1996: 4). In order to understand the motives and factors behind Obama's adoption of R2P, one must therefore examine the creation of this emerging norm and how these factors shape the decisions by states to adopt it.

Following humanitarian catastrophes in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia during the 1990s’, and the insufficient responses in stopping these major atrocities, it was critical for states to construct an appropriate response to gross violations of human rights (Schütte & Kübler 2007). As Sikkink argues, the emergence and need for a new human rights policy is not just ‘a simple victory over interests, it demonstrates the power of ideas to reshape understanding of national interest’ (1993: 140). In order to understand why and how new norms are created we must examine the role of norm entrepreneurs. Norms are actively built by agents, who have strong notions about what constitutes desirable behaviour within the international system (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 896). Norm entrepreneurs then strive to convince a critical mass of states to embrace a specific new norm, which can be viewed as an attempt to socialise other states to becoming norm leaders (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 895). Arguably it is the desire for actors to enhance their self-esteem and strengthen their identity, which in part helps to facilitate this process of norm cascade (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 895). The norm must also become institutionalised through specific international rules and organisations, thus helping to facilitate the norm cascade, through clarifying parameters of the norm and what actions constitute a violation (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 901). A state’s decision to comply with a new norm is also intrinsically linked to their own identities as members of the international system and the extent to which they wish to demonstrate their adaption to this environment (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 902). It is these institutionalised norms and ideas which help to define the meaning and identity of actors, as well as the pattern of appropriate economic, political and cultural activity in which they engage (Reus-Smit 2001: 218). The outcome of this process helps to demonstrate the way in which a state’s identity fundamentally shapes its behaviour and the way state identity is shaped by cultural context (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998: 902). It is through the application of this theory that one can further understand the motives surrounding Obama's adoption of R2P. For Obama this adoption is inherently linked to a need to radically redefine American identity in the international system. Through supporting the emerging R2P norm Obama is acknowledging
the US adaption to the changing international environment, therefore helping to change US identity. Subsequently, to understand how R2P is linked to American identity, one must examine the role of key norm entrepreneurs in redefining the idea of humanitarian intervention and the process of this social construction.

There were a wide range of key norm entrepreneurs who were involved in the social construction of R2P, significantly the responses of Tony Blair, Lloyd Axworthy and Gareth Evans (Pollentine 2012: 69). However, it was arguably Kofi Annan who played the most vital role in attempting to redefine the concept of humanitarian intervention. One can argue that these key actors all acknowledged the challenges of the post-Cold War era, in which globalisation was redefining the interest and security concerns of states (Pollentine 2012: 69). In this sense, there was a need to further protect human rights of civilians and create a global responsibility in which to do so (Pollentine 2012: 70). This was stipulated through a clear support for the concept of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’, whilst also calling for new frameworks to improve multilateral decision making processes (Pollentine 2012: 70). Annan in his article ‘Two Concepts of Sovereignty’ directly challenged the traditional concept of sovereignty and posed the possibility of a new perspective (1999). This allowed the creation of further debate and questioning into the norm of intervention on humanitarian grounds. On the other hand, it was arguably the post 9/11 context that provided the catalyst for an even greater commitment to fully defining the concept of R2P (Pollentine 2012: 62). The fallout following the Iraq war engulfed the international system and helped mobilise Annan to create his ‘summit focused response’ (Pollentine 2012: 62). Annan emphasised the importance of R2P in his ‘In larger freedom’ report submitted before the 2005 world summit (UN 2005). The clear endorsement of R2P within the report called upon states to follow suit, helping to lock R2P into the negotiating agenda, giving it political traction (Pollentine 2012: 53). The forging of this concept, through the contrasting debates on the role of sovereignty and multilateralism, ultimately created a new way of conducting intervention to prevent mass atrocity crimes. In this sense the creation of R2P must be viewed as a reframing of the humanitarian intervention debate, disputing arguments about any right to intervene, instead ‘acknowledging a responsibility – one to protect civilians’ (Evans 2006).

It is therefore critical to understand, how this new framing of the concept behind R2P contrasts with the previous debates surrounding humanitarian intervention (Adams 2012). Humanitarian intervention is often defined as ‘military intervention in a state, without the
approval of its authorities and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among the inhabitants’ (Roberts 1993: 429). In this sense, it is possible to argue that R2P is a far more refined approach to protecting populations from mass atrocity crimes (Adams 2012: 11). As humanitarian intervention automatically focuses on the use of military force by a state against another without consent, it therefore fails to look into a broader range of preventative actions or non-coercive measures, which are arguably central to the concept of R2P. Most controversially humanitarian intervention often assumes a right to intervene without gaining the appropriate authorisation under international law. In contrast, R2P is attempting to respond effectively to extreme crises, in a way that is both legitimate and legal (Adams 2012: 11). The legal aspect of R2P was clearly demonstrated by the ability of the UN to pass resolution 1973 without direct opposition, in the case of the Libyan intervention. Based upon this assertion, it will be argued that these new ideas and values within the emerging R2P norm are inherently tied to what Obama views as key moral values of US identity. In his attempt to radically redefine US identity, Obama is seeking to legitimise the emerging norm of R2P, which must be seen as contrasting to the more general norm of humanitarian intervention.

Despite initial attempts to fully define the concepts behind R2P, the application of this emerging norm has also been used by states in clear violation of its original premise. From a constructivist perspective one must acknowledge the difficulties for emerging norms to become fully legitimised by the international community. In the early stages of norm acceptance, the meanings and structures behind a norm may not be fully defined, and thus has the potential to lead some actors into norm-breaking behaviour (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998). It has been argued that the actions of the Bush administrations intervention in Iraq played a crucial part in originally undermining the US as a norm carrier as well as damaging the concept behind R2P (Bellamy 2005: 32). Their decision to frame the war in Iraq in humanitarian terms therefore limited the overall acceptance of the emerging R2P norm, whilst also discrediting part of its core premise, demonstrated by the failure to adhere to international law (Wheeler & Egerton 2008). Despite the claims of chronic human rights abuses within Iraq, it did not provide an exceptional enough case in which intervention was required, as such the use of humanitarian justifications were widely perceived as abuse (Bellamy 2005). With the creation of any new norm there will be a period of contestation between advocates of old and new norms. The actions of the Bush administration arguably slowed and reversed to some extent this process of normative change. Their credibility and
association with this emerging norm was damaged, as they were perceived to have abused it for primarily self-serving purposes (Bellamy 2005: 33). Evans argues, that the Iraq example highlighted the dangers of R2P becoming a licence for unilateral humanitarian intervention in contrast to its original conception (2004: 71). It also provided more fuel for opponents of R2P to claim the doctrine was merely serving the interests of the powerful, allowing them a greater freedom to intervene in the affairs of weaker states (Bellamy 2006:146). The effects of the Iraq war arguably had a direct consequence on the events surrounding atrocities in Darfur. With the credibility of the US as a norm carrier diminished, the international community failed to respond effectively and a clear lack of consensus prevailed (Bellamy 2005: 52).

As the next chapter will examine, the actions of the Bush administration had severe consequences for the image of the US in the international system, whilst also discrediting the importance of key US values, seen as fundamental to its previous identity. It is therefore argued that the resulting US ‘moral crisis’ had a pivotal impact on Obama's decision to adopt R2P. For Obama there was a clear need to radically redefine US identity, in which adhering to the ideas and implementation of the emerging R2P norm would allow the US to begin this process. The theoretical framework laid out in this chapter will now be applied to the significance of US identity, in order to demonstrate how Obama's conception of US identity and the US role in the international system is crucial to the adoption of R2P.

3. Obama and American moral crisis

This chapter will seek to demonstrate, how Obama's adoption of R2P is founded in a need to radically overhaul US identity following the actions of the Bush administration. Through a constructivist perspective it is possible to highlight the way in which US identity shapes foreign policy decisions and establish how specific actors can seek to redefine this identity. In this sense Obama's adoption of R2P is founded in a need for America to return to its role as a liberal exemplarist state (Signer 2006) A return to this role stipulates an obligation for the US to uphold a specific moral code, which is fundamental to its identity (Klayman 2008: 139). Furthermore the chapter will demonstrate how the need to uphold key moral values as part of this new US identity, also creates a specific necessity to adopt and implement the principles of R2P.
3.1 Reconstructing US identity

In order to examine the motives behind Obama's adoption of the responsibility to protect, one must acknowledge the way in which ideas and identity shape US foreign policy (Schmidt 2012: 13). The US is a particular kind of subject, with a specific identity and with interest's attendant on that identity (Weldes 1996: 287). From a constructivist perspective the identity of the United States is in part ‘a function of both its domestic self-image and foreign policy’. In this respect the identity is never self-referential but instead is relational, emerging through its ability to differentiate itself from others. Due to this constructed identity, the ideas that American foreign policy makers hold about the United States help to create the basis of American national interest. American foreign policy is therefore susceptible to change due to the malleability of identity and interests (Schmidt 2012: 13). Through the process of social interaction, states and actors are able to engage with intersubjective norms that help to shape identity (Reus-Smit 2008).

Obama's adoption of the R2P is therefore inherently tied to his own interpretation of American identity. In this regard, his move to legitimise R2P as an emerging norm stems from a perceived ‘American moral crisis’ following the actions of the Bush Administration, and from the need to redefine a standard of appropriate behaviour consistent with international norms and US identity (Finnermore & Sikkink 1998). The actions of the Bush administration can be viewed as violating the norms of the liberal international society and consequently are seen as incompatible with US identity (Alexandrov 2003: 36). As Deudney & Meiser argues, the Bush turn against the idea of ‘America as a multilateral alliance leader and institution builder’ marks not just a rejection of basic liberal ideals, but also ‘a departure from every previous administration since FDR’ (2012: 40). Subsequently any major attempt to violate norms that are seen as integral to the US image represents a potential shift in US identity, therefore challenging the current consensus (Marsden 2011). In order to redefine American identity in the international system, Obama has subsequently drawn upon ideas of liberal exemplarism. The idea behind liberal exemplarism can be seen as uniquely American, and in this sense recognises America's singular status as a beacon of hope for other nations around the globe (Signer 2006). The belief in this idea of the US as an exemplarist state can be seen to inform the interests that it will pursue and its overall identity (Marsden 2011: 327). Evident within this liberal exemplarism is the idea that it matters to President Obama, and to the US, how the world views the superpower (Isola 2012: 70). This is made clear in Forman's argument that ‘US foreign policy must be informed by a deeper appreciation of the way the
United States is perceived abroad, arguing that unilateralism undercuts US national interests’ (2003: xi). This move towards liberal exemplarism is therefore in direct contrast to the previous actions of the Bush administration. Based on this assertion it is critical to understand how the actions of the Bush administration violated the norms of the liberal international society, and the way in which these actions discredited the emerging norm of R2P (Deudney & Meiser 2012: 36).

As highlighted, the sudden turn of the Bush administration following 9/11 marked a serious reduction of the exemplarist liberal stand in US foreign policy (Deudney & Meiser 2012: 36). Whilst the Bush doctrine did still make claims to its special status as ‘the global palladium of liberty’ it brought with it a more offensive realist dimension (Deudney & Meiser 2012: 36). The theory behind offensive realism, first conceptualised by Mearsheimer, stipulates a need for great powers to ‘maximize their relative power because this is the optimal way to maximize security’ (Mearsheimer 2001: 21). This language appeared to resonate with the Bush administration through a stronger emphasis on pre-emptive strikes and greater unilateralism, in order keep the state secure (Lacy 2005: 18). This emphasis on security meant taking any necessary actions to protect US security, thus including a move to force regime change in Iraq. Through this move by the Bush administration to an offensive realist foreign policy, immediate security threats were met by a strategy that had little regard for the cost of the potential international fall out, or the discrediting of American moral values (Deudney & Meiser 2012: 36). The entanglement of democracy promotion ideals with the ‘war on terror’ and the use of military force resulted in a worldwide loss of credibility for the US (Poppe 2010: 31). This loss was in part due to its own rhetoric about democracy and human rights, in contrast to the blatant violation of these rights through examples such as Abu Ghraib (Poppe 2010: 31). In terms of its perspective on humanitarian intervention, the Bush administration appeared sceptical and such ideas were often rejected as naïve idealism, inconsistent with US national interests (Jentleson 2012: 402). In specific regard to R2P, the Bush administration’s approach was to directly limit the substantial obligations of this emerging norm, whilst still attempting to preserve US sovereignty (Reinold 2011: 66). This is demonstrated by the Bush administration’s decision to refrain from committing any real US resources to the Darfur humanitarian crisis in 2005 (Signer 2006). The administration failed to exercise a strong leadership stance in order to help force the Sudanese regime to comply with its international obligations (Reinold 2011: 66). The administration’s refusal to work towards an effective resolution, or commit to the deployment of a multilateral force...
represented a clear discrediting of the R2P concept (Signer 2006). In this sense one must understand the rejection of R2P as tied to an inherent fear within the administration, that R2P would de-legitimise US unilateral action (Reinold 2011: 68). This belief is again informed by the idea of American exceptionalism, in which the US must be viewed as different to other states, due to its historical origin, culture and political institutions (Reinold 2011: 70). This role of the US as a hegemonic state means that it is inclined to obtain legal privileges for itself, allowing its evasion from multilateral obligations that R2P may impose (Reinold 2011: 71). The combination of this exceptionalist view of the US, fused with a more offensive realist dimension, led to key norm violations, undermining the US position as a norm carrier of R2P, as well as severely discredited its overall legitimacy on the international stage (Bellamy 2005: 33).

It was over this backdrop of norm violations by the Bush administration that Obama sought to redefine American identity and the US role in the international system. It is firstly vital to stress, that both the Bush and Obama administrations view America as an exceptional state and the motives behind foreign policy decisions are informed by this belief. However, one must acknowledge these two interpretations of US exceptionalism as contrasting. For Bush, exceptionalism gives the US a right to create special prerogatives for itself and make use of unilateral force under its own terms, discrediting specific norms and the moral cause of its actions (Reinold 2011: 71). Obama in contrast has stressed the importance of US exceptionalism based upon the ideas of US exemplarism, with the US acting as a guiding beacon for other states (Signer 2006). Obama therefore holds an image of the US as a liberal exemplarist state, as he made clear in his speech to the CIA, ‘What makes the United States special and what makes you special is precisely the fact that we are willing to uphold our values and our ideals even when it’s hard, not just when it’s easy’ (Obama 2009a). It is therefore clear, that the core legitimacy of Obama’s foreign policy is tied to a specific set of moral principles that are seen to be inherent within US identity, and his belief and commitment to advancing these US moral values (Taylor 2012). This liberal view acknowledges that American power must at times be used for moral purposes due to its own singular moral status (Traub 2011: 1). Obama is subsequently defiant in arguing that if America is unable to follow a moral code themselves then the actions of the US appear arbitrary and undercut the ‘legitimacy of future interventions, no matter how justified’ (Obama 2009b). In this regard, Obama states that ‘America must remain an example of the universal values and freedoms we hold dear’, highlighting that America’s standing, reputation
and authority is critical to its identity (Klayman 2008: 139). It is this form of liberal exemplarism that is at the heart of Obama's foreign policy and his subsequent adoption of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’. For the US to regain its moral standing, Obama argues it must ‘lead the world by deed and by example’ (Obama 2007). This example can be set through a variety of practices and actions, one of which is a greater commitment to work with the international community to prevent mass atrocity crimes. Obama's speech to the Nobel Peace prize committee made clear his own belief, that ‘force can be justified on humanitarian grounds’ whilst ‘inaction tears at our conscience and can lead to costly intervention later’ (Obama 2009b). Within his ‘Renewing American Leadership’ article he also made clear that using military force in circumstances beyond self-defence, (such as mass atrocity prevention) can help to provide greater global security, and was evident that the actions to do this need to be taken through the ‘clear support and participation of others’ (Obama 2007). This greater emphasis on cooperation with the international community is tied to his belief that, working ‘multilaterally rather than unilaterally’ when using force, will almost always be in US strategic interest (Obama 2006: 309). Obama therefore believes that gaining the support of others allows US actions to ‘serve and further recognise international norms’ (Obama 2006: 309). From a constructivist perspective, Obama's strong notions about what constitutes desirable behaviour in the international system can be seen to have strengthened the emerging norm of R2P, as well as the US as a norm carrier.

Part of Obama's belief in supporting and strengthening particular international norms can be seen to be based upon a ‘logic of appropriateness’ (March & Olsen 2009). This perspective sees human action as driven by specific rules of appropriate and exemplary behaviour. In this regard, rules and norms are followed because they are seen as ‘natural, rightful and legitimate’. Actors therefore seek to fulfil the obligations that they believe comply with their specific identity and role in the international community (March & Olsen 2009: 2). From this constructivist perspective, it is argued that these rules and norms come from ‘identity driven conceptions of appropriateness, rather than conscious calculations of costs and benefits’ (March & Olsen 2009: 7).

This theory can be further applied to Obama's support of multilateralism and greater support of international organisations (Obama 2006). In the context of Obama's adoption of the responsibility to protect, one can highlight how the rules of appropriateness are seen as ‘carriers of lessons from experience’, in which these lessons carry inferences of other's
experience (March & Olsen 2009: 12). In this sense actors are often likely to learn from previous crises, and therefore change initiatives in order to present them as emancipated from a previous order, of an unacceptable past (March & Olsen 2009: 16). Obama, through legitimising R2P is attempting to firstly, distance himself from the actions of the Bush administration and secondly, redefine the rules and norms of his policies to fit with a new logic of appropriateness. This has been displayed through a move to a more multilateral, norm-dominated environment, in which Obama believes seeking IO authorisation and a diverse set of allies is crucial (Kreps 2008: 540). Through the US collaborating with its allies within international organisations, it brings with it a normative sense of ‘oughtness’ and a shared moral assessment about the appropriate way to intervene (Kreps 2008: 539). This move towards multilateralism can be founded not in a need for material gain but rather political and normative reasons, in order to generate greater legitimacy for the interventions of the US and its overall image in the international system (Kreps 2008: 540). Part of this legitimisation is created through the US allowing other nations to ‘shoulder burdens of fostering an international order’. This move is arguably embedded in a desire to not further establish a balance of power, but to bring about a ‘dynamic framework to address global challenges’ (Hachigian & Shorr 2012: 47).

To further understand the motives behind Obama's adoption of R2P one must also analyse the influence of key actors within his administration and their role in helping to redefine US identity, through their own beliefs and values. From a constructivist perspective, it is clear that individuals who act under the state bring with them their own meanings (Weldes 1996: 280). As Finnermore asserts, an individual acting on behalf of the state can themselves change and adjust new forms of structural and social interaction, to influence the adoption of an emerging norm (1996). They also bring with them an already comprehensive and detailed appreciation of the international system and the role of the state within it (Weldes 1996: 280). Furthermore the values and ideas that exist within this social environment play a vital role in constituting the interests and subsequent actions of actors (Reus-Smit 2009: 223). When we apply this theory to actors within the Obama administration, we can highlight two key figures, Susan Rice and Samantha Power, who have arguably played a crucial role in reinforcing a normative sense of ‘oughtness’, for Obama to adopt and implement the ideas of R2P (Kreps 2008: 539).

UN Ambassador Susan Rice has attempted to push back against the damage caused by the
Bush administration to R2P through its association with an ‘unfettered right to intervention’. Rice has therefore been highly critical of the Bush administration and neo-conservatives, who sought to cast the Iraq war in these terms, consequently undermining efforts to deepen consensus on the role of R2P as a concept (Jentleson 2012: 406). Her strong and passionate commitment to R2P was acknowledged through her speech at the International Peace Institute Vienna, in which she called the responsibility to protect ‘a duty that I feel deeply’ (Reinold 2011: 78). Secondly Obama's National Security Council senior director Samantha Power has also been highly vocal in acknowledging the damage caused by the Bush administration, in regards to humanitarian intervention. Power noted that international humanitarian intervention had potentially been killed for a generation by the US unilateral intervention in Iraq. For Power, the intervention vastly discredited US military action abroad and has resulted in limiting the ability to build future coalitions to help stop war crimes (Calabresi 2011). In her 2002 book A Problem from Hell Power argued that ‘mass killing’ on the scale of Rwanda or Bosnia must be prevented by other nations, including the United States (Power 2002: xi). For Power, stopping the execution of thousands of foreigners is in some cases, worth the cost in dollars, troops, and strained alliances (Lizza 2011: 1). The previous experience of these two key members of the Obama administration has a significant impact, highlighting the need for this administration to learn from previous crises and therefore change US initiatives. This is exemplified in the memories of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans and Rwanda, in which both Rice and Power have first-hand experience, leading them to conclude that the US had previously failed in its responsibilities to other countries (Hastings 2011). In terms of the implementation of R2P in the case of Libya, it will be highlighted in the later chapter the influential role they both played, in emphasising the moral codes that the US must meet.

3.2 The adoption of R2P into US security strategy

Obama's commitment to R2P, as well as his belief in greater multilateralism was made explicitly clear in his first national security strategy issued in May 2010, stating the US move towards a greater affirmation and support for the principles of R2P, in regards to genocide and mass atrocity crimes (Jentleson 2012: 405). The document also highlights US commitment to working with its allies and the international community proactively, to make a ‘strategic effort to prevent mass atrocities and genocide’ (White House 2010: 48).

When viewed in contrast to Bush's 2006 National Security Strategy, one can acknowledge
how previous policies in regard to genocide and mass atrocity crimes were far less direct in acknowledging the need for the US to hold responsibility and adhere to the ideas of R2P. Previously the NSS of 2006 simply stated, ‘Where perpetrators of mass killing defy all attempts at peaceful intervention, armed intervention may be required’ (White House 2006: 17). The Bush administration approach to R2P can therefore be viewed as a continued attempt to preserve US sovereignty, through a watering down of the substantial obligations of R2P. There was also a consensus on the need to prevent the emergence of legitimising criteria, which could force the US to limit its freedom of action. This emphasis on allowing states a need to decide for themselves if intervention is required was highlighted by the comments of Richard Haas, the Director of Policy Planning for the US department of State in 2002 (Reinold 2011: 66). Hass commented that ‘the international community has the right and sometimes even obligation to act’ (Hass 2002). The use of the term ‘sometimes’ highlights the belief that the US does not always have an obligation to carry forward the ideas of R2P (Reinold 2011: 67).

In direct contrast to the Bush administration's NSS 2006, Obama's NSS 2010 can be viewed as a clear acknowledgement of the need for multilateral engagement and a more responsible moral leadership. It can be seen to take a strong moral responsibility in world politics and promises to lead by example in this regard, again further highlighting Obama's commitment to liberal exemplarism (Isola 2012: 60). Through endorsing the concept of R2P directly in this document, Obama has made a commitment to change the US policy towards preventing mass atrocity crimes, demonstrating a move to redefine American identity in the international system. In contrast to the Bush administration’s attempt to protect sovereignty, Obama concedes ‘responsibility passes to the broader international community when sovereign governments themselves commit genocide or mass atrocities’ (White House 2010: 48).

The adoption of the emerging R2P norm within Obama's NSS 2010 is significant, in acknowledging that fundamental values that are critical to the ideas of R2P are also inherently tied to key US values. As R2P stipulates, there is a need for increased multilateralism and cooperation within the international community, in order for greater prevention of mass atrocity crimes. It also highlights the need for all states to recognise their inherent responsibility to protect civilians from mass atrocity crimes, if civilians’ own state refuses to uphold this responsibility. For Obama these key principles of R2P are reflected within the liberal and moral values of the US. Through adopting the ideas of R2P within his
NSS 2010, Obama has recognised the relationship between US values and the emerging R2P norm. In order for Obama to radically redefine American identity these principles needed to be adopted on the international stage to illustrate a new image of American intervention. The next chapter will therefore show how the implementation of R2P with regard to the Libyan intervention, enabled Obama to redefine US identity in the international community, demonstrating a clear break from the previous actions of the Bush administration. Following on from this, the domestic implementation of R2P will be analysed, highlighting the critical importance of this policy to the Obama administration and establishing how this dual implementation helps to radically redefine American identity.

4. The Libyan intervention & PSD-10

This chapter will seek to demonstrate the significance of the 2011 Libyan intervention in regards to Obama's legitimisation of R2P, and his fundamental redefinition of American identity in the international system. Specifically it will be argued that two key factors were critical to informing the decision to intervene, in which both were significant in allowing a successful implementation of the emerging norm of R2P, as well as helping to redefine the role of American intervention. The two factors also further highlight how the fundamental principles of R2P are tied to the ideals of Obama's new exemplarist state identity. Furthermore this chapter will examine the significance of the domestic implementation of R2P through the strategy set out in Obama's PSD-10. The continued commitment to mass atrocity crime prevention and the ideals of R2P will again demonstrate how the need to fully implement this emerging norm is crucial to the construction of a new US identity.

4.1 The Libyan intervention

In December 2010 uprisings, that would come to be known as the Arab Springs began across Northern Africa. Following the domino effect of these initial uprisings, protests began to break out across Libya forging the beginnings of the Libyan Civil War. On February 17th a ‘day of rage’ was held in which large scale protests took place across many Libyan cities (Maessen 2012: 16). During the protests, Libyan security forces fired with live ammunition on the protesters, killing at least 61 (Maessen 2012: 16-17). The protests continued and eventually resulted in Libyan security forces being forced out of Benghazi because of the overwhelming protest support (Maessen 2012: 17). The Libyan rebels subsequently organised themselves under the banner of the ‘National Transition Council’ (NTC) proceeding to take control of large parts of East Libya (Maessen 2012: 16). Following this uprising, Gaddafi
called upon his supporters to ‘Come out of your homes, attack [the opposition] in their dens.’. He then referred to the protesters as ‘cockroaches’ and ‘rats’ who did not deserve to live, language that some viewed as reminiscent of the broadcasts used to spur on the perpetrators of Rwanda’s genocide in 1994. The imminent attack on Benghazi threatened by Gaddafi was claimed to have the potential to cause a massacre, in a city of 700,000 people (The Economist 2011). As Obama stated, a massacre on this scale would reverberate ‘across the middle east and stain the conscience of the world’ (Obama 2011b). On February 26th, the United Nations passed a resolution placing an arms embargo and economic sanctions on the Libyan regime, as well as referring Qaddafi to the International Criminal Court. Two days later, US lobbying led by Hillary Clinton and Samantha Power, helped remove Libya from its seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council. The tightening of economic sanctions on Qaddafi isolated him diplomatically, allowing Obama and the international community to make use of the tools that Power had outlined in ‘A Problem from Hell’ (Lizza 2011: 8). France, with the support of the UK, were the first to underline the need for further international action, which was quickly supported by nine Arab-League states, calling for a no-fly zone over Libya (Maessen 2012: 17). The growing international support culminated in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, on March 17, 2011. The vote, 10–0, with five abstentions represented the first time in its sixty-six years that the United Nations authorised military action to pre-empt an ‘imminent massacre’ (Lizza 2011: 9). For Obama, the support of the Arab League and eventually the UN would prove a crucial part to his decision to support the intervention, as will be discussed in this chapter. However in order to further analyse the motives behind Obama's adoption of R2P in this instance, one must place the actions within the larger context of redefining America's image in the international system.

Obama's response to the Libyan crisis arguably provides a palpable example of his leadership style and his broader vision in regards to defining America’s place in the international system, and the way it responds to international affairs. The Libyan crisis therefore allowed Obama the opportunity to put into action the words and policies stipulated in his 2010 National Security Strategy document (Hastings 2011: 2). At the same time this implementation allowed Obama to present a new vision of America's role in the world, one which was in stark contrast to the previous administration, upon which he fundamentally disagreed with (Hastings 2011). In this regard America would have to avoid acting alone whilst still opposing aggression and injustice (Hastings 2011: 2). Subsequently the Obama administration in reacting to the Libyan crisis, presented a vocal leadership in seeking to help
consolidate R2P as a vital global norm, in stark contrast to the attitudes of the Bush administration (Patrick 2011b).

The decision to intervene in Libya, under the policy of R2P, can therefore be linked to 2 key factors, which are intrinsically tied to the much broader concept of American identity and values. The first of these factors is a commitment to multilateralism. The wide range of international support that was created for the Libyan intervention, which included not just the UN and NATO but also the Arab League, was crucial for Obama to be able to demonstrate a redefined US identity forged by a strong commitment to the ideas of R2P. In order for Obama to keep to his policy of increased multilateralism, an intervention in Libya needed to be presented as a move away from ‘muscular democracy promotion’ and a return to multilateral foreign policy. This meant placing great importance on the UN approval and Arab league support (Toaldo 2013: 17). Obama's first military action therefore needed to be an exercise in repudiating Iraq and redefining American identity (Steele 2011). The support for a multilateral element helped to create the first implementation of R2P and arguably was a crucial part of the attempt to redefine the role of American intervention (Toaldo 2013: 17).

Through the Libyan intervention, Obama can be seen to be involved in a ‘rebalancing’ away from the Middle East quagmires of the previous administration (Nye 2012). This new emphasis on multilateralism and the policies of R2P, meant Libya was not just about America and the Middle East, but also about sharing the burden of intervention with NATO allies and the international community (Toaldo 2013: 19). As previously highlighted, the need to work together with key allies to build a ‘dynamic framework to address global challenges’ is an idea founded upon US liberal identity (Hachigian & Shorr 2012: 47). In this sense, America's vital role as a key alliance leader and institution builder creates a precedent for a commitment to multilateralism in the international system (Deudney & Meiser 2012: 36).

This precedent for multilateralism must be understood in regards to US identity. As Obama had previously stated, he held a strong belief in the idea that a multilateral coalition established a much higher measure of legitimacy in terms of interventions. This was crucial in establishing greater domestic and international support for US actions, whilst constructing a new US identity as a liberal exemplarist state (Harvey 2011). The ownership of the operation therefore could not be solely that of the US alone, the international community would subsequently need to take responsibility collectively (Gerges 2012). In this regard, it
was crucial for the Obama administration to wait for the Arab league and the UN to adopt resolutions in order to provide the US with greater legitimacy for intervention. This process allowed the US to ensure ‘the right soft power narrative’ and the creation of a ‘shared leadership of the hard power operation with NATO allies’ (Nye 2012). Thus satisfying the key principles that are integral to the construction of a new American identity.

It was also critical that Obama was able to distinguish his strike against Qaddafi from the perceived unilateral ‘regime change’ the Bush administration had pursued in Iraq, for this reason Obama made it clear that ‘broadening our mission to include regime change would be a mistake’ (Obama 2011b). As Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser, on behalf of President Obama stated: ‘The effort of our military operation is not regime change; it’s the Libyan people who are going to make their determinations about the future’ (Youngman & Fabian 2011). Obama made clear the objective of the mission was limited to ‘the task of protecting the Libyan people’, explicitly disfavouring the idea of regime change being a US goal (Patrick 2011a). The clear support from the UN and Arab League, arguably allowed Obama to back up this claim, creating greater legitimacy for his actions whilst also limiting the fallout from questions over US’s role in the removal of Gaddafi.

This commitment to multilateralism, implemented through the Libyan intervention is an integral part of Obama's attempt to radically redefine American identity in contrast to the previous administration, founded upon his belief in a need for other nations to shoulder some of the burden for fostering international order. As Hachihian & Shorr have argued this move towards multilateralism is also directed by a need to strengthen multilateral norms and structures (2012: 47). From a constructivist perspective this commitment is not simply about establishing a new balance of power, but is an attempt to bring about a ‘dynamic framework to address global challenges’, one that is led by the legitimising of R2P in order to adhere to emerging international norms (Hachihian & Shorr 2012: 47). Libya highlights this example, with Obama concentrating on spreading responsibility to other nations; urging European and Arab allies to supply hard power alongside the US (Hachihian & Shorr 2012: 48). As Obama made clear in his UN speech 2009, ‘Those who used to chastise America for acting alone in the world cannot now stand by and wait for America to solve the world’s problems alone…. Now is the time for all of us to take our share of responsibility for a global response to global challenges.’ (Obama 2009c). Libya therefore provides a significant example of Obama's first implementation of this strategy, demonstrating his commitment to redefine the way in which
the US conducts itself on the international stage.

Secondly, there was a need to avoid the image of the US standing idly by the side, in the face of impending mass atrocities (Toaldo 2012:17). For Obama, the intervention in Libya represented an opportunity not just to prevent atrocities Gaddafi might commit but also to help bolster the ability of America to intervene elsewhere in the future, without damaging its own credibility and image in the international system (Calabresi 2011). The prospect of failing to intervene and not acting would have been akin to the actions of the UN in 2005, adopting R2P in the world summit declaration but not then taking effective action to prevent atrocities in Darfur (Jentleson 2012: 417). In this sense, the roles of Rice and Power must be acknowledged as significant, in helping to strongly champion the humanitarian need for intervention. As was previously noted, both had first-hand experience in terms of previous humanitarian failure by the US. It is clear that Obama's interaction with influential individuals such as Rice and Power was critical; both were able to reinforce the need for America not to stand idle in the face of mass atrocities and acknowledge how this fit with American liberal identity (Hastings 2011).

In order to analyse the perceived need to re-establish a US reputation for preventing mass atrocities, one must again discuss the actions in regard to American identity. The idea of redefining the image of America in the international system is an idea born out of the belief in American exceptionalism. Attached to this exceptionalism is the ascription of a ‘unique moral rightness to US motives of obligation’ and therefore, the US must be at the forefront in spreading and defending democracy and human rights around the world. It is because of this exceptionalism that one can acknowledge how the US national discourse creates the assumption, that preventing slaughter in Libya must be part of US national interest. By intervening through Obama's belief, not just in American exceptionalism but also through a strong belief in liberal exemplarism, he has created a moral duty upon which America must seek to present itself as the exemplary democracy (Steele 2011). This idea is manifested within his speech on Libya, March 2011 where he states ‘some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different’ (Obama 2011b).

This idea of US exceptionalism can be seen to feed into an overall American identity, which has had a clear impact on Obama's decision to intervene in Libya. When Obama stated that
“to brush aside our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are” in his speech on Libya, it highlights not just Obama's belief in the exceptionalism of America, but also his belief that US identity is crucial in informing how the state must act on the international stage. Further to this, Obama also made clear in this address, the responsibility the US has to act, because of its special position in the international system. For Obama the responsibility to protect is arguably fundamentally tied to intrinsic US values, ‘When our interests and values are at stake, we have a responsibility to act’ (Obama 2011b). In order to fulfil this moral responsibility and attempt to redefine American identity, Obama has demonstrated his commitment to fulfil this agenda on the international stage. However, in order for Obama to fully redefine American identity, the adoption of a moral code in regards to preventing mass atrocity crimes must be taken at the domestic level also. The significance of Obama's decision to create a new domestic policy complimenting the emerging R2P norm will therefore be examined.

4.2 PSD-10

Following the Libyan intervention Obama demonstrated that his adoption of R2P would involve further policy change domestically, rather than the ideas of R2P being implemented solely on the international stage. As Power had stated previously, ‘it is in the realm of domestic politics that the battle to stop genocide is lost’ (Power 2002: xviii). Crucial to the continuation of the ideas stipulated by R2P, there was a need to implement policies domestically, highlighted by the creation of the Presidential Study Directive on Mass Atrocities (PSD-10). Presidential study directives are issued in areas of foreign and national security policy that are viewed as requiring a systematic re-evaluation, in which new initiatives need to be taken (Jentleson 2012: 407). The introduction of PSD-10 represented Obama's belief in the need for this emerging norm to become salient within social discourse, influencing the way in which domestic debate must interact with US actions on the international stage. In order for this to occur, PSD-10 had to fully reinforce the emerging norm of R2P in domestic discourse (Cortell & Davis 2000: 70). The policy was therefore officially introduced by an extensive presidential speech at the holocaust museum, highlighting the importance of mass atrocity prevention for the US and its identity, whilst also making a clear symbolic statement through an announcement of this scale (Jentleson 2012: 408).

The directive aims to define the safeguarding measures needed to prevent mass atrocities,
creating ‘a core national security and a core moral responsibility of the United States’ (White House 2011). The implications of the initiative being that the US will inevitably confront atrocities that cannot be ignored (Patrick 2011b). Most significantly, PSD-10 pledges the creation of an Atrocity Prevention Board to ‘coordinate and institutionalise the Federal Government’s efforts to prevent and respond to potential atrocities and genocide’ (White House 2011). The prevention board helps to fill in a vital operational gap between everyday diplomacy and outright crisis. It gives policy makers ‘the opportunity to discuss potential emerging crises throughout the world as well as providing recommendations on on-going crises’ (Abramowitz 2012). Overall this initiative makes a defining statement as to Obama's own belief in the importance of US domestic policy working together to achieve a greater commitment to the principles of R2P. In a practical sense, the directive expands upon the options available in such situations, presenting an escalatory ladder that encompasses a wide range of tactics, from preventive diplomacy to embargoes and coercive action. In a similar regard to the core principles of R2P, PSD-10 acknowledges the need to weigh up a range of options along with armed intervention It also more broadly recognises the US commitment to the principles of R2P and its own role in acting upon these in the international system (Patrick 2011b).

The implementation of this initiative is also heavily linked with the idea of American identity and reputation in the international system. PSD-10 elevates the importance and value of saving lives, allowing for this objective to be put on a more equal footing with other competing foreign policy priorities (Albright & Cohen 2012). Obama in taking the relevant steps to bring this issue to the forefront has demonstrated his own commitment to redefine America's image, which he believes is tied to a moral consciousness in regards to preventing mass atrocities. Within PSD-10, Obama states that ‘America’s reputation suffers, and our ability to bring about change is constrained, when we are perceived as idle in the face of mass atrocities and genocide’ (Obama 2012). PSD-10 also provides further recognition of Obama’s strong commitment to work multilaterally in order to help prevent mass atrocity crimes. PSD-10 therefore states the US position in working with allies, ‘in order to ensure that the burdens of atrocity prevention and response are appropriately shared’ (White House 2011).

Furthermore, within PDS-10, Obama alludes to the argument first made global by Kofi Annan in reference to the concept of sovereignty. For Obama ‘national sovereignty is never a license to slaughter your people’ (Obama 2012). As Annan argued in his ‘Two Concepts of
Sovereignty’ article, and Obama highlighted in his speech, the right of Sovereignty ‘no longer exclusively protects states from foreign interference, it is a charge of responsibility that holds states accountable for the welfare of their people’ (UN 2010). This concept was also insinuated by Obama's speech prior to the Libyan intervention, stating ‘Libya must be held accountable for its failure to meet those responsibilities and face the costs of continued violations of human rights’ (Obama 2011a). This example represents a defining acknowledgement by Obama, to a core premise of the R2P doctrine. It is through this clear acceptance, that Obama has demonstrated an commitment to legitimise this emerging norm in accordance with US identity, accepting that the argument founded within R2P is one intrinsically tied to a core US moral responsibility.

From a holistic constructivist perspective it is crucial to analyse how a range of factors influence the identities and interests of a state, within this the domestic and international elements need to be treated as ‘two faces of a single social and political order’. This holistic approach makes it possible to explain the development of ‘normative ideational structures within the international system, as well as the social identities that have engendered’. From this perspective, foreign policy behaviour can be seen as an interaction between domestic and international identity and the way in which they shape a state's behaviour (Reus Smit 2009: 225). Consequently, ‘identity formation at both domestic and international levels is a continuous process’, in which both identities interact with each other, leading states to produce and reproduce ‘new definitions of “self” and “other”’. Any changes in the domestic identity will therefore eventually have an effect on the identity formation at an international level and vice versa, where states may try to ‘reorient their preferences in accordance with the new identity’ (Bozdaglioglu 2007: 142). When we apply this theory to the adoption of the R2P by Obama, we can see a definitive attempt to reconstruct American identity in the international system through the application of R2P to the Libyan intervention, followed by a domestic identity change highlighted by the creation of the first mass atrocities prevention board in the US (PSD-10). As Cortell & Davis argue, once international norms become enmeshed within domestic institutions, their prescriptions can have considerable impact over time on the interests and actions of national actors (2000: 81).

One must subsequently view the creation of PSD-10, as an attempt to remove some of the bureaucratic infrequency and lack of prioritisation that has blighted previous opportunities to prevent and react to mass atrocity crimes. Through this commitment Obama is raising the
standards of accountability for this and future administrations (Albright & Cohen 2012). The creation therefore represents a clear commitment to adapt the priority of US national interests in line with a new exemplarist identity, which Obama is attempting to construct. Finally, Obama has demonstrated that only through an interaction between domestic and international policy, can America attempt to confront mass atrocity crimes and therefore fully redefine US identity. The overall application of these policies by Obama is therefore tied to a new American identity running through international and domestic policy, influencing its interests in both policy areas.

5. Conclusion
This paper has undertaken a comprehensive constructivist analysis, in regards to further understanding Obama's adoption of the emerging R2P norm. The use of Constructivist theory has made it possible to acknowledge how the decision by actors to adopt a specific norm is intrinsically tied to their own social construction of state identity (Finnermore 1996). Furthermore, the paper has been able to acknowledge the influence of the socially constructed environment in which a wide range of actors interact, helping to build new state identities. Subsequently, Obama's own socially constructed values and beliefs of what is appropriate behaviour in regards to the international system has created an obligation to adopt and implement the principles of the emerging R2P norm. The adoption of this norm must therefore be viewed in the wider context of Obama's attempt to radically redefine US identity. Whilst this paper has focused predominately on Obama's adoption of R2P, this decision has to be understood in regard to Obama's will to create a more exemplarist US state, in the aftermath of a perceived 'moral crisis'. The adoption of R2P represents a fundamental part of this new exemplarist image, in which the US must be viewed as leading the way in the struggle to prevent mass atrocity crimes. The values and ideas stipulated by this new US identity is therefore tied to values within the emerging R2P norm. To construct this identity of the US as an exemplarist state, Obama has had to reinforce and legitimise key liberal values that help to project this identity of the US as a shining beacon for the rest of the world.

This paper has also demonstrated how the adoption of R2P has had significant impact on the behaviour of the US on the international stage, as well as within domestic policy. Firstly the Libyan intervention highlighted Obama's commitment to working proactively with allies in the international community, when attempting to prevent mass atrocity crimes. This has also meant an increased willingness to reaffirm the importance of international organisations, and
ensure that intervention is able to uphold international law. Secondly Obama demonstrated that the US would be willing to act upon its moral responsibility as a hegemonic power to protect civilians in Libya, helping to legitimise its role as a liberal exemplarist state. As the example of Libya illustrates, Obama's first military intervention was successful in distancing his approach from the previous unilateral actions of the Bush administration, whilst also showing how the US could uphold a moral code, to reaffirm the US as a protector of human rights. Through taking a holistic approach to constructivism, this paper has highlighted how international and domestic policy areas have interacted, creating a need for Obama to affirm the principles of R2P within domestic policy. The creation of PSD-10 has been instrumental for Obama to create a defining statement to his overall commitment to R2P. By embedding this international norm within domestic institutions, PSD-10 is able to have considerable impact on the interests and actions of national actors (Cortell & Davis 2000: 81). Overall the decision to intervene in Libya and the creation of PSD-10 must be understood as part of Obama's attempt to fundamentally redefine US identity through a greater adherence to the emerging R2P norm. This paper therefore concludes, that the significant shift in policy and behaviour towards the emerging R2P norm is founded within Obama's own concept of US identity and his need to create a more exemplarist US state.

References


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