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R2P as a global principle?

A case study of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

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Abstract

The principle of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) has been described as revolutionary in its affect on the relationship between the concepts of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty by placing an even greater emphasis on the issue of human rights. However, R2P has proven to be difficult to apply in certain cases. The aim of this study was to contribute to the international debate within International Relations about the viability of the principle of R2P. In order to understand the problem of implementing R2P in certain cases, this study intended to examine a perceived tension between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty. Idealism and realism worked as the theoretical tools to analyze this tension. The examination was motivated by an identified gap in the previous research, i.e., how the tension might have affected the viability of the principle of R2P. The research problem was defined as follows: How can the justification and the implementation of the principle of R2P be understood in certain cases? In order to operationalize the research problem, the thesis was performed as an investigating case study of the DPRK, which was motivated by the complex and controversial relation between the country and the international community. In order to answer the research problem, three research questions were identified. These examined why the DPRK is a case for the principle of R2P, how the UN has pursued the principle of R2P in the DPRK and how it was argued about using or not using the principle of R2P in the DPRK. The study had a qualitative approach and was conducted as a qualitative content analysis. Scientific articles and reports constituted the data of the study. The results of the investigation showed that the DPRK was a case for R2P as the government committed crimes against humanity by the systematic starvation of its citizens and through the maintenance of political prison camps, that the UN acted against the human rights violations in the DPRK through its various bodies, but its actions had been assessed in different ways, and that it was not likely that R2P would be implemented in the DPRK. The study concluded that the justification and the implementation of R2P in certain cases could be understood as a contradiction between an idealist and a realist approach to international politics. R2P could thus be regarded as a construction for relieving the tension between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty. Hence, a common understanding of R2P's rational basis will be necessary to make it work.

Keywords: Responsibility to Protect (R2P), humanitarian intervention, national sovereignty, United Nations (UN), Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

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1. Introduction

Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and For All. This is the subtitle of the book written by Gareth Evans (2008) who is a prominent supporter of the principle¹ of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). R2P is seen by many as a groundbreaking principle and as the beginning of a new era in international relations. The principle of R2P was launched by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in the year of 2001 as a response to the genocide in Rwanda in order to prevent future similar events (ICISS, 2001:VIII). In the year of 2005, at the United Nations (UN) World Summit, over 150 leaders adopted a revised version of the report by the ICISS, which in the following year was reaffirmed by the UN Security Council (Bellamy, 2010b:371).

The principle of R2P has been described as revolutionary in the way that it is able to affect the relationship between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty, i.e., it adds a new dimension that favors human rights over sovereign rule (Hyllienmark, 2013). A major change after R2P was launched deals with how sovereignty should be defined and understood (Axworthy, 2011:14), which has meant a shift in terminology from "... *sovereignty as control* to *sovereignty as responsibility*..." (ICISS, 2001:13). This implies that the state has the sole responsibility to protect its citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, but when the state fails to do so the international community has a responsibility to protect, which can not be blocked by the national sovereignty (United Nations, n.d.). With this, the principle of R2P has become an important part of the international diplomatic agenda as well as of the diplomatic language of humanitarian emergencies (Bellamy, 2010a:144).

While R2P was initially seen as a groundbreaking principle, criticism has since been levelled towards the document from the 2005 World Summit. Two main critical strands can be discerned in the debate on R2P. In the first way, R2P is seen as too strong, having an imperialist agenda which threatens to undermine the national sovereignty as well as the political autonomy of the weak. In the other way, R2P is seen as too weak as it just seems to be a rhetorical construction which in reality means a little protection for the vulnerable and a marginal addition to what already exists in the UN-charter (Bellamy, 2010a:144). The criticism towards R2P as too weak, in the sense that national sovereignty remains superior to human security, is a consequence of many states were against the major limitations of sovereignty. Therefore, the UN General Assembly adopted a revised version of the report by

¹ In this thesis R2P will be referred to as a principle, which means how something is and not how it should be.

the ICISS (Hyllienmark, 2013). Criticism towards R2P has also been directed at its limited possibilities in getting around veto powers. At the World Summit in the year of 2005 the proposal that urgent matters could be taken through the General Assembly in a situation where the Security Council may be paralyzed by vetos was rejected. Consequently, the Security Council continues to be the only actor of authority to decide on military intervention, in accordance with chapter VII in the UN Charter, and in cooperation with regional organizations when it is deemed appropriate (Svenska FN-förbundet, 2008). Furthermore, criticism has been directed to R2P based on the assumption that the principle lacks clear criteria for how it shall be applied (Hyllienmark, 2013). This criticism was a result of the decision at the 2005 World Summit, where it was stated that R2P should be applied on a case-by-case basis (Svenska FN-förbundet, 2008).

The criticism that has been directed towards R2P shows that the use of the principle has not been as significant as its proponents first alleged and comprises a deeper problem. R2P may be a "good" invention, but it will probably be difficult in certain cases. Syria is one current example where the principle has not been applicable. In the year of 2011 the Syrian population raised up against the regime, which in turn, responded with a massive armed aggression against its almost defenceless citizens (Kassim, 2014:2). In the case of Syria, the government has not only failed in its R2P, it is also the primary source for the ongoing crimes against humanity that has been committed in the country (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2014). The international response to the situation in Syria has been weak as resolutions in the UN have been blocked by vetos by two of its members in the Security Council - China and Russia (Kassim, 2014:2).

Another example where R2P has been unsuccessful is Darfur in Sudan where genocide and mass rapes were results of Africa's longest armed conflict caused by internal contradictions. Even if the crimes in Darfur would have been encompassed by the principle of R2P, the strong powers lacked the political will for putting an end to the mass atrocities in the region. Not until the independence of Southern Sudan in the year of 2011 did the conflict come to an end (Lee, 2012:17). A third example where R2P has been unsuccessful is the case of Myanmar after the cyclone in the year of 2008. The cyclone resulted in high mortality rates and material damages but the application of R2P was impossible because a natural disaster is not encompassed by the scope of the principle (Lee, 2012:24).

Whether R2P is a "good" invention or not, its status within international relations is unclear. Some argue that the principle of R2P is the most important step towards human security in the history of international law (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och

beredskap, 2010). The UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-Moon, refers frequently to the responsibility to protect within the international community and since the year of 2009 the UN has released annual reports about the application of the principle. According to Ban Ki-Moon the principle of R2P, in terms of the common responsibility, has got a wide support within the UN General Assembly and R2P as a principle has gained a great confidence. The unclear status of R2P within international relations relates thus to when and how it shall be applied (Hyllienmark, 2013). While the principle of R2P has potentials, it also carries major problems, two of them being how it shall be justified and implemented. Hence, this thesis will analyze the problem of justifying and implementing the principle of R2P through a case study of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea² (DPRK).

1.1 Aim of study and Research problem

The aim of this study was to contribute to the international debate within International Relations about the viability of the principle of R2P. The launching of R2P, with its emphasis on human rights, has affected the relationship between the concepts of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty. This study intends to examine a perceived tension between these concepts, in order to understand the justification and the implementation of R2P in certain cases. The research problem, therefore, is:

- How can the justification and the implementation of the principle of R2P be understood in certain cases?

The examination is motivated by an identified gap in the previous research, i.e., how the tension between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty may affect the viability of the principle of R2P. Idealism and realism will work as the theoretical tools to analyze this tension.

1.2 Operationalizing of the Research problem and Research questions

In order to operationalize the research problem, this thesis will be performed as an investigating case study of the DPRK. The choice of case is motivated by the complex and controversial relation between the country and the international community, where cooperation has proven to be difficult to maintain but also where the principle of R2P is

² Also known as North Korea.

commonly considered to be particularly hard to apply. A further discussion about the case selection will be held in the chapter about method and data. The following research questions will be examined:

- Why is the DPRK a case for the principle of R2P?
- How has the UN pursued the principle of R2P in the DPRK?
- How is it argued about using or not using the principle of R2P in the DPRK?

In conclusion, the aforementioned research questions will add a deeper understanding of the research problem. The first research question will contribute to an answer about the justification of the principle of R2P. The second research question will contribute to an answer about the implementation of R2P and the third research question will contribute to an answer about different understandings of R2P's applicability. In this way the study will achieve its aim, i.e., to contribute to the debate about R2P's viability.

1.3 Disposition

Following this introducing chapter, the thesis proceeds in five parts. The first chapter is named *Theoretical Underpinnings* and contains previous research in the field, the chosen theoretical perspectives, definitions of central concepts as well as a theoretical framework. The next chapter, *Method and Data*, consists of a discussion about the method, the data, methodological issues, the selected case and delimitations. Before the results will be presented, the chapter called *Background on the DPRK* provides the basic information about the selected case. The findings of the study will then be presented and analyzed under the headline of *Results and Analysis*. This is followed by the chapter called *Concluding discussion* in which the conclusions and the contribution of the study will be presented as well as suggestions for future research on the topic.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

The empirical starting point of this study originates from previous research regarding why the principle of R2P has seemed hard to apply in certain cases, but also more specifically about the application of R2P in the DPRK. In order to problematize the principle of R2P and to understand why it does not seem to work in certain cases, this study takes its theoretical starting point in two well-established perspectives in International Relations theory: idealism and realism. The two different theoretical perspectives will in this thesis be important tools in

order to understand why the principle of R2P, on the one hand, is attractive and why it, on the other hand, has seemed hard to apply. More specifically, the justification and the implementation of R2P will be examined by analyzing the tension between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty from the perspectives of idealism and realism.

2.1 Previous research

Whether the principle of R2P could be seen as an efficient strategy in managing global conflicts is a much-debated topic within International Relations. In the article, *Redefining the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Intervention*, the author Amitav Acharya (2002) argues for R2P as an improvement of humanitarian intervention. According to Acharya R2P has, as a result of the changed language, gained a greater acceptance as a norm and as a practice within the international society. Still, this does not mean that the principle of R2P is a resolver of the dilemmas which have been associated with humanitarian intervention. Thus, the UN-system remains dominated by the political and geopolitical constraints of the five members in the Security Council, which implies that the humanitarian imperative is not yet completely separated from these constraints (Acharya, 2002:380). In the article, *Protecting States or Protecting Civilians: The Case for R2P*, the author Jon Western (2011) describes R2P as a crossroad in which the international system could either be governed by national sovereignty where the states are prioritized, or by humanitarian intervention and R2P where the focus is on the protection of civilians. Hence, Western argues for R2P as "... *the best hope for future mitigation and control of violent conflict and mass-atrocity events.*" (Western, 2011:357). According to another article, *The Responsibility to Protect and Alternative R2P Authority: Implications of New Thinking on Sovereignty* written by Ernest G. Wheeler (2006), it is described that R2P, from a perspective of International Law, does not seem to work in certain cases. The reason is that the principle of R2P lacks legitimacy as there is no alternative if the Security Council fails to act. Wheeler argues for an alternative R2P authority, which is proposed to consist of the global civil society. When it is deemed necessary this alternative authority should check and balance the decisions taken by the Security Council, which in turn would give legitimacy to the principle (Wheeler, 2006:ii).

The previous research on the topic has to a large degree been focusing on how the viability of the principle of R2P is related to the concepts of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty, by examining how external factors, e.g., the UN-system and International Law, affect the implementation of R2P. Based on the results from this previous research, it has been proposed that the principle should be rearranged. This study will, unlike

previous research, address the relationship between the concepts of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty as a tension that may affect the viability of R2P, which is in accordance with the previously mentioned gap. Instead of focusing on the normative dimension of R2P, i.e., how it should be, the present study will place its focus on the descriptive dimension of R2P, i.e., how it is. Hence, this study will examine the justification and the implementation of R2P in a certain case in order to get a deeper knowledge of R2P's nature.

The principle of R2P has also been discussed in relation to the case of the DPRK. The article, *The Responsibility to Protect and Northeast Asia: The Case of North Korea*, written by Boris Kondoch (2012), examines whether the DPRK has failed in its R2P and further on whether there is a responsibility within the international community to act. Kondoch concludes that the DPRK has failed in its R2P and argues that the recognition of the international community to act has been low (Kondoch, 2012:433). In another article, *The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in Humanitarian Emergencies: From Libya to North Korea?*, the author Shin-wha Lee (2012) examines a number of previous cases, which had been categorized either as "R2P crimes" or "non-R2P crimes", in order to analyze which practical implications this categorization means for a "complex humanitarian emergency" like the one in the DPRK. Lee argues that it is necessary to explore different ways in how to expand the limited scope of R2P to make it an applicable tool in controversial cases (Lee, 2012:3). Other similar studies have also been made on the difficulties with R2P in the DPRK but rather from the perspective of International Law and Development (Howe & Kah-ul, 2011; Howe, 2012a).

The previous research that has been done on the principle of R2P in the case of the DPRK examines, in general, whether R2P is an applicable tool in the country, which has contributed to an understanding of R2P as particularly hard to apply in the DPRK. It has also contributed to an assumption that the country is hard to cooperate with. The present study will question these preperceptions and further examine how the justification and implementation of the principle of R2P can be understood in the case of the DPRK.

2.2 Idealism

The idealist thought about the nature of international relations extends far back in time, from around the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, which at that time revolved around the problem of establishing relations between people that were just, orderly and peaceful. In this, Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, has been very influential (Steans, Pettiford, Diez &

El-Anis, 2010:23). Idealism has its origin in a philosophy that emphasizes certain beliefs about the characteristics of the world as well as our capacity for rational thought. According to Kant, perpetual peace would not be possible to achieve through an unjust world order based on the assumption that the international system was equal to 'the state of nature'. In this, a 'state of peace' would be the only way for defeating such a situation. Kant did not argue for a world government, nor did he argue for a merger of sovereignty, but rather that states should be governed by the rule of law through a federation consisting of free states. Even if this Kantian idea has been thought of as utopian, Kant did not see this state of affairs to come about quickly. Instead he recognized certain conditions that were necessary in order to achieve a just world order, e.g., the formation of republics. According to Kant, civilized countries that were characterized by free citizens who were governed by the rule of law, would consider to leave the state of nature and the lawlessness that was included. Consequently, Kant suggested that countries that were governed by monarchies or dictatorships were significantly more inclined to go to war (Steans et al., 2010:26).

The idealist perspective puts great emphasis on human rights as well as democracy (Steans et al., 2010:23). The state is seen to have the primary responsibility to secure the human rights towards its citizens, which in turn affects its legitimacy in the international order. Human rights, according to the idealist perspective universal, mean that they are independent of cultural or social preferences. In order to secure human rights, cooperation between states through peaceful means is seen as possible and necessary. However, problems that could arise are consequently considered to be prevented and resolved by effective institutions (Lohr gen Stahl, 2011:26f).

The failed attempt of the League of Nations to prevent a Second World War resulted in the formation of the UN in 1944, which was a new international organization similar to the former one (Steans et al., 2010:34). The international organization originates from an idealist approach as it is based on the assumption that human beings are potentially good and therefore have no interest in starting war with each other. Dialogue is then the preferable alternative to belligerence. This makes respect for the rule of law and an international order that maintains peace and security through stable institutions, the proper way for ending a war (Steans et al., 2010:23). Like the League of Nations, the primary aim of the UN is to maintain peace and security, which implies that conflicts are resolved in a peaceful manner, but also to promote trade as well as economic and social cooperation between the states. Unlike the former organization, the new international organization included economic and social development and the promotion of human rights on the agenda.

Thus, the UN needed, most importantly, to be as universal as possible (Steans et al., 2010:34f).

Idealism will in this thesis be a useful theoretical perspective in order to understand why the principle of R2P is attractive and what problems it could be expected to solve. This is contrasted to realism, which will be presented below.

2.3 Realism

Realism became the dominating theory in International Relations after the end of the Second World War. This implied a rejection of idealism as the failure to prevent another world war had become a fact. World politics was no longer about writing laws or creating international organizations, it was a struggle for each country to pursue power and security. Even if realism increased its popularity in International Relations theory in the post-Second World War period, its intellectual roots can be traced much further back in time to a number of influential thinkers. The fundamental assumptions of realism can be found in the writings about state behaviour written by Thucydides, more than 2,500 years ago, which are still important work for scholars within International Relations. Another influential thinker within realism is Niccolò Machiavelli who already during the sixteenth century expressed thoughts about the absence of trust or sentiment in politics. Thomas Hobbes, in turn, has been an influential thinker within the realist school as he was one of the first political thinkers to have a discussion about the nature of secular power and authority (Steans et al., 2010:54ff).

According to realism, the key actor within international relations is the state, which is motivated by the pursuit for national interest and driven by the desire for power and security (Steans et al., 2010:57). Unlike idealism, realism is based on the assumption that states are self-interested and aggressive entities by nature. This implies that they will ignore the constraints of law or morality in order to pursue their interests (Steans et al., 2010:53). According to the realist perspective an intervention is seen as a way for the state to ensure its own security, which is carried out by the state's ability to maintain and expand their power. The power of a state could in this case be measured by military strength or economic resources (Lohr gen Stahl, 2011:23f).

As a result of the belief that no other state should get more benefits than itself, there is a constant suspicion between the states in the international system. This in turn could imply an arms race between the states where the states are mobilizing their security, but which will end up in a collective insecurity. Cooperation will according to this assumption never be successful (Lohr gen Stahl, 2011:24f). The major problem with international

relations within realism has to do with anarchy as there is no sovereign authority higher than the state. Further on, an international body would not solve the problem as states would not give up their sovereignty, which makes the thought of a world government impossible (Steans et al., 2010:53f). Consequently, conflicts will always be present realities within international relations. International institutions and law will only be effective tools in conflict management while backed up by force or by effective sanctions. The balance of power is one alternative to provide order and security within the international system, in which allies of states prevent other states from becoming too powerful (Steans et al., 2010:57). Another possible alternative that could stabilize the world order according to realists is a bipolar system, which could explain the pessimistic view of the UN through the absence of such a structure. The deficiencies that exist in international cooperation can in turn be explained by its obstacles, which consist of a security dilemma, a balance of power and polarity (Lohr gen Stahl, 2011:24f).

In this thesis, realism will be an important theoretical tool in order to understand why the principle of R2P has seemed to be hard to apply in certain cases and more specifically about its application in the DPRK.

2.4 Central concepts

The key concepts in this thesis will be defined as following:

Responsibility to Protect (R2P) will be referred to as an international principle which was created by the ICISS in 2001 and which implies a reconceptualization of sovereignty from solely about the control of national territory to also include the responsibility to protect its citizens from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (ICISS, 2001).

Humanitarian intervention will be referred to as the use of military force by external actors in order to secure humanitarian conditions, which is usually in conflict with the wishes of the host government (Bellamy, 2013:290).

National sovereignty will be referred to as the defining characteristic of the state, which implies independence and self-control (Steans et al., 2010:57).

United Nations (UN) will be referred to as an international organization which consists of a composition of states and whose aim is to maintain peace and security (Steans et al., 2010:34f).

2.5 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study relies on how the tension between the concepts of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty can be understood from an idealist and a realist perspective. In turn, this tension will be analyzed in relation to the justification and the implementation of the principle of R2P. As was revealed by the theoretical review above, idealism and realism have many different standpoints. The theoretical framework, therefore, aims to highlight the core values in both idealism and realism and to show how these are linked to the concepts of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty, which is pursued in order to show and understand the tension between the concepts.

Three core values within the idealist perspective have been identified. The first core value relies on the perception that the human being is seen as the main actor within the international order. The second core value within idealism relies on the perception that the international order is structured by dialogue, cooperation between states and effective institutions. The final core value that has been identified relies on the perception of human rights as universal and democracy as the primary objectives within the international order.

Three different core values have also been identified within the realist perspective. The first core value relies on the perception that the state is seen as the main actor within the international order. The second core value within realism relies on the perception that the international order is structured by anarchy. The final core value that has been identified relies on the perception of the pursuit for power and security as the primary objectives within the international order.

The identified core values within idealism and realism can be categorized into three different perceptions of the international order: the main actor, the structure and the objectives. The identified core values within idealism show how it is connected to the concept of humanitarian intervention as it puts the human being in focus of the actions, it believes that something slightly larger than the state, e.g., international institutions, characterizes the international order and the primary objectives are human rights and democracy. In contrast, the identified core values within realism show how it is connected to the concept of national sovereignty as it puts the state in focus of the actions, it believes that anarchy characterizes the international order and the primary objectives are the pursuit for power and security. The

theoretical framework, presented as a matrix below, will serve as the structure for the empirical survey.

Core values – Perceptions of the international order	Idealism – Humanitarian intervention	Realism – National sovereignty
<i>the main actor</i>	the human being	the state
<i>the structure</i>	cooperation	anarchy
<i>the objectives</i>	human rights & democracy	power & security

3. Method and Data

This thesis has a qualitative approach and was carried out by an investigative case study on the DPRK. The study was conducted as a qualitative content analysis in which relevant data was collected, systematized, processed and analyzed. This chapter consists of five sections in which discussions about the method, the data and methodological issues will be held but also discussions about the case selection and delimitations.

3.1 Method

This study was designed as a qualitative content analysis. The choice of analytical method was based on the premise that the study required an accurate reading in order to make latent information in the text, e.g., power dynamics, visible. The depth of the text had not been possible to achieve through the use of a quantitative content analysis as it tends to put a greater focus on different parts in the text and not on the entire text (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wängnerud, 2012:210).

The collection of data for this study was performed by literature searches in databases, particularly in the database of Gothenburg University Library but also in Google Scholar. Important keywords and combinations of them in this research were: "R2P", "DPRK", "UN", "humanitarian intervention" and "national sovereignty". The selection of data was made by reading abstracts in order to find relevant literature. The acquisition method was permeated by a source critical approach where the selection of relevant data was made with regard to its four main criteras about authenticity, independency, reliability and tendency (Esaisson et. al., 2012:194).

The systematizing of data was guided by the research questions, which were clarified in the introduction part. Therefore, the study adopted an open approach, i.e., the

absence of predefined categories, in order to answer the research questions. The open approach allowed the content of the texts to govern the investigation to a greater extent than would have been possible by using predefined categories (Esaiasson et al., 2012:216).

The processing of data was made by reading the selected literature several times in order to get a general idea of the text. Then, parts of the text, i.e., meaning units, which were relevant for the research questions, were selected. In the next step, these meaning units were condensed to quotes in order to reduce the length of the text but still to maintain its main sense. These quotations were then organized in relation to the different research questions, constituting the results of the study (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004:106).

The results, i.e., the selected quotes, were analyzed and interpreted in accordance with the theoretical framework. This means that the latent meaning of the selected quotes were interpreted through the identified core values within idealism and realism, i.e., three perceptions of the international order, in order to reveal how the tension between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty may affect the viability of R2P (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004:106).

3.2 Discussion of Data

The selected data for the study consisted of one chapter in a book, one report and four scientific articles. The chapter, *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, in the book, *The Responsibility to Protect – The Promise of Stopping Mass Atrocities In Our Time*, written by Kjell M. Bondevik and Kristen Abrams (2011) contributed to answers to the first two research questions. The report, *Failure to Protect: A call for the UN Security Council to Act*, commissioned by Vacláv Havel, Kjell Magne Bondevik and Elie Wiesel (2006), prepared by the global law firm DLA Piper LLP and the U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, contributed to answers to all of the research questions. The scientific article, '*Opening up' by default: North Korea, the humanitarian community and the crisis*, written by Hazel Smith (1999), was particularly important in the discussion about how the UN's actions in the situation in the DPRK have been assessed. Finally, the following scientific articles: *The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in Humanitarian Emergencies: From Libya to North Korea?* written by Shin-wha Lee (2012), *Lessons Learned for Promoting Human Security in North Korea* written by Brendan Howe (2012) and *The Responsibility To Protect in the Asia-Pacific Region* written by Alex J. Bellamy and Sara E. Davies (2009) were important in the discussion about how it has been argued about using or not using the principle of R2P in the DPRK.

The quality of the selected data in this study can be evaluated on the basis of its tendency towards a Western or a UN-biased approach. The selection of data was delimited to not include articles from the DPRK. This was the result of the difficulty to get access to such papers as well as the linguistic barriers. Hence, the book chapter by Bondevik and Abrams (2011) got a major role in certain parts of the investigation. While the comprehensive use of this source may have resulted in a tendency problem for the study, it still was motivated and justified by its prominent status within the field. However, the study was conducted by an awareness of this tendency. Hence, alternative data that could have been used for this study would have been suggested to consist of articles from the DPRK in order to be able to reflect both sides' view of the problem. Further on, the majority of the selected data illustrated the DPRK as a hopeless case in terms of interactions and cooperations. Consequently, this study embraced a critical approach towards the literature in which their truths were not taken for granted.

3.3 Methodological issues

In order to evaluate the trustworthiness of the research findings, this thesis will discuss the concepts of credibility, dependability and transferability. These are common measures of the trustworthiness within qualitative content analysis. Thereby, this thesis will not refer to the concepts of validity, reliability and generalisability, which are still commonly discussed in relation to qualitative content analysis but more related to the tradition within the quantitative content analysis (Graneheim & Lundberg, 2004:109).

Credibility deals with the focus of the research and therefore how well this focus has been captured in the data and the processes of analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004:109). In order to achieve credibility this study intended to describe the collection of data and its tendency as well as the researcher's approach, but also how the process of analysis has been performed.

Dependability deals with the consistency of the data collection as well as of the analysis process (Graneheim & Lundberg, 2004:110). In order to facilitate dependability this study aimed to collect the data during a relatively short time period in order to minimize the risk of experiences from the beginning of data collection had an impact on the following data collection. The theoretical framework governed the analysis process in order to perform the analysis as coherent as possible. Since this study was conducted as a bachelor's thesis there is a risk that experiences gained during the process might have affected the dependability.

Transferability deals with how well the results of the study are able to be transferred to another context (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004:110). In order to achieve transferability this study intended to describe the methods of collecting, systematizing, processing and analyzing data as clear and transparent as possible, but also to present the findings of the study with appropriate quotations.

3.4 Case selection

The selection of case was based on the assumption that it has seemed to be problematic for the international community to maintain cooperation with the DPRK, and that the principle of R2P is commonly considered to be particularly hard to apply in the country. The DPRK is known as a highly isolated state where ongoing abuses of human rights are committed. Furthermore, the state has been accused for the maintenance of a food policy in which the citizens are starved as well as maintenance of political prison camps (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:347). These abuses will be further developed in the chapter about the background on the situation in the DPRK. However, the understanding of the DPRK as a highly complicated case is confused and unclear and there is a lack of information about the situation in the country. Hence, this understanding will in this thesis be questioned and examined in relation to the problem of implementing the principle of R2P in the country. The understanding of the DPRK as a highly complicated case in terms of the implementation of R2P, together with the fact that the DPRK has been ranked as one of the most isolated states in the world, makes this case particularly important to examine in relation to the tension between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty.

3.5 Delimitations

This study has, due to time constraints, been delimited to only include a single case study. Based on this choice, it will be difficult to draw general conclusions of the study, which in turn affects the representativeness. Instead, the study might contribute to give a deeper insight into the problem.

Delimitations have also been made in the selection of data. The ideal use of data for this study would have been an inclusion of data from the perspectives of the UN as well as of the DPRK. As was stressed in the discussion about data, the study has been delimited to only include data on how the UN and authors from the West interpret the situation in the DPRK. This was made because of a difficulty in getting access to articles and documents from the DPRK, but it was also necessary because of the limited time and space for the

study. Consequently, this delimitation implies that the study has an inevitable UN-bias. The analysis of the results will therefore be made by an awareness of these delimitations.

4. Background on the DPRK

The DPRK is considered as one of the most isolated countries on the earth with 23 million citizens living in absolute isolation. Emigration is deemed illegal and freedom of movement does not even exist. The power of the leaders in the DPRK is maintained through a militaristic dictatorial rule and the government's work is characterized by absolute secrecy (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:348).

Since the Korean War and the leadership of Kim Il-Sung, the DPRK has been governed as an autonomy and self-reliant state in accordance with a Marxist-Leninist political model. The centrally planned economy is inspired by the former Soviet Union, which before its collapse was an important donor of aid and subsidies to the DPRK whose own domestic production was poor. The DPRK was heavily affected by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, an incident which almost resulted in an economic collapse caused by the declined aid. The economic situation in the DPRK has, since the 1990s, remained unstable as a result of political and economic isolation, over-militarization and economic mismanagement. Following the death of Kim Il-Sung in 1994, the take-over of his son Kim Jong-Il did not change the economic problems in the country. Economic progress was hindered by the DPRK's continued, self-imposed, global isolation together with the far-reaching mismanagement of the economy. Millions of people in the DPRK have starved or malnourished as a result of large-scale military investments, collective state-farming that has been ineffective, government mismanagement and problems related to the weather (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:348f). His son Kim Jong-Un succeeded not entirely unexpected Kim Jong-Il in the year of 2011 (Nationalencyklopedin, 2014).

4.1 Food policy

The first leader, Kim-Il Sung, instituted a public system in which food was rationed in order to control the citizens. This implied that certain classes, e.g., the ruling party, were favored. As a result of the government's food policy together with a variety of other factors, such as the monopoly of the state on food and the devastation of the agricultural sector in the DPRK as well as the severe weather conditions, a famine was caused in the country during the 1990s in which around one million citizens were killed. The government of the DPRK has, even during a year when the harvests were good, serious problems in providing food to the

population. Foreign food aid has been offered, but the DPRK has since 2008 hesitated to accept food shipments from the US as well as from other countries. The chronic hunger situation caused by the food shortages has affected the health of the citizens in the DPRK in a dramatic way. Malnutrition in the country is widespread and children as well as pregnant or breast-feeding women are worst affected. The government in the DPRK refuses, however, to take any action against the situation and continues to ignore the problem. Instead the DPRK prioritizes to strategically control the population and spend money on the military as well as on the nuclear weapons programme (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:348ff).

4.2 Political prison camps

The political prison system has existed since 1947 but was at that time created for people who supported Japan during its occupation of Korea as well as for landowners or religious people. Ever since, the political prison camps have been used to control the population and to dismiss criticism against the regime. In the DPRK, all forms of political dissent will be punished. First by torture until the accused person confesses the crime and then either by being executed or by being put into the political prison camps. The prisoners are forced to engage in hard labor, e.g., quarrying of stones, under primitive living conditions where the food ratios corresponds to a starvation level. Health care does not exist in the camps and when a prisoner is too sick for working, the person will be sent to a sanatorium. If a prisoner, e.g., fails in meeting the productive requirements or being accused of working too slow, the person will be punished by reduced ratios of food or by physical violence. Even if the political prison camps in the DPRK are generally known by the rest of the world, the access to more detailed information about the lives of the prisoners is limited. However, according to some reports it has been estimated that around 400,000 prisoners have died in the political prison camps in the DPRK during the last 30 years (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:350ff).

5. Results and Analysis

The presentation and the analysis of the results will be organized on the basis of the research questions, i.e., every research question will be answered separately.

5.1 Why is the DPRK a case for the principle of R2P?

"The North Korean government is actively involved in committing crimes against humanity with respect to both: (1) its food policy leading to famine and (2) its treatment of political prisoners." (Havel, Bondevik & Wiesel, 2006:ii)

This statement can be understood as a justification of the DPRK as a case for the principle of R2P because the state is committing crimes against humanity through its food policy as well as through the maintenance of political prison camps. These actions are proposed to be encompassed by the principle of R2P.

During the famine in the 1990s around one million of the citizens in the DPRK died as a result of the government's food policy and according to the report, *Failure to Protect: A call for the UN Security Council to Act*, the problem is still remaining in the country: *"Hunger and starvation remain a persistent problem. Over 37 percent of children in North Korea are chronically malnourished."* (Havel et al., 2006:ii). In addition to the devastation caused by the food policy in the DPRK the imprisonment of its citizens is another major problem, which was expressed in the report as: *"North Korea imprisons upwards of 200 000 people in its modern-day gulag without due process of law and in near-starvation conditions. More than 400 000 are estimated to have died in that system over 30 years."* (Havel et al., 2006:ii). These quotes showed how the crimes against humanity are ongoing in the country, which further justifies the idea of the DPRK as a case for the principle of R2P.

In order to examine whether the DPRK is a case for the principle of R2P, the authors Kjell Magne Bondevik and Kristen Abrams had, in their book chapter (2011), applied the principle of R2P, based on the perspective of international law, to the food policy as well as to the political prison camps. The authors' definition of crimes against humanity was based on the Rome Statute and was defined as:

"... crimes including, among others, murder, enslavement, torture, rape, persecution, and all other inhumane acts of a similar character... committed 'as part of a widespread or systematic attack' directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack." (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:353)

This definition of crimes against humanity can, in principle with how idealism is portrayed, be understood by putting the human being in focus of the actions within the international order.

Based on the definition of crimes against humanity, the food policy in the DPRK has resulted in "... *widespread malnutrition, disease and death.*" (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:354). According to Bondevik and Abrams, the food policy is a result of a number of factors committed by the government in the DPRK. Firstly, the public distribution system was governed by the Songnum Policy in which the military was prioritized over the citizens. Secondly, international food aid was ignored because of the Juche Ideology in which self-reliance was advocated. For the third, private sales of grains were criminalized, i.e., the people were forbidden to buy their own food. For the fourth, the military spendings over feeding its citizens and finally the currency devaluation in the year of 2009 which seemed to further worsen the food crisis (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:354ff). The above-mentioned actions by the state can, in principle with how realism is depicted, be understood as putting the state in focus of the actions, which is in contrast to idealism and its primary focus on the human being.

Despite the warnings from the international community, the government of the DPRK has ignored to take any action to protect its citizens: "... *North Korea has denied that there are any human rights violations in the country.*" (Havel et al., 2006:10). The ignorance of the DPRK can be interpreted as a failure of the state to secure the human rights towards its citizens, which is in principle with how idealism is portrayed.

Based on the definition of the crimes against humanity, the government of the DPRK commits "... *extermination and other inhumane acts ...*" (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:354), which are a result of "... *starving and malnourishing large segments of its population ...*" (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:354). The food policy of the government in the DPRK, therefore, constitutes crimes against humanity, which is also expressed in the following quote:

"By committing extermination and other inhumane acts, the government of North Korea's food policy and its refusal to feed substantial segments of its own population constitute crimes against humanity." (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:356)

In addition, crimes against humanity are also constituted in the DPRK by the government's intentional maintenance of political prison camps. These consist of a number of international crimes including: "... *enforced disappearance, imprisonment, persecution based on political and religious grounds, extermination, enslavement, and torture.*" (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:357). According to Bondevik and Abrams, the political prison camps are systematically

organized and maintained as they "... requires tens of thousands of prison officials" (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:361), which implies that "... the improbability of their random occurrence are beyond doubt." (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:361). Moreover, the political prison camps are widespread because of "... the massive nature of the prison camp system, and the hundreds of thousands of North Koreans who are subjected to this brutal network ..." (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:361). These crimes, in terms of the political prison camps, can in accordance with the idealist perspective further justify the DPRK as a case for the principle of R2P as they are directed to its citizens.

5.2 How has the UN pursued the principle of R2P in the DPRK?

A number of UN bodies, including the General Assembly, the former Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the DPRK and the Human Rights Council, have at least once in a year since 2003 "... condemned... the human rights situation in the North Korea, including the grave food situation and the existence of the prison labor camps." (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:362). The UN's position against the human rights violations in the DPRK can be understood in accordance with idealism in which the agenda of the UN relies on.

The first resolution on the DPRK by the UN Commission on Human Rights, which was released in 2003, expressed a deep concern about the abuses of human rights regarding the malnutrition of the citizens as well as regarding the political prison camps. The subsequent resolution on the DPRK by the Commission on Human Rights in 2004, regarding the concern about the human rights situation in the country, resulted in a demand to appoint a Special Rapporteur. The Special Rapporteur has since then, at least once in a year, published reports on the remaining abuses of human rights in the DPRK, in which the criticism towards the regime has increased for each year. Since 2005, the General Assembly has adopted five resolutions, each growing more critical, on the situation of the abusing human rights in the DPRK (Bondevik & Abrams, 2011:362ff).

The General Assembly has called upon the government in the DPRK to engage in cooperation with the Special Rapporteur and to discuss the human rights situation with the UN bodies, but that has been refused by the DPRK and answered with "... UN criticism of North Korea is merely a thinly veiled plot to overthrow the country's government." (Bondevik and Abrams, 2011:365). This statement by the DPRK can be understood as a distrust of international institutions' ability to solve conflicts, which is in principle with how realism portrays the international order as characterized by anarchy. As a result of the

unwillingness of the government in the DPRK to engage in any discussion about the human rights situation in the country, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution containing:

"... the body's serious concern regarding both the government's refusal to cooperate with – or even recognize – the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in North Korea and the reports of 'systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights.'" (Havel et al., 2006:70)

This quote can be interpreted as an expression of the DPRK's unwillingness to accept any international interference in their internal affairs, which is in accordance with realism and its emphasis of national sovereignty.

The replacement of the former Commission on Human Rights with the Human Rights Council in the year of 2006 was performed in order to make recommendations on the violations against the human rights that had been committed in the country (Bondevik and Abrams, 2011:366). In the context of the Human Rights Council's review in the year of 2009, in which there is an opportunity for states to comment on the human rights situation in their country, the DPRK:

"... denied the existence of all human rights violations, despite a great majority of participating States expressing deep concern with the human rights situation in North Korea." (Bondevik and Abrams, 2011:366)

The statement above can also be understood in principle with how realism is portrayed, as it shows how the DPRK does not accept foreign assessments of the situation in their country.

The human rights situation in the DPRK has been neglected within the UN Security Council as a result of the nuclear weapons and the tests of missiles in the DPRK. While the Security Council is the only body within the UN system with the authority to decide on military intervention, a number of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have *"... recommended that the Security Council take up human rights and humanitarian issues because they have clear implications for the stability of the region."* (Bondevik and Abrams, 2011:367). The inactivity by the UN Security Council can be understood, in accordance with realism, as a perceived threat to engage in the situation in the DPRK. In turn, this threat can be interpreted as way for the DPRK to pursue its objectives in terms of power and security.

The actions that have been taken by the various bodies within the UN, against the human rights violations in the DPRK, have been assessed in different ways. According to the report, *Failure to Protect: A call for the UN Security Council to Act*, the actions by the UN have had no effect on the situation: *"The United Nations concern, however, has had no effect on the North Korean government, which to this day refuses to engage in serious discussions regarding human rights."* (Havel et al., 2006:70). This statement can be understood as a critical assessment of the UN's actions against the human rights situation in the DPRK. Further on, the cooperation between the UN and the DPRK has been hard to perform, which is exemplified by the following quote:

"The North Korean government has repeatedly been unwilling to engage in substantial discussions regarding human rights or to accept technical assistance from the United Nations with respect to human rights." (Havel et al., 2006:70)

This quote shows how the UN, on the one hand, emphasis cooperation, which is in principle with how idealism portrays the structure of the international order. The DPRK, on the other hand, seems to oppose any foreign interference, which can be understood from the perspective of realism and its perception of anarchy as characterizing the international order.

Another assessment of the UN's actions against situation in the DPRK was depicted in the article *'Opening up' by default: North Korea, the humanitarian community and the crisis*. The author Hazel Smith (1999) argued for the importance of the activities by the UN and other NGOs in the DPRK during the food emergency since 1995:

"... to what I will argue is the extremely important and unnoticed 'confidence-building' exercises with which the UN agencies and the non-governmental organizations have been engaged, almost unwittingly, since 1995 and the start of the food emergency." (Smith, 1999:454f)

The quote above can be understood as a positive assessment of what the UN has been able to achieve in the case of the DPRK.

In the year of 1995, after a series of natural disasters and a devastated economy, the DPRK appealed humanitarian assistance (Smith, 1999:454). For the first time the DPRK, *"... had publicly requested international assistance."* (Smith, 1999:457), which was unexpected because *"... the DPRK had hitherto prided itself on its 'self-directed'*

development or Juche philosophy and had always attempted to find internal solutions to its problems.” (Smith, 1999:457). This can be understood as a new behaviour of the DPRK as the country for the first time seemed willing to receive international assistance, which is in contrast to its previous behaviour that has been associated with realism.

The presence of the humanitarian community in the DPRK from 1995 had, according to Smith, been of great importance as it had contributed to *”... a de facto opening up of the country to the outside world.”* (Smith, 1999:454). The cooperation between the humanitarian community and the DPRK was assumed to have *”... enabled some responses to the very severe food shortages affecting the entire population ...”* (Smith, 1999:454) and:

”... what have been largely unforeseen political implications in that it has in fact constituted an important ‘confidence-building’ exercise for the DPRK government in terms of its relations with the West.” (Smith, 1999:454)

Thus, these statements can be understood as a new approach towards the outside world by the DPRK as well as a new approach towards cooperation.

The opening up of the country could, according to Smith, be understood in relation to *”... the increased availability of information about the DPRK and improved access to DPRK institutions and geographical areas.”* (Smith, 1999:472). Further on, Smith argued that the increased familiarity with the practices of the international organizations within the government of the DPRK was one explanation to why the government behaved with an *”... increasingly relatively relaxed attitude towards the international presence ...”* (Smith, 1999:472). The government’s flexibility could also be understood as *”... arisen partly of necessity, in that the DPRK required international support in order to feed its population.”* (Smith, 1999:472).

5.3 How is it argued about using or not using the principle of R2P in the DPRK?

Many discussions have been ongoing regarding a possible implementation of the principle of R2P in the case of the DPRK. In the report, *Failure to Protect: A call for the UN Security Council to Act*, it was stated that: *”The North Korean’s violation of its responsibility to protect its own citizens from crimes against humanity creates a need for Security Council intervention.”* (Havel et al., 2006:94). Thus, this statement argued for intervention by the UN Security Council against the situation in the DPRK. Further on, the justification for an intervention by the UN Security Council was argued as follows:

"... the Security Council has independent justification for intervening in North Korea either because of the government's failure in its responsibility to protect or because North Korea is a non-traditional threat to the peace." (Havel et al., 2006:iv)

This justification for an intervention in the DPRK can be interpreted in two ways. The justification, in terms of the government's failure in its responsibility to protect, can be interpreted in principle with how idealism is portrayed in terms of putting the human being in focus of its objectives, i.e., to protect the citizens in the DPRK from the human rights violations. In another way the justification, based on the DPRK as a threat to the peace, can be understood from a realist perspective in which the UN assesses the DPRK as a threat to maintain power and security.

Whether R2P is possible to implement in the DPRK was also highlighted by the author Shin-wha Lee (2012) in the article, *The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in Humanitarian Emergencies: From Libya to North Korea?*. According to Lee:

"... it is doubtful that the international community can take coercive measures and intervene in North Korea's 'internal' matters in the name of international justice or the R2P, since the UN Charter clearly indicates respect for 'matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state'" (Lee, 2012:29)

The statement by Lee indicates that it is not likely that the principle of R2P will be implemented in the DPRK since the UN-charter, emphasizing national sovereignty in principle with realism, hinders the UN from achieving its objectives on human rights.

Further on, Lee argued against the probability of an implementation of R2P in the DPRK as: *"... China and Russia will most probably veto any action against North Korea."* (Lee, 2012:29). Moreover, despite the appeals of the humanitarian community to stop the violations of the human rights in the country *"... outright advocacy for putting the North Korean case into the basket of the R2P should be avoided..."* (Lee, 2012:29). Such appeals could instead imply that:

"... the UNSC discussion on whether to invoke R2P may incite North Korea to threaten to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against South Korea or Japan or to actually launch missiles in protest of international intervention." (Lee, 2012:29)

The quote above indicates that the DPRK is perceived as a threat in terms of the pursuit for power and security, which can be related to the objectives within realism.

In another article, *Lessons Learned for Promoting Human Security in North Korea*, discussing the probability of implementing R2P in the DPRK, the author Brendan Howe (2012) stated that *"In the case of North Korea... R2P faces serious obstacles."* (Howe, 2012b:481). According to Howe: *"There remain significant normative as well as practical obstacles to conducting an international humanitarian intervention, regardless of the prima facie evidence of the DPRK's strong candidature."* (Howe, 2012b:482) in which the normative obstacles regard *"... what is 'bad enough' to constitute humanitarian justifications for intervention."* (Howe, 2012b:483) and practical obstacles regarding *"... authorizing R2P international action"* (Howe, 2012b:483). These statements indicate that it is not likely that R2P will be implemented in the DPRK as there are issues concerning the definition and authorization of the principle.

Further on, Howe proposed three different factors which implied *"... what exactly the international community can and should do to promote human security and development in North Korea"* (Howe, 2012b:482). The first factor stated that *"the role of the international community is vital"* (Howe, 2012b:486), the second factor stated that *"issues of regime insecurity must be addressed lest they are internalized to the detriment of the citizens of the DPRK, or externalized to the detriment of international peace and security"* (Howe, 2012b:486f) and the third factor stated that *"the international community may have to accept the necessity of dealing with unpalatable regimes and individuals in order to achieve rational and normative goals with regard to the transformation of North Korea and the surrounding international security environment."* (Howe, 2012b:487). These factors can be understood as an approach to manage the situation in the DPRK. This approach can in turn be interpreted in principle with how idealism is portrayed as it emphasizes other actors than only the state, i.e., the international community, as well as human rights. Consequently, according to this approach it is necessary to deal with the DPRK rather than ignoring them as a state.

In order to be able to transform and progress R2P from words to deeds, the importance of a global consensus about the meaning and scope of R2P was emphasized in the article, *The Responsibility To Protect in the Asia-Pacific Region*, written by Alex J. Bellamy and Sara E. Davies (2009). The authors stressed the importance of highlighting the positions of the world's governments, which in the article were limited to the Asia-Pacific region and were categorized based on four different standpoints to R2P: advocates, R2P-engaged, fence-

sitters and opponents. The DPRK was known for being an opponent towards R2P as it emphasized "... *that it is the sole responsibility of states to prevent genocide and mass atrocities, and not a matter of international peace and security.*" (Bellamy & Davies, 2009:566). This indicates that the DPRK as a state is perceived to have a central role to take care of internal matters, and thus, the national sovereignty is important, which is in principle with how realism is depicted.

The importance of sovereignty and non-interference were clearly called out by the DPRK when R2P was introduced in the World Summit Outcome Document in 2005 (Bellamy & Davies, 2009:566). Bellamy and Davies described how the DPRK together with Myanmar "... *are among the world's worst abusers of human rights and widely thought of as international pariahs, so their reticence towards R2P is not unexpected.*" (Bellamy & Davies, 2009:565). The DPRK's opposition towards R2P has been argued to depend on "... *a concern that R2P provides grounds for external interference in their domestic affairs.*" (Bellamy & Davies, 2009:566). The DPRK had further tried to stop resolutions about the violations of the human rights from both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, which was understood by the authors as following: "*Obviously such a position is in tension with R2P, which insists that states should be accountable for their actions in relation to the four specified types of crimes.*" (Bellamy & Davies, 2009:567).

6. Concluding discussion

To conclude the study, the following discussion aims to show how the results of the research questions in the previous chapter illuminated the research problem. Then, the discussion intends to show how the research problem contributed to the aim of the study. Finally, as science is cumulative, suggestions for future research will be presented.

6.1 Conclusions

The results of the first research question showed that the government of the DPRK commits crimes against humanity by the starvation of its citizens through its food policy and by the maintenance of political prison camps, which are systematically performed as well as geographically widespread in the country. Based on this, the DPRK was justified as a case for the principle of R2P. This justification can be understood in principle with idealism as it puts the human being in focus of the actions. In contrast, the ongoing crimes against humanity, performed by the government in the DPRK, was understood in principle with realism indicating that the state prioritized itself higher than its citizens. However, the crimes against

humanity that are committed by the government in the DPRK could also be understood as a failure of the state to meet its responsibility of securing the human rights of its citizens. Consequently, the justification of R2P was dependent on how the main actor within the international order, i.e., the human being or the state, was perceived.

The results of the second research question showed that the UN has condemned the human rights situation in the DPRK and pursued the principle of R2P through its various bodies, but the actions by the UN have been assessed in different ways. The implementation of the principle of R2P in the DPRK can be understood as problematic because the UN emphasizes cooperation and dialogue, in principle with idealism, while the country refuses to accept any international interference, which is in accordance with an anarchical approach in principle with realism. What the UN has been able to achieve in the DPRK has been assessed in two different ways. The first assessment was understood as critical because the UN seemed to have had no effect on the government of the DPRK. The other assessment was understood as positive because the UN seemed to have been important for the country's relation to the West. This was interpreted as a new behaviour because the DPRK for the first time seemed willing to receive international assistance and it was also seen as a new approach of the country towards the outside world. Even if this assessment was based on actions by the UN during the food emergency in the 1990s, i.e., before R2P was launched, it highlights the question if there may be a possible way into the country, which may go against the otherwise well-known view of the DPRK as a highly isolated state. According to the idealist perspective conflicts between states should be managed by effective institutions through dialogue and cooperation. A tendency towards this idealist perspective on conflict management could, according to this assessment, be identified which was distinct from the realist view of the DPRK in which the international order is characterized by anarchy. Consequently, the implementation of R2P and the different opinions about it were dependent on how the structure within the international order, i.e., cooperation or anarchy, was perceived.

The results of the third research question showed that it is not likely that the principle of R2P will be implemented in the DPRK, as there were problems with the implementation process. The reasons for this are a number of difficulties, e.g., vetos in the UN Security Council and security threats concerning weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, the government of the DPRK is an opponent towards R2P; emphasizing non-interference and national sovereignty. The principle of R2P can be understood as a project, originating from the idealist perspective, created by the UN. The principle implies a normative basis where the fundamental objectives, human rights and democracy, are pursued

through cooperation and dialogue. However, the situation in the DPRK can be understood as a struggle for power and security in line with the realist perspective. Consequently, the different understandings of R2P were dependent on how the objectives within the international order, i.e., human rights and democracy or power and security, were perceived.

The justification and the implementation of the principle of R2P in certain cases, i.e., the research problem, can therefore be understood as a contradiction between two different approaches within international politics; an idealist approach in which humanitarian intervention is emphasized and a realist approach in which national sovereignty is emphasized. Idealism and realism are despite their different theoretical standpoints, in reality, integrated to a large degree. One example of this integration is that the principle of R2P is a reformulation of sovereignty in the sense that the responsibility of the state has been transformed to include also a responsibility to protect its citizens. This implies that the responsibility of the state is no longer only about territorial control. Hence, R2P can be seen as a construction to overcome, or to relieve, the tension between humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty and to make this tension invisible.

The inherent contradiction in the principle of R2P, in which one part of the contradiction aims to be idealist and humanistic with a common desire for peace, and in which the other part of the contradiction is derived from realism and its quest for state sovereignty, will inevitably raise the question about R2P's rational basis. Does the principle of R2P have a rational basis to rely on and to develop from? Or will the principle of R2P forever be fixed in the contradiction between the theoretical perspectives idealism and realism? In order to solve the dilemmas with R2P, a deeper theoretical understanding about how these theoretical paradigms work together will be important. R2P can only get the power to operate and to bridge its inherent contradiction when a common understanding of the rational basis of the principle is established. This has to be solved in order to elevate R2P to the status of a global principle.

6.2 Contribution of study

This study has contributed to a novel understanding of R2P's viability by identifying and exploring an inherent contradiction in the principle affecting its implementation process. The principle of R2P was identified as a construction for relieving the tension between the concepts of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty. However, a need for a deeper understanding of the rational basis of R2P was identified. This was distinct from previous research, which has focused on how the existing R2P should be rearranged in order to work.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

Based on the findings of this study, three suggestions for future research will be presented.

- The first suggestion deals with how R2P can be developed based on its rational basis.
- The second suggestion is to conduct a retrospective study on other unsuccessful cases in terms of R2P, in order to explore the transferability of this study.
- The third suggestion deals with the application of another theoretical perspective than idealism and realism to further explore the rational basis of R2P.

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