

**China's and India's Perspectives on Military Intervention:
Why Africa But Not Syria?**

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Abstract

This paper addresses a puzzle for students of International Relations as to why China and India, two major re-emerging powers in Asia, do not always balk at military intervention invoked by Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, while they rhetorically harbour strong reservations about it. The recent cases of Côte d'Ivoire (2011), Libya (2011), Syria (since 2011) and Mali (since 2012) showed that both China and India acquiesced in external military intervention in these African countries plunged into brutal civil wars, with only that into Syria being rebuffed. By studying how they voted in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2011-2012 and their discourses on intervention, including humanitarian intervention, this paper examines why their decisions about intervention in Africa diverged from that in Syria. We put forward a thesis that their behaviour can be explained by an interplay between norms and interests in which they express a common anti-US liberal imperialist stance, shaped by a 'collective historical trauma' and 'post-imperial ideology', and demonstrate concerns for state failure and preferences for regional initiatives and political mediation to resolve civil wars.

Keywords: Military intervention, China and India, post-colonial ideology, collective historical trauma, Responsibility to Protect

In the period 2011-12, when both China and India sat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), it deliberated whether to invoke Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to endorse military intervention in various countries in Africa and the Middle East. China and India acquiesced to the intervention in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Mali but balked at an attempt in Syria. What was the glue that held them together? Why did their stance on interventions in the three African countries differ from that towards Syria?

Why do we study China and India? In terms of political system and ideology, contemporary China and India are in stark contrast to each other. One is the biggest communist country with an authoritarian government and the other one is the largest democratic country in the world. However, these two states share a lot of similarities in their historical development. Both were home to great and ancient Asian civilizations and were once major economic powers of the world. Together, they accounted for 46.8% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) by 1700 and 49.0% by 1820. With the ascent of the West, they underwent painful experiences of repressive Western colonialism up to the end of the Second World War and their share of the global GDP correspondingly fell sharply to a mere 8.8% by 1950 (Maddison 2010). In particular, Indians suffered severe famines under the British colonial rule (Banerjee 2000, 188).¹ Their encounters with colonialism, regarded by Miller (2013) as a 'collective historical trauma', have led to the growth of a deeply ingrained collective mentality of victimhood and a resultant anti-colonial 'post-imperial ideology' in the two countries. They have attributed their countries' past poverty, underdevelopment, social disorder and violence to colonial exploitation and encroachment.

Following the onset of the Cold War in Asia, the US containment policy against Communist China was rebuffed by non-aligned India which recognized the People's Republic of China in April 1950. Shaped by the collective trauma and the bitter resentment against victimization at the hands of external imperialist powers, they have been acutely sensitive to any infringement of territorial integrity and national sovereignty by the West. This marked a stark contrast with Chinese and Indian pre-colonial, loose conceptions of territorial boundaries and sovereignty (Miller 2013, 28-29). For Chinese and Indian leaders, Western powers have been inclined to

¹ By pointing out the sharp fall in India's share of the world economy during the 200-year British rule of India, Shashi Tharoor, an Indian member of parliament, called on the United Kingdom to make reparations to India for the damaging colonial rule in a speech delivered at Oxford University in July 2015. Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, endorsed this demand for compensation (Burke 2015).

invade less ‘civilized’ states, based on a condescending principle of ‘*mission civilisatrice*’, which would divide the world into ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ states and the principle of non-intervention would be denied to the latter for their failure to meet the (Western) standard of ‘civilization’ (Gong 1984). In June 1954, during his visit to India, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai advocated the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (known in India as the doctrine of *Panchasheel*) as the basic norms for handling the bilateral relationship between India and China. These principles – mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence – were subsequently proposed as the norms governing international relations among developing countries during the Bandung Conference in April 1955 (Keith 1989, 59-87, 117-49).

Today both China and India are re-emerging as major powers in Asia. They accounted for 24.2% of the global GDP in 2008 while making up 36.9% of the world’s population (Maddison 2010). However, the collective historical trauma still matters. Since a nationalist turn by Jiang Zemin in the 1990s, following the demise of communism in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, historical memory and narrative has been employed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to strengthen its claim to legitimacy. Since its Patriotic Education campaign, the CCP has portrayed itself as the guardian of China’s national integrity while the narrative also both reinforces the country’s collective identity as a victim of imperialism and shapes its foreign policy (Wang 2012b; Hughes 2006, 42-69). Today’s Chinese leaders often make reference to the ‘Century of National Humiliation’ (1839-1949) and the associated ‘Never Forget National Humiliation’ narrative in discussing China’s external relations with other major countries in the twenty-first century, believing that the contemporary international system is still characterized by ferocious struggles and conflicts between strong and weak nation-states (Kaufman 2010; Wang 2012a). As noted by Callahan (2004, 202), a major goal of Chinese foreign policy has been to ‘cleanse National Humiliation’. The recent mottos, ‘Chinese Dream’ and ‘national rejuvenation,’ grow out of the same nationalist discourse and narrative (Hughes 2011). Albeit the largest democratic country, safeguarding national sovereignty from great, especially former colonial, powers’ infringement has also long been high on India’s list of foreign policy priorities (Pai 2013). In the post-Cold War era, India’s human rights policy has also become ‘defensive’, proclaiming its sovereignty against external intervention by Western

powers.² On the world stage, the two re-emerging powers are said to form an ‘in-group’ of an Asian ‘axis of sovereignty’ (Ferdinand 2014, 386), sharing similar views on national sovereignty and human rights. For example, they *never* vote in the United Nations in favour of resolutions or motions critical of other countries’ human rights records (Ferdinand 2014, 385) and are regarded as ‘high priority dissenter states’ among states critical of the notion of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) (Quinton-Brown 2013).

We argue in this paper that present-day China and India share with each other a *sui generis* national identity of post-colonial, *re-emerging* powers, which other rising powers such as Russia, Brazil and South Africa do not possess. Russia was not colonized by western imperial powers, and historically Brazil and South Africa were not major powers. Because of the nineteenth-century historical trauma and their common post-colonial identity, the use of force by powerful states against inferior states has caused China and India much consternation. They demonstrate a stronger commitment to the sanctity of national sovereignty and territorial integrity than Russia, which is prone to intervening in its ‘sphere of influence’ (Chen 2015, 22). This can be shown in the Russo-Georgian war of August 2008 and the Russian annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. In the former, Russia sent troops into Georgia in response to the latter’s offensive to regain control over South Ossetia. After expelling Georgian troops from South Ossetia and Abkhazia, another breakaway region, Russia recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia. Without seeking any UNSC authorization, the Russian government, however, invoked the R2P principle to protect the South Ossetians, and Russian citizens and peacekeepers from ‘genocide’ by the Georgian armed forces (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008). The humanitarian intervention claim was not only rebuked by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (2009), Evans (2009) and Badescu (2011, 142-44), but also received little demonstrable political support by China. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, of which China is a key member, in late August 2008 did not recognize the independence of the two new separatist regions (Bowker 2011, 198; Farizova and Gabuev 2008; Swanström 2008). In the wake of the Euromaidan movement in Ukraine and the succeeding political crisis in Crimea in early 2014, the UNSC deliberated and voted in March 2014 a draft resolution on not recognizing the altered status of Crimea after a scheduled referendum in Crimea in the same month. China abstained from voting, referring to its avowed stance on respecting the sovereignty and territorial

² Due to space constraint, the reasons for the policy change cannot be discussed here. For details, see Banerjee 2000.

integrity of all states in an equivocal statement (United Nations 2014a; see also: Alpert 2014; Tiezzi 2014). Russia, in contrast, defended the use of force by saying that the ousted Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich asked for military aid from Russia and that it safeguarded the human rights of the Russian-speaking minority people in Crimea (Ledere and Speilmann 2014). Later China and India abstained from voting in a non-binding UN General Assembly resolution (68/262) calling for protecting the territory integrity of Ukraine. They did not go along with Russia and ten other states such as Cuba, North Korea, Nicaragua, Sudan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe to vote against the draft resolution (United Nations 2014b).

Their very similar voting patterns at the UN, despite their divergent political systems and values, prompt us to make a deeper enquiry into their shared views on external intervention, including humanitarian intervention, and R2P. Miller (2013) has proclaimed that both countries seek to regain the past glory of pre-colonial history and the pursuit of their rightful international status would necessitate them to not fully emulate or support the rules and norms promoted and imposed by the West, their common victimizer.³ With the rise of China and India (and other emerging powers), norm diffusion is no longer a top-down process dictated single-handedly by the West. This paper discusses how normative considerations have empowered China and India to pursue the interests they believe legitimate and appropriate for their identity, and how their interest-seeking behaviours have led to norm contestation with the West. We argue that their policy towards various cases of intervention can be explained by virtue of mutually penetrating norms and interests. Whereas it is commonly held that norms and interests are often in tension with each other,⁴ we contend that they interact with and penetrate each other in a dialectical relationship in which norms define for actors what constitutes their legitimate interests, empowering them to pursue the interests, and in the pursuit of their interests the actors are tempted to reinforce or change the prevailing norms.⁵ As already noted by Wayne Sandholtz, who in turn echoes Finnemore and Sikkink, norm change emerges out of disputes and arguments (Sandholtz 2007; Sandholtz 2008; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Based on this

³ A case in point is China's moves to establish a new development bank known as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) since 2013. The US has been concerned that the new development bank would pose a direct challenge to the post-World War II international and regional financial order set up and led by it (Economist 2013; Perlez 2015).

⁴ Before the full entrenchment of the norm of racial equality in international society, both the United States and United Kingdom resisted imposing sanctions on apartheid-era South Africa due to concerns over their strategic and economic interests (Klotz 1999).

⁵ Harald Müller (2013, 9) argues that political parties, politicians, lawyers and diplomats are duty-bound to 'act in an interested-oriented way'. As argued by Richard Youngs (2004) in the context of the European Union, ideational dynamics often co-exist with power politics. Katzenstein (1996, 27) claims that norms 'both constrain and enable actors'.

theoretical framework, this paper reviews China and India's voting patterns in the UNSC and their discourses on military intervention and R2P.

The article proceeds in three parts. The first attempts to discuss how China and India were in agreement with – at least not in opposition to – external intervention in the three African states but not in Syria. The second section examines whether the Libya intervention was a 'game changer' after which both China and India hardened their stance on armed intervention. The final section discusses the crucial reasons for China and India's votes over the Syrian crisis. Focus will be on how China and India justified their determination to block any external humanitarian intervention in Syria, and on how their actions were driven by an intermingling of material interests and normative considerations.

China, India, and Armed Intervention in Syria and Africa

All the four cases of intervention under study were interventions in essentially domestic matters, three were all for humanitarian purposes (as discussed in detail below, that in Mali by the French force was more about stemming terrorism). A few words on the interrelationships between humanitarian intervention and the notion of the 'Responsibility to Protect' are in order. R2P is not synonymous with humanitarian intervention (Bellamy and Williams 2012, 545), which is an older concept dating back to the nineteenth century (Finnemore 2003, 58-66). For the purpose of this paper, humanitarian intervention can be defined as the deployment of military force by a state, or a group of states, or an international organization across borders for the purpose of protecting foreign civilians from massive and egregious violations of human rights (Badescu 2011, 9; Finnemore 2003, 53; Pattison 2010, 28). We adopt a broader definition than the one provided by Holzgrefe (2003, 18): 'the threat or use of force across state borders by a state (or group of states) aimed at preventing or ending widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals other than its own citizens, without the permission of the state within whose territory force is applied.' We do not consider in our definition the factor of the consent of the host government in order to include the interventions into the countries where well-functioning central governments were virtually non-existent due to state failure or where the host governments granted the consent only under intense pressure

or coercion from the more powerful states or international organizations, as was the case of Indonesia in the Australian-led intervention in East Timor in 1999 (Martin 2003).⁶

Whereas, as Finnemore (2003, 52-84) points out, unilateral humanitarian interventions are no longer regarded as legitimate after the end of World War II, multilateral interventions are not necessarily free of controversy. NATO's intervention in Kosovo led to the 'Kosovo dilemma' (Stromseth 2003, 234-40) or the 'humanitarian intervention conundrum' (Badescu 2011, 1-3, 19-39) because, without an authorization of the UNSC and not for self-defence, that multilateral military action against a sovereign state was technically illegal. This dilemma or conundrum prompted the establishment of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2000 under the auspices of Canada to address and reconcile the tension between the norms on national sovereignty and non-intervention and those demanding respect for human rights. The ICISS advanced the concept of the 'Responsibility to Protect' in its final report in 2001. It was ultimately accorded the status of a global norm, albeit a nascent one, after heads of state and government threw their weight behind it in the World Summit in September 2005, a United Nations General Assembly plenary meeting to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the UN (as included in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the World Summit Outcome Document). The UNSC has since then made direct reference to R2P in its resolutions 1674 (April 2006), 1706 (August 2006), 1894 (November 2009), 1970 (February 2011) and 1973 (March 2011). It won the support of the majority of the member states in the UN General Assembly debate on R2P in July 2009 (Badescu 2011, 111-13; Bellamy 2011, 42-49; Thakur 2011, 156-57).

An impact of the R2P doctrine on the understanding and practice of humanitarian intervention since 2005 can be seen in the discussions about the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. Sovereignty is re-interpreted by the R2P advocates as responsibility towards a state's population and towards the international community rather than as absolute right of statehood (i.e. exclusive and total jurisdiction within one's territory and non-intervention). Humanitarian intervention is permissible because the responsibility to intervene in a state where extreme human rights violations are occurring is not derived from the intervening states' right of intervention but from the failure of that state to meet its responsibilities towards its population

⁶ For an argument that the requirement for the lack of the consent of the government of the target state should not be applied too strictly, see Pattison 2010, 26-27.

(Badescu 2011, 41). With regard to the question of who has the legitimate authority to approve humanitarian intervention, although the ICISS (2001, 53-55) does not give the UNSC any absolute monopoly on the authorization of humanitarian intervention, major powers (especially China, India, Russia and the US; see Badescu 2011, 106; Bellamy 2009, 83-91) at the 2005 World Summit came to a watered-down agreement that collective action would be taken ‘through the Security Council ... on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate’ (paragraph 139). Under the influence of the ICISS and the subsequent negotiations by major powers in the run-up to the World Summit, humanitarian intervention has been effectively understood as UNSC-sanctioned military intervention to protect foreign nationals from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (Evans, Thakur and Pape 2013, 203). Likewise, the use of force against the other state, motivated not on humanitarian or self-defence grounds, will not be regarded as legitimate if it does not have the UNSC’s stamp of approval. The primary question this paper will address is why China and India – especially the former as a veto-wielding permanent member of the UNSC – refused to sanction intervention in Syria whereas endorsing authorizations of the use of force in three states in Africa.

Popular uprisings in Syria, inspired by the outbreak of the Arab-Spring social movement in Tunisia in December 2010, erupted in March 2011. Afterwards, they were morphed into armed rebellion between opposition forces and the Bashar al-Assad regime, creating a regional humanitarian emergency (Blanchard et al. 2015, 9-10).⁷ Sources indicate that out of a total population of 22.4 million before the civil war, no less than 200,000 people had been killed, more than 4 million had fled the country and more than 7.6 million Syrians had been internally displaced by the end of 2014 (Blanchard et al. 2015, 2; Sharp and Blanchard 2013, 4; The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights 2014; Amnesty International 2015, 354). In October 2011 a draft resolution setting out options for action, including measures under Article 41 against the Assad regime, was tabled at the UNSC. The draft resolution, proposed by four European members of the UNSC – France, Germany, Portugal and the UK – was effectively

⁷ There are allegedly more than 1,500 opposition groups of varying political ideologies and priorities. A coalition of opposition groups, known as the Syrian National Coalition, was formed in Doha, Qatar in November 2012. The main opposition group is Istanbul-based Syrian National Council, initially founded in August 2011. In addition, there are armed groups which operate virtually independent of each other. They include the Free Syrian Army (formed by defectors from Assad’s military) and its succeeding Supreme Military Council, Southern Front Forces, the Islamic Front, Jabhat al-Nusra (the Support Front for the People of the Levant; an Al Qaeda-affiliated jihadist militia), and more recently, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS) (Blanchard et al. 2015, 10-13; Lesch 2012, 245-48).

vetoed by Russia and China, with four abstentions from Brazil, India, Lebanon and South Africa. Strongly disapproving of regime change in Libya (as discussed below), China stressed the principles of non-intervention in domestic affairs and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. China also highlighted the importance of the principle of non-intervention for small and medium-sized developing countries but did not mention the wishes of regional organisations such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council to intervene (United Nations Security Council 2011e, 4, 5, 11; United Nations Security Council 2011f).⁸ In explaining its abstention, India expressed its disagreement with threats of sanctions and regime change, took issue with the opposition ‘militant’ groups for taking up an armed insurrection path, and called on the international community to give time and space for the Syrian government and the opposition to engage with each other. At that time India showed faith in the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) initiative with Syria (as discussed below) (United Nations Security Council 2011e, 6-7; Adams 2012).⁹

Four months later, in early February 2012, a total of 19 countries, including five from the West (France, Germany, Portugal, the UK and the US) and a group of Middle Eastern, African and Latin American countries,¹⁰ proposed another UNSC draft resolution, calling on the Syrian government to draw a halt to the violence, withdraw its armed forces to their barracks and allow the League of Arab States full access to ‘all parts of Syria’ to monitor the violence there. They also threw their weight behind the Arab League’s decision of 22 January 2012 to facilitate a ‘political transition to a democratic, plural political system’ (United Nations Security Council 2012b). Once again, China and Russia presented a double veto to the draft resolution. China maintained that the draft would place ‘undue emphasis’ on the Syrian government, and that Syria’s sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity must be fully respected. Yet India was in favour of the draft resolution, based on the rationale that it supported the efforts of the Arab League to resolve the crisis peacefully and inclusively and that any measures under Article 42 of Chapter VII were expressly ruled out (United Nations Security Council 2012d). There was no principled discord between China and India over the use of force under Chapter

⁸ Russia in particular expressed concern about the ‘Libyan experience,’ in which compliance with the UNSC Resolution 1973 on Libya had become a model for NATO military intervention to implement the Responsibility to Protect. It was grateful to other members of BRICS states for their support of its stance. More vocal than India and Brazil, South Africa pointed out that the UNSC Resolution 1973 was abused with the implementation going far beyond its mandate. It was hence concerned that there would be ‘a hidden agenda aimed at once again instituting regime change’ (United Nations Security Council 2011e, 3-5, 10-11).

⁹ IBSA in August 2011 sent a delegation to Syria in a bid to mediate the conflicts.

¹⁰ Three of them were non-permanent members of the UNSC; they were Columbia, Morocco and Togo.

VII. They were soon in agreement, and (with other UNSC members) voted for Resolutions 2042 and 2043 in April 2012. Resolution 2042 authorized a team of up to 30 unarmed military observers and called on the Syrian government to begin a ‘pull-back of military forces from population centres and cease the use of heavy weaponry in those areas’ in order to carry out the six-point plan proposed by Kofi Annan, the then UN-Arab League joint special envoy to Syria (United Nations Security Council 2012c). Resolution 2043 went further by setting up a United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) of 300 unarmed observers for 90 days to monitor a ceasefire (United Nations Security Council 2012d).

On 19 July 2012, a day before the expiry of the UN mission, both China and Russia for the third time vetoed a proposed resolution that would have extended the mandate of the UNSMIS *and* threatened sanctions, imposed under Article 41 of Chapter VII, against the Syrian government if violence in the country had not ceased within ten days. China not only echoed Russia but also was highly critical of the sponsoring countries of the draft resolution for ‘jeopardi[zing] the unity of the Security Council’, ‘adopting a rigid and arrogant approach’ and ‘repeat[ing] their old trick of setting preconditions as obstacles to the extension of UNSMIS’s mandate’ (United Nations Security Council 2012e, 7-9, 11-14). India argued for a renewal of the UNSMIS mandate while expressing veiled reservation about the sanctions. The UNSMIS extension was approved the following day in Resolution 2059 (2012) with the extension issue being kept *separate* from the threatened sanctions (United Nations Security Council 2012f).

The significance of the Syria case should be seen in light of the interventions elsewhere in Africa. Both China and India did not oppose the endorsement by the UNSC of the use of force in containing the atrocities in Côte d’Ivoire, Libya and Mali, although they abstained from voting on Resolution 1973 on Libya.¹¹ The interventions into Côte d’Ivoire and Mali were, nevertheless, not without controversy.

In Côte d’Ivoire, internal disputes arose from the controversial presidential elections of October-November 2010, which was under the supervision of the UN. The West African country was plunged into political turmoil and civil-military conflict following a disputed presidential runoff election between the incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, and his rival,

¹¹ China and India voted in February 2011 in favour of Resolution 1970, which, among others, referred the situation to the International Criminal Court while they are not signatories to the Rome Statute of 1998 that set up the ICC.

Alassane Ouattara. Civil strife and violence broke out as soon as Gbagbo refused to concede victory to Ouattara, who was widely recognized by the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) and the UN as the victor. Regional and international organizations, and the international community endorsed the results announced by the Ivorian Independent Electoral Commission (CEI). The CEI disputed the Ivorian Constitutional Council's account that Gbagbo was duly elected with 51.5% of the total votes, after a substantial number of votes in the north, where Ouattara was based, were annulled because of alleged counting irregularities.¹² In late March 2011, in the context of the ongoing UNSC-mandated action against Libya,¹³ the UNSC adopted Resolution 1975 under Chapter VII to impose sanctions against Gbagbo and demanded that he step down and hand over power to Ouattara. Yet the intervention in Côte d'Ivoire deviated from the age-old principle of respecting the national sovereignty of the state. The consent of the sitting government of Gbagbo was neither sought nor given. The UN Secretariat ignored Gbagbo's demands before the passage of Resolution 1962 (2010) that foreign forces leave his country. The UNSC also intervened into the internal affairs of the country, with Resolution 1962 (2010) overriding the Ivorian Constitutional Council's verdict on the presidential election.¹⁴ China and India, nevertheless, continued voting in favour of Resolution 1975 (2011) that imposed targeted sanctions against Gbagbo and four of his associates and urged him to 'immediately step aside', despite making principled caveats. India wanted to 'put on record' that UN peacekeepers 'cannot be made instruments of regime change' and so the UN Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) 'should not become a party to the Ivorian political stalemate' (United Nations Security Council 2011b; United Nations Security Council 2011c, 3). The UN forces were not neutral in the civil conflict; UNOCI, French special forces and pro-Ouattara insurgents jointly attacked Gbagbo's residence in Abidjan in April 2011, leading to his capture by Ouattara's forces (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2011, 291-293; Bellamy and Williams 2011, 832-838). Despite their reservations, China and India continued voting in favour of Resolutions 1980, 1981, 1992 and 2000 (2011) in April-July 2011. The last one, adopted under Chapter VII, continued to authorize UNOCI to use 'all necessary means' to carry out its mandate, and both China and India made no statements in the meeting (United Nations Security Council 2011d). It is said that Gbagbo was in favour of breaking the monopoly of Western oil

¹² For an account of the frauds in the north, see: Bush et al. 2011, 363.

¹³ According to Weiss (2012, 64-65), the UNSC had not taken action for three months until the onset of the military action against Libya.

¹⁴ As shown below, the UN authorities were derived from the Pretoria Agreement of 2005.

companies by inviting those from China, India and Russia to invest in his country's newly found oilfields, whereas Ouattara was educated in the US and a former IMF official (Bush et al. 2011, 363; McGovern 2011). So why did China and India not come to Gbagbo's rescue and instead lend support to the rebels from the north?

In the multi-ethnic country of Mali, which earned independence from France in 1960, the Tuareg tribe in the desert north has agitated for a separate state. The separatist combatants were given additional arms from returning mercenaries who had fought for the Gaddafi regime, and formed a National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). They were later, however, allegedly defeated by the Islamic groups, Ansar al Deen (also known as Ansar Dine; Defenders of the Faith), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its splinter faction, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) (Arieff 2013, 1). The inefficacy of the Malian government to handle the uprising in the north provoked a military coup in March 2012. The Islamic groups capitalized on the political chaos in the wake of the coup and seized control of the north, creating a *de facto* division of the country. This heightened international concerns over terrorism, cross-border crime and population displacement. The UNSC in October 2012 (in Resolution 2071 (2012)) requested that ECOWAS and the AU develop a plan to respond to requests from the interim Malian government for an international force to help Mali to recover the occupied northern territories (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2013, iv-vi). One month later, however, Ban Ki-moon argued that the UN was 'not best suited to play a direct role' in Mali (cited in: Théroux-Bénoni 2014, 176). The UNSC in December 2012 (in Resolution 2085 (2012)) authorized the deployment of a regional intervention known as the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA), led by Nigeria, to restore state sovereignty and political order. The force would be given training by the European Union.¹⁵ The two resolutions were adopted under Chapter VII and earned the endorsement of both China and India.

However, apparently capitalizing on the unlikelihood of the regional force being ready to step in until September 2013, the rebels advanced southward in January 2013, threatening the weak regime. Upon a request from Mali's interim president, and claiming to act under Article 51 of the UN Charter, France launched a military intervention against the northern insurgents in the same month (Opération Serval) (Heisbourg 2013, 7-18). However, French military intervention

¹⁵ It is not a full-fledged UN peacekeeping force. But Resolutions 2071 and 2085 were adopted under Chapter VII.

in Mali was not explicitly authorized by the UNSC, as Resolution 2085 made no mention of any role France could play in resolving the civil war in Mali and the intervening force would be led by African states (see also: Boeke and Schuurman 2015, 9). France later quietly dropped the Article 51 argument, as there was no aggression by another state. It is also open to dispute in international law as to whether it would be lawful for third states to give assistance to a government in office against rebel forces. The interim Malian government did not have a democratic mandate either (Bannelier and Christakis 2013; Bergamaschi with Diawara 2014, 144-145; Corten 2010, 289-290). Despite these concerns, China voted in favour of Resolution 2100 (2013) (adopted in April 2013 after the French offensive), which welcomed the French 'swift action' (United Nations Security Council 2013).¹⁶ Since 2013, India has no longer been on the UNSC; but Mali deserves greater attention for the study of Chinese attitude towards UN peacekeeping operations. Marking a major policy shift, China made a political and military breakthrough by committing 400-500 combat troops to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), set up in July 2013 in accordance with Resolution 2100 (Hille 2013; Murray 2013; Sisk 2013).

In sum, in 2011 and 2012, there were Chapter VII-type external interventions into Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Mali. While China and India did not balk at them, they were opposed to UNSC-authorized intervention in Syria. The following sections explain why that is the case.

Was Libya Really a Game Changer?

Why were China and India opposed to external intervention in Syria *only*? Can their policy preferences be explained by virtue of material interests? China has insignificant material interests in Syria. There are only about 800 Chinese citizens in Syria; in contrast, China had to evacuate more than 300,000 Chinese nationals from Libya (Y. Sun 2012). In 2011 when the Syrian uprisings took place, bilateral trade between Syria and China only amounted to \$2.43 billion and China's investment in Syria was less than \$20 million (Ren 2014). Furthermore, Saudi Arabia, a staunch supporter of the Syrian opposition forces, is the largest supplier of China's oil imports, accounting for 20% (Spegele and Ma 2012; Downs, 2013). For India, there

¹⁶ China's response to French intervention was 'at most tepid and reserved' (Sun 2013).

are approximately 2.45 million Indians migrant workers in Saudi Arabia (Parashar 2013). Why did China and India not side with the oil-rich kingdom in line with their material interests?

We first explain why they did not vote against Resolutions 1970 and 1973 on Libya and then examine the turning point in their understanding of the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. The process and agenda of the UNSC discussions and adoption of the two resolutions were firmly controlled by the British and French governments at the outset and then by the so-called ‘P3’ including the US. Much scepticism about the use of force against a sovereign state notwithstanding, the dissenting states – Russia, China, India and Brazil – could not counter outright the P3 narrative. Nor could they offer a better option than forceful intervention in the face of the deflection in February 2011 of Ibrahim Omar Dabbashi, the deputy permanent representative of Libya to the UN, and the mounting pressure on the UNSC to take swift action to halt an alleged impending massacre of civilians by Gaddafi’s forces. China and India (and even Russia) exerted limited power over the process (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014, 899, 901, 907).

As early as March 2011, however, while Barack Obama was still arguing that ‘broadening our military operation to include regime change would be a mistake,’ the US had secretly requested Saudi Arabia arm Libya’s rebel forces in Benghazi in defiance of Resolution 1970 that imposed arms embargo against Libya (The White House 2011; Chivvis 2013, 93; Fisk 2011). In addition, the US and its European allies took steps to give Resolution 1973 ‘the most expansive possible interpretation’, launching an all-out attack on Libya’s military in the hope that they would topple Gaddafi (Schmitt 2011).¹⁷ While admitting that the mandate of UNSC Resolution 1973 was to protect civilians and not to remove Gaddafi from power by force, the leaders of the US, the UK and France argued jointly in the following April that ‘it is impossible to imagine a future for Libya with [him] in power’. In order for a transition to ‘an inclusive constitutional process’ to take place and succeed, they declared, Gaddafi ‘must go and go for good’ (Obama et al. 2011). Around the same time, the civil war in Libya reached a stalemate on the ground with government forces still maintaining a firm grip on the western part of the country. NATO quietly transformed its strategy into one that undertook regime change (Zifcak 2012, 65-66).¹⁸

¹⁷ The Obama Administration was concerned that the war would drag on for weeks or even months (Chivvis 2013, 96-97).

¹⁸ For the stalemate that created mounting pressures on the coalition forces to bring the war to an end as soon as possible, see: Chivvis 2013

To enforce the establishment of the no-fly zone, France, the US and then NATO launched aerial strikes against the Libyan armed forces and defence system, followed by ground attacks. A total of 18 countries, including the Arab states of United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Qatar, had participated in the NATO-led campaign. Some of them had provided the rebels with ‘non-lethal’ military equipment (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2011, 69-71). Not proscribed by Resolution 1973, NATO and some Arab states (e.g. Qatar and the UAE) dispatched special forces into Libya helping the rebel forces against the Gaddafi regime.¹⁹

China was alarmed by, and opposed to, the so-called ‘Libyan model’ whereby UNSC-mandated humanitarian intervention was used as a guise to topple a functioning government of a sovereign state (Bellamy and Williams 2011, 825). For China, NATO stretched the interpretation of UNSC Resolution 1973 and R2P, and had used the Resolution to carry out a forceful regime change in Libya, rather than to protect civilians as the Resolution was intended to do (see, among others: Ruan 2012; Liu 2012, 91-96; Liu 2011, 66-67). The Libya intervention was believed a ‘failure or mistake in Chinese foreign policy’ and Chinese diplomats were criticized inside the country for knowing little about the meaning and implications of ‘no-fly zone’ (Liu and Zhang 2014, 418; see also Y. Sun 2012).²⁰ India was equally critical of the expansive interpretation of Resolution 1973, contending that the reference to ‘all necessary means’ would be equivalent to a ‘blank cheque’ for intervention (Jaganathan and Kurtz 2014). Its ambassador to the UN, Hardeep Singh Puri, referred to NATO as the ‘armed wing’ of the UNSC (Adams 2012). Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said in September 2011 at the UN General Assembly that ‘[s]ocieties cannot be reordered from outside through military force’ and that ‘the idea that prescriptions have to be imposed from outside is fraught with danger’ (Singh 2011).

Therefore, there is no dearth of studies of China’s or China and India’s changing stances concerning external intervention between Libya and Syria, suggesting that the Libya intervention was a ‘game changer’ (see, e.g. Dunne and Teitt 2015; Swaine 2012), however, as

¹⁹ What the Resolution banned was rather ‘a foreign *occupation force* of any form on any part of Libyan territory’ (emphasis added). See Article 4 of the UNSC Resolution 1973.

²⁰ But it was less likely that China was ‘tricked’ into not vetoing Resolution 1973. Welile Nhlapo, the National Security Advisor of South Africa, was quoted as saying that it would be ‘beyond belief that some permanent members of the Security Council would not understand what the implications would be for [Gaddafi] of having “to take all necessary measures” in the text’ (cited in Verhoeven 2014, 61). For a similar argument, see Roberts 2011.

noted above, China and India continued to support intervention in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali but had prevented one in Syria. The following section will deal with this puzzle.

Norms and Interests in Explaining China and India's Perspectives

To account for this puzzle, this paper argues that China not only harbours reservations about military intervention due to historical trauma, but also attempts to advance its own norms on intervention. India is comparatively reticent and cautious about pronouncing its norms but seems to contain the interpretation and practice of intervention in order to give support for a state-centred, pluralist view of international society (Hall 2013, 106; Aneja 2014).²¹ This section discusses how normative considerations have empowered China and India to pursue the interests they consider legitimate and how their interest-seeking behaviours have led to norm contestation with the West which has the capability to carry out humanitarian intervention. We explain their policy towards various cases of humanitarian intervention, by virtue of the following mutually penetrating norms and interests.

Anti-US Hegemonic Imperialism

The Libyan crisis has confirmed lingering suspicions among developing countries that more powerful states would use the pretext of humanitarian intervention to make wars for ulterior purposes, and indicated that the abstaining states could do little to constrain the scope of intervention in Libya).²² There was an 'erroneous' image in China and India of an aggressive, imperialist US wishing to provoke another war in the Middle East (Mohan 2011, 5-6; Mohan 2014; Ruan 2012; Wang 2012).²³ Apparently many specialists in the two countries were not

²¹ India's foreign policy is said to be characterized by caution, as manifest in its unwillingness to endorse new principles other than national sovereignty (Hall 2013, 106). For a succinct discussion of the pluralist-solidarist debate in the English School theory, see Buzan 2004, 45-62. Pluralist disposition is state-centric and concerned mainly about preserving inter-state order by maintaining political and cultural differences between various states, which will allow them to coexist peacefully. Pluralists accordingly support and promote the principle of non-intervention. In contrast, solidarist disposition is inclined towards cosmopolitanism and concern for individual human rights, based on a conviction that order without justice is both undesirable and unsustainable.

²² For an account of 'pretexts for war', see: Goodman 2006; Hall 2013, 97-102.

²³ Indian discourse on Libya as well as the R2P has been dominated by the left-wing, Nehruvian elites who are suspicious of and opposed to Western intervention in the Middle East (Mohan 2014, 6). Ruan Zongze (2012) of China Institute of International Studies highlights the leading role of the US when he writes, 'Since anti-government demonstrations erupted in Tunisia in late 2010, public dissatisfaction with government quickly spread like prairie fire to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, producing eventually the Domino effect of "regime change". Some people in the United States became agitated and rolled up their sleeves, believing the good chance of re-dominating the Middle East had come. The United States then sang praises for the "peaceful revolution" and "democratic transition" in Tunisia and Egypt and not only increased aids [sic] to them but also

aware of the initiatives of both France and the UK in the UNSC, the conflicts between France and NATO over the leadership of the intervening force and the internal debates and disagreement within the Obama administration about the feasibility of the war (Silander 2013, 271-75).²⁴ The relatively novel idea that the implicated government must be overthrown so as to halt an unfolding humanitarian crisis, as demonstrated in the Libya intervention, has developed out of the age-old *mission-civilisatrice* ideology of liberal/humanitarian imperialism (Charap 2013, 38). Counter-arguing that the UNSC does not have a mandate to regime change (see, in particular, Qu 2012), China and India were at pains to preserve the existing Westphalian norm that the UNSC should uphold the principles of non-intervention and the inviolability of state sovereignty. India abstained from voting on a UN General Assembly resolution on Syria in August 2012 that called for ‘President Assad to step down from power and for other members to sever diplomatic relations and contacts with Syria’. India expressed regret that the part of the resolution requiring Assad’s removal was not removed, and so it had to abstain in the vote (Jacob and Raj 2012).

A study by Zeng and Wang (2015) indirectly unveils the logic behind China’s policy towards the Syria intervention. In seeking answers to variations in responses to the application of the R2P norm in Libya by various groups of states, they put forward two key variables, focusing on the pivotal role of the US in the norm application, namely the mutual strategic trust between the US and the country under study and US assessment of the human rights record of the country. Holding that the US is the sole ‘normative leader’ which has – and only it has – the power and credibility to carry out interventions, the authors are primarily concerned over whether the US would use R2P and humanitarian intervention as a pretext to intervene in another state. According to them, those who are convinced that the US will not do so – due to their strategic mutual trust with the US and their good human rights records – will align with the US. Typical examples are the Western powers, including Germany, even though it did not

dispatched senior officials to the Liberation Square in Cairo to pep up the rallying mass. When Libya was caught in the flames of public demonstration, Gaddafi once controlled the situation by means of military suppression. The United States lost no time in getting itself involved, first pushing for the adoption by the UN Security Council of a resolution to set up “no-fly zones” in Libya to justify its military action and then imposing military strikes or high-hand sanctions against Libya and Syria, the two disobedient states, so as to erect a yardstick of reward or punishment for Arab countries.’

²⁴ France was the first country that recognized the Transitional National Council (TNC) as the legitimate government of Libya on 10 March 2011, a week before the adoption of Resolution 1973. The US did not do so until July 2011 (Chivvis 2013, 34; Vandewalle 2012, 204).

join the NATO intervention in Libya.²⁵ All the five BRICS countries belong to a group that are on guard against (*jingti*) the Americans. Based on an inherent fear of non-Western civilization, the argument goes, the US has a hidden agenda of containing Russia while wishing to integrate it into the Western world. The separatist conflict in Chechnya runs a risk of descending into a humanitarian crisis, opening the door to American intervention. Although the authors refer to Russia as a representative state of BRICS and do not explicitly discuss the stance of China, the rationale behind Russian watchful attitude towards R2P and humanitarian intervention can be equally applied to China, which also encounters separatist challenges in Tibet and Xinjiang (see below). Both Chinese elites and masses are inclined to believe that US China policy is driven by ‘a desire to transform China’s social system by a combination of containment and engagement’ (Ye 2011, 115). Chinese suspicion around the American perceived hegemonic leadership in military intervention has spurred doubts about the legitimacy of the intervention.

Underlying Chinese and Indian concerns over US ‘neo-colonialist’ military intervention include – but are not restricted to – ethnic conflicts and internal challenges within the two Asian countries. Both have been long committed to the five principles of peaceful coexistence and there are precedents in recent history for their misgivings about humanitarian intervention. As early as April 1991 when the UNSC adopted Resolution 688 (1991) demanding the end of the Saddam Hussein regime’s repression of Kurds in northern Iraq, both China and India abstained in the vote, for the reason of respecting Iraq’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Virk 2013, 66). India was fiercely opposed to the theory of ‘neo-interventionism’ in the post-Cold War, unipolar era, which was used to justify NATO’s unilateral military campaign against Yugoslavia over the Kosovan crisis in March 1999 (Rajan 2000).²⁶ After the start of the military action, India co-sponsored Russia and Belarus to table a draft resolution to the UNSC demanding an end to the war, arguing that Kosovo was part of Yugoslavia and that the UN had ‘no role in the settlement of the domestic political problems’ of the country. Although the resolution was defeated by 3-12, it had the support of China, Russia and Namibia (Virk 2013, 71). During the run-up to the 2005 UN World Summit, India rejected the right of humanitarian intervention and maintained that R2P is a Western intervener’s charter to legitimize intervention, although it was ‘not prepared to scuttle the summit by rejecting the R2P

²⁵ The divergent stances of France and Germany in the intervention in Libya are explained by Bucher et al. (2013). Due to the legacy of the two world wars, Germany has followed a non-militaristic approach to foreign policy and unlike France, Germany does not have any close ‘colonial’ relations with African states.

²⁶ At that time the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia comprised only Montenegro and Serbia.

paragraphs at the last moment’ (Bellamy 2011a, 22-23; see also: Teitt 2012, 199-200; Virk 2013, 64). Its stance was orchestrated by Nirupam Sen, its then permanent representative to the UN, an alleged anti-American leftist. He demanded, in particular, that the five permanent members of the UNSC should exercise restraint in vetoing in cases where the General Assembly had decided that R2P would apply (Jaganathan and Kurtz 2014, 9-10). Well before the Libyan crisis, at the UNSC debate on protection of civilians in November 2009, India had warned that ‘several member states are all too willing to expend resources to effect regime change in the name of protecting civilians’ (Mohan 2014, 4).

The ‘post-imperial ideology’ also mattered in the national psyche of China and India, leading them to be sympathetic to Assad. Syria has long positioned itself as a staunch anti-imperialist state in the Arab world and is said to be the cradle of Arab nationalism against Israel (Lesch 2012, 77-78). As a founding member of the Arab League in 1945, Syria pushed hard for military action against the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Some rebel groups, in contrast, receive funding and arms supplies from the US, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar (Erlich 2014, 94, 96). Also, humanitarian intervention can be disruptive for domestic and international order if it morphs into regime change (‘mission creep’), providing a fertile ground for extremists, or encouraging anti-government rebels to take up arms to overthrow the governing regime (Yang 2012; Luo and Liu 2012). For China, the toppling of a ruling government of a sovereign state under the pretext of exercising R2P would give strong incentive to recalcitrant rebels not to make compromise with the ruling regime, limiting the room for a peaceful resolution of any conflict (Yang 2012; see also: Qu 2012; Zhu 2015).²⁷ This is similar to Alan Kuperman’s moral hazard theory of humanitarian intervention (Kuperman 2008a, 2008b; see also: O’Connell 2010, pp. 47-48; for a compelling critique, see Bellamy and Williams 2012).²⁸ Toppling a tyrant in one country may paradoxically give rise to unrest elsewhere. Mali was a typical example of the spill-over from Gaddafi’s downfall (Douthat 2012; Huang 2013, 73; Song and Kong 2013).

²⁷ Qu (2012) contends that by providing assistance to the Syrian opposition, the West has indeed narrowed the space for compromise. Zhu (2015) warns of a vicious circle in which the use of force to address a humanitarian crisis would likely lead to more acts of violence. Qu Xing was the president of the China Institute of International Studies.

²⁸ For Bellamy and Williams, the moral hazard theory is limited by placing excessive weight on a single international factor (the expectation of third-party intervention) while ignoring the internal dynamics that lead to civil conflicts.

In addition to the ‘post-colonial ideology’, two major events in the twentieth century have shaped Indian perception of the legitimacy and feasibility of armed intervention, notably that by the West. They were the Bangladesh War of Independence (the Bengali East Pakistan’s separation from West Pakistan) of 1971 and Indian intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987-90. For India, major Western powers did not make any attempt to intervene in East Pakistan in spite of egregious humanitarian atrocities there, making New Delhi highly suspicious of the real, non-humanitarian motives of Western powers for intervention in Libya and Syria. Critical Indian observers hold that humanitarian intervention is inherently selective and merely a tool for major powers, notably the permanent members of the UNSC, to pursue geopolitical interests (Muni 2013).²⁹ The failure of the Indian intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war taught India a lesson that external forces could only play a limited role in resolving civil conflicts, deepening its previous normative preference for non-intervention. India has since then not unilaterally intervened into its neighbouring countries, aiding it to improve relations with them (Banerjee 2012, 93). Up to 2009 India had been a staunch opponent to R2P, contending that it was ‘patronising and offensive’ (cited in: Teitt 2012, 199).³⁰

To maintain a pluralist, non-US-predominated international order, China in particular argues, the consent of the host government prior to external intervention is deemed necessary and the notion of R2P is not only applied to the ruling governments and the international society but also to opposition groups in civil wars. Libya was an exception to this norm largely because Gaddafi was a widely loathed leader (Hehir 2013, 302; see also: Zeng and Wang 2015, 81).³¹ His bizarre words against his opponents in Benghazi in February 2011, accusing them of being ‘cockroaches’ and ‘traitors’ and vowing to ‘cleanse Libya house by house’, rendered him little

²⁹ According to an Indian account, up to three million people were killed, 100,000 women were raped and ten million refugees crossed the borders into India during the East Pakistan crisis (Wheeler 2000). Wheeler writes, ‘This appeal to justice fell on deaf ears in the great debating chambers of the society of states, where the Indian action was widely viewed as a breach of the rules that jeopardized the pillars of interstate order’ (p. 55). George H.W. Bush, then-US ambassador to the UN, accused India of ‘clear-cut aggression’ (p. 65). More recently, Harold Saunders attributes US policy of ‘massive inaction’ to, among others, Nixon’s ‘strong bias’ in favour of Pakistani General Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan and his dislike of Indira Gandhi (Saunders 2014; Jaganathan and Kurtz 2014).

³⁰ In January 2008, Sri Lankan government began to launch an offensive in the country’s north in a bid to bring its war campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to an end. There were allegations that war crimes, including indiscriminate attacks on civilians, were committed by the Sri Lankan military and LTTE, in the closing stage of the civil war in 2009. India’s Minister of External Affairs, Pranab Mukherjee, warned the Sri Lankan government of its responsibility to protect its own citizens (Teitt 2012, 200-201).

³¹ There was a misconception that Gaddafi’s Libya was a friend of China because of the shared authoritarian political system and anti-imperialist ideology. But as a matter of fact, Gaddafi had not visited China since 1982 and the last visit by a Chinese president to Tripoli was the one by Jiang Zemin in 2002. Much to Beijing’s dismay, Gaddafi hosted Taiwan’s pro-independence president Chen Shui-bian in 2006 (*International Business Times* 2011; Spegele 2011).

external support. The way the word ‘cockroaches’ was used was strongly reminiscent of the massacre of Tutsis by Hutu in Rwanda in 1994 and the Holocaust in World War II (BBC News 2011; Snow 2011). Alarmed by this imminent brutal crackdown, the UNSC swiftly adopted Resolution 1970, days after Gaddafi’s televised speech, demanding an end to state violence against civilians (Zifcak 2012, 61).

With concern over a US-led ‘imperialist’ mission allayed, China and India were more amendable to French-led interventions in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali than the one into Syria that was pushed for by the US. French intervention in Côte d’Ivoire was not unilateral. The UNSC has been involved in the country’s civil strife for years, dating back to Resolution 1528 (2004) which established UNOCI. It was followed by a couple of resolutions up to Resolution 1975 (2011).³² Resolution 1527 (2004) authorized the French military operation in Côte d’Ivoire, *Licorne*, to give support to UNOCI in carrying out its peacekeeping tasks, and the authorization was regularly extended. However, a presidential election, initially pledged in 2005 to be held in 2008 (Meldrum 2005), was repeatedly postponed until November 2010. After the eruption of post-election violence, Ban Ki-Moon stressed in December 2010 in the UN General Assembly that he would not tolerate any attempt to ‘starve the United Nations mission into submission’ and that ‘facing this direct and unacceptable change to the legitimacy of the United Nations, the world community cannot stand by’ (cited in Charbonneau 2014, 627). As soon as violence became increasingly acute in March-April 2011 with intensified use of heavy weapons against civilian populations in Abidjan, UNOCI and foreign diplomats in the country, Ban Ki-Moon made an appeal to Sarkozy for French military assistance in early April 2011. The French authorities categorically denied any direct role of the French military in the arrest of Gbagbo which would otherwise have amounted to promoting a regime change in the country (Piccolino 2012; Simonen 2012; see also: Koepf 2012, 336; Vallin 2015, 97).

The US was not persuaded by France into believing that the Malian crisis would pose a security threat to the region or to American interests. Susan Rice, the then US ambassador to the UN, once referred to the French intervention as ‘crap’ (cited in Marchal 2013, 493; for a similar argument, see Charbonneau and Sears 2014, 197). China does not see nationalistic France as a

³² They included Resolutions 1633 (2005), 1721 (2006), 1933 (2010), 1962 (2010) and 1967 (2011) (Piccolino 2012; Simonen 2012).

submissive ally of the US.³³ In their analysis of French intervention in Libya and Mali, Li and Fang point out the domestic needs of the French government to use external conflicts to arrest a decline in the popularity of the ruling president, but do not use the term ‘neo-interventionism’ (*xin ganshe zhuyi*) to describe French military actions (see also: Song and Kong 2013). In particular, they make reference to Sarkozy’s claim that the Libya war was a ‘lesson’ for EU foreign policy, asserting that the EU would play a bigger role vis-a-vis the US in protecting security in the Middle East and North Africa (Li and Fang 2014, 68-69, citing Rettman 2011). When the Malian political crisis began to emerge in early 2012, France initially turned to the EU and ECOWAS for conflict resolution (Vallin 2015, 97).

Concern over Failed States

China and India perceived that external intervention would be less objectionable if there were no functioning central governments in the states in question and (ideally) if the campaign was not led by the US. Without external intervention, Côte d’Ivoire would likely have slipped back into civil war. The problems and dangers of failed states have come to the fore in the post-intervention Libya. He Wenping, an expert in African Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, held that French intervention in Mali was necessary because the northern militias contained terrorists (Musakwa 2013), and that it is ‘not necessarily a bad thing for China if France’s decision to send in troops can stabilize the situation’ (He 2013).³⁴

China, in particular, is wary of the negative impact of Syria’s descent into political anarchy and a disruption of the regional balance of power (as discussed in detail below) on its national security. Chinese leaders have harboured concerns over the links between the ISIL/ISIS in Iraq and Syria and the anti-government extremists in Xinjiang (Saul 2015). For China, terrorism, separatism and religious extremism are inseparable from each other, collectively posing an existential threat to the state. China claims that a global jihadist network in Eurasia, spanning across the Middle East and North Africa, Central, South and Southeast Asia, has found willing allies among the Uyghur in Xinjiang. With an internationalist agenda, the global jihadists vow

³³ Despite the fact that France was an imperial power in Africa and that there exists ‘special relationship’ (*Françafrique*) between it and its former colonies in Africa, it is not considered by China an ‘America’s thug for hire’ in today’s international system. In contrast, the United Kingdom is believed so (see Anderlini 2015). France under Charles de Gaulle was the first ‘major’ Western country that established diplomatic relations with China at ambassadorial level in 1964, well before the Sino-US rapprochement in 1971-72 (Gosset 2009). Strengthening the role of Europe as a global actor is a goal of French foreign policy activism (Bucher et al. 2014, 527; see also: Vallin 2015, 95, 96).

³⁴ The only caveat was that the French intervention would legitimize a new wave of interventionism in Africa (He 2013).

to defend and support Muslims in all conflicts involving their religious brethren. They do not have fixed enemies. After 9/11, Beijing has designated the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), East Turkistan Liberation Organization, East Turkistan Information Centre and World Uyghur Youth Congress as terrorist organizations, although only the ETIM is on the UN's Al-Qaeda Sanctions List. The ETIM resumed using violence against the Chinese government in 2008 after a period of non-activity (Gunaratna et al. 2010, 109, 135-39; Sun 2010 for a Chinese account; see also: Kuo 2012).³⁵

A similar incident took place in December 1992 when China and India voted in favour of Resolution 794 (1992) authorizing, under Chapter VII, a US-led mission to 'use all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia' (United Nations Security Council 1992; Virk 2013, 67-69). The intervention in Somalia, a failed state, also brings us to the third factor: the role of regional organizations. African countries were highly supportive of the US action.³⁶

Regional Initiatives without Capacity

The third norm that would justify forcible external intervention is the presence of regional initiatives to resolve regional crises but the lack of material means to accomplish the initiatives. This also serves to allay concerns over the overwhelming predominance of the US in the intervention. The crises in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Mali confirm the growing significance of regional organizations as key stakeholders in maintaining regional peace and security (Bellamy and Williams 2011, 837; Glanville, 2013).³⁷ ECOWAS, backed up by Nigeria, was proactive in taking action against Gbagbo in the Ivorian post-election crisis. On 7 December 2010, two weeks before the UNSC adopted Resolution 1962 (2010), the regional organization had approved the election results, demanded that Gbagbo leave office immediately and suspended Côte d'Ivoire's membership from it. Two days later the AU followed suit, despite initial disagreements among key African states about military intervention to oust Gbagbo. The Central Bank of West African States in January 2011 denied the Gbagbo regime's access to its

³⁵ Kuo (2012) argues that Sino-Uyghur conflict is primarily of ethnic nature. The Islam in Xinjiang is under stronger influence of Hanafi Sunnism and Sufism than Salafism. Many Uyghurs do not call for an Islamic state ruled by a stringent interpretation of Islamic law.

³⁶ China had expected the African states to reject the Resolution and therefore indicated that it would abstain in the vote (Wheeler 2000, 186).

³⁷ The importance of regional organization was first evident in the resolution on the Darfur crisis, Sudan. The UNSC in July 2007 passed Resolution 1769 to deploy a UN-AU hybrid peacekeeping force (UNAMID) to Darfur (Lee, Chan and Chan 2012).

state bank account, harming the ability of the government to pay its soldiers and civil servants (Charbonneau 2012, 518-519; McGovern, 2011). In light of mounting violence by pro-Gbagbo forces against civilians which it was unable to tackle successfully, ECOWAS on 25 March 2011 called on the UNSC to ‘strengthen the mandate’ of UNOCI to enable it ‘to use all necessary means to protect life and property, and to facilitate the immediate transfer of power to ... Ouattara’ (cited in: Wyss 2014, 140). In the 30 March 2011 UNSC meeting that adopted Resolution 1975 (2011), all three present African states – Nigeria, South Africa and Gabon – spoke in favour of imposing sanctions on Gbagbo (United Nations Security Council 2011c, 2-4).³⁸

The crisis in Mali also showed both the presence of a regional initiative to manage the crisis and the absence of a viable regional solution to it. On the one hand, the African states of South Africa and Togo, an ECOWAS member state, voted in favour of UNSC Resolution 2085 (2012) that authorized an ‘Africanized’ mission; on the other, according to Thérroux-Bénoni (2014), both ECOWAS and the AU did not have the funding and logistics to accomplish the envisaged initiative. That was why it would have taken nine months after the passing of Resolution 2085, without French intervention, for AFISMA to be able to be deployed in Mali. France was the only viable force that was able to repel the southward offensive of the rebels. Leaders of the West African states of Niger, Senegal and Guinea also urged France to intervene (Marchal 2013, 498; Charbonneau and Sears 2014, 198; Boeke and Schuurman 2015, 10). To keep the regional initiative alive, France worked in partnership with ECOWAS and the AU in its Mali intervention (Chafer 2014, 525).

Despite the lack of a consensus in the AU, other regional organizations – the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of Islamic Conference – played pivotal roles in pushing forward the resolutions regarding Libya. Regarded as an extraordinary move, the Arab League asked the UNSC to impose a no-fly zone over Libya in March 2011 (Leiby and Mansour 2011; Bronner and Sanger 2011). The emerging norm of regional initiatives to regional problems by regional organizations contributed to the abating of Chinese and Indian resistance to forceful intervention or to their understanding that inaction could not be justified

³⁸ Influenced by its anti-imperialist position, South Africa was once supportive of Gbagbo. However, in face of isolation by other members of the AU’s Peace and Security Council, South Africa changed tack in March 2011, leading to the Peace and Security Council to reach a collective decision to demand Gbagbo’s departure (Wyss 2014, 139).

(Bellamy 2011b, 267). China justified its decision to not to veto Resolution 1973 by claiming that it ‘attach[ed] great importance to the relevant position by the ... Arab League ...’ and ‘to the position of African countries and the African Union’ (United Nations Security Council 2011a, 10).

In the Syrian crisis China and India were less constrained by the key regional organizations, as a result of the dearth of regional initiatives that received their blessing. The efforts by Western powers and their Middle East allies to forge a regional consensus was blocked by Lebanon, which supported the Libya intervention, and stymied by the long-standing sectarian rivalry between the Sunni and the Shiite in the region.³⁹ In addition to Lebanon, Yemen, Algeria and the Shiite-led government of Iraq rejected calls for imposing stronger sanctions against the Assad regime (Lesch 2012, 130-133). China’s Middle East policy is driven by its commitment to a ‘balanced’ policy whereby it does not directly get involved in the time-honoured conflicts among the four major nations in the region, namely the Arabs, the Jews, the Turks and the Persians. The Syrian civil war *per se* is a Sunni Arab attempt to oust the Assad regime which is a coalition of minorities (Carpenter 2013, 2). China notes that the Sunni majority in the Arab world intends to remove Shiites, who are close to Iran, from power in the wake of the Arab-Spring social movement. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council threw their weight behind the ruling government of Bahrain, despite similar protest movements there, mainly because the ruling monarchical family was Sunni while the opposition was Shiite. Turkey’s Sunni government also wants a regime change in Syria. It is, however, uncertain as to whether a regime change in Syria would serve Israel’s interest better (Carpenter 2013, 4-6; Lesch 2012, 148-149). To assume the role of a third-party mediator (as discussed below) in the Middle East, China does not want to be seen as one-sidedly supporting pro-Sunni forces (Wu 2012; Zhang 2012). Strategically speaking, this neutrality and the Syria crisis give China an opportunity to assert its presence and influence in the Middle East. It is argued that this ‘creative involvement’ (*chuangzaoxing jieru*), a term coined by Wang Yizhou of Peking University (Wang 2011,

³⁹ Lebanon abstained in the 6627th meeting of the UNSC in October 2011 where a draft resolution on Syria was given vetoes by both China and Russia, arguing that it ‘would like to defend that brotherly Arab country and its right to sovereignty and integrity of its people and land, including the right to ensure the security and safety of all its citizens’ while expressing their ‘great sorrow at the death of all victims in sisterly Syria’ (United Nations Security Council 2011e). The Egyptian Morsi regime was supportive of the Syrian opposition but the military that toppled it in July 2013 was not. Only Saudi Arabia and Qatar have firmly backed the opposition (Katz 2013; see also Nazer 2013 for the Sunni-Shiite conflict).

Wang, 2013; see also: Zhou 2013), in the Middle East is a response to the US ‘pivot’ to Asia, while the US extricates itself from Iraq and Afghanistan (Yao and Yan 2012b).

India also gives preference to regional intervention for similarities in cultural and political values among regional actors. In the UNSC’s 4 February 2012 meeting, in which the draft resolution S/2012/77 on Syria was vetoed by China and Russia, India emphasized the positive role of the Arab League in bringing about political dialogues among the various actors (United Nations Security Council 2012a, 8; Pethiyagoda 2013, 14).

Mediation: Political Settlement of Civil Wars

Inside China, although the government never admits it publicly, there has been an unofficial argument that the Libya intervention was aimed, among others, at jeopardizing Chinese political and economic interests in Libya (Zeng and Huo 2014, 22; see also: Engdahl 2011 for a similar account). The other lesson China learnt from NATO’s intervention in Libya was that NATO ignored the requests from the AU for mediation (Chen and Wang 2014, 114; Wang 2012). Having been marginalized after the adoption of Resolution 1973,⁴⁰ China was determined to take a proactive approach to the Syrian crisis (Yao and Yan 2012a). Behind the joint vetoes at the UNSC that ruled out the possibility of military humanitarian intervention in Syria was its belief that peace could not be made by war as well as insistence on seeking a political solution to the intra-state conflict. While the continuance of the conflict in Syria is less likely to adversely affect its national interests, China realizes that as a self-proclaimed ‘responsible great power,’ it has to provide global or regional public goods (Yao and Yan 2012a).⁴¹ So after casting the vetoes, it has felt obliged to play a ‘creative’ or ‘constructive’ role by spreading and putting into practice its preferred norms on conflict resolution based on its normative convictions that intervention should not be made on behalf of rebellious forces and that the R2P norm should be equally applied to all parties in violence.⁴² Likewise, India

⁴⁰ China was not a full member of the International Contact Group for Libya formed at the end of March 2011. The Libyan National Transitional Council was non-committal to protecting China’s oil interests in post-Gaddafi Libya. An official of the Libyan oil company Arabian Gulf Oil Company (AGOCO) was quoted as saying, ‘We don’t have a problem with western countries like the Italians, French and UK companies. But we may have some political issues with Russia, China and Brazil’ (Branigan 2011).

⁴¹ The responsibility of China to provide global or regional public goods is emphasized in Wang Yizhou (2013, 121-50). However, the degree of the provision must be commensurate with China’s self-perceived national strength. It still claims to be a developing country.

⁴² Qu (2012) argues that China (and Russia) vetoed the draft UNSC resolutions because, among others, the Syrian government was the prime target for criticism for the violence, and the Western powers refused to accept the amendments proposed by Russia. The draft resolutions would have paved the way for the West to intervene in the country and to push for a regime change.

has held that the use of force should be regarded as a last resort (Virk 2013; Pethiyagoda 2013; Banerjee 2012, 91-109), and that preventive diplomacy is the most important element of R2P (Nambiar 2011). In July 2009 at a UN General Assembly plenary meeting, India declared (Puri 2009):

‘Willingness to take Chapter VII measures can only be on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations with a specific proviso that such action should only be taken when peaceful means are inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail in discharging their duty. These measures ... not only have to be used as a last resort but have to be in conformity with the provisions of the UN Charter.’

Political solution is sought by a particular means of conflict management and resolution known as third-party mediation (D. Sun 2012; see also: Dunne and Teitt 2015, 383, 386), which can be defined as ‘a reactive process of conflict management whereby parties seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, or organization to change their behaviour, settle their conflict, or resolve their problem without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law’ (Bercovitch and Houston 1996, 13). Conflict mediation has three necessary components: ‘(1) the mutually permitted involvement of a third party; (2) third-party reliance on nonviolent tactics; and (3) an absence of authority for the third party to make a binding resolution’ (Beardsley 2011, 18). In other words, the actors involved have the freedom to accept or reject mediators’ proposals (Bercovitch and Jackson 2009, 35). This dovetails with the Chinese and Indian shared principle that it is Syrians, rather than outsiders, who should decide the fate of their country. Key questions about international mediation concern who the mediator should be, what it does in intervening in a conflict and whether the mediated outcomes are enduring (Bercovitch 2005, 416-417).

India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) sent a joint delegation to Syria in August 2011 in a bid to mediate the intra-state conflict. Shortly after the double veto by Russia and China of a resolution in early February 2012, the troika of France, the UK and the US, with their Arab allies, convened the first meeting of an informal Group of Friends of the Syrian People in Tunisia to organize and coordinate anti-Assad forces (Irish 2012; Lesch 2012, 201). A replay of the Libya Contact Group, this meeting occurred outside the UN framework. China did not attend for the reasons that the meeting excluded the Syrian government and demanded the

removal of Assad (Hokayem 2013, 166). In a delicate balancing act to avoid being caught in a dilemma between choosing Riyadh and Tehran in the Middle East, India decided to attend the Tunisia meeting and the one on ending the Syrian violence organized by Iran in August of the same year (Radyuhin 2012; Roche 2012).

In June 2012, an Action Group for Syria⁴³ held a meeting in Geneva (now known as Geneva I conference) and issued a communiqué that focused on the setting up of a transitional governing body with full executive powers. The UNSC adopted Resolution 2118 in September 2013, demanding the destruction or removal of Syria's chemical weapons by the middle of 2014, and calling for an international conference to implement the Geneva Communiqué. After the Syrian government and the main opposition force, the National Coalition, agreed to participate in the conference in November 2013 and January 2014 respectively, a UN-backed international conference to find political solutions was held in Montreux and Geneva, Switzerland on 22-31 January 2014 (dubbed Geneva II conference on Syria).⁴⁴ Lakhdar Brahimi, then-UN and Arab League peace envoy to Syria, was delegated the role of organizing the international conference in cooperation with both Russia and the US. Four international and regional organizations (the UN, the EU, the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation), 38 states and the Holy See participated in the conference. In addition to China and Russia, Brazil, India and South Africa were present at the conference, demonstrating that the emerging powers wanted to have a stronger say in defining international rules about intra-state conflict resolution and look to the UN as the principal means to it (Keating 2013, 172).

In attending the Geneva II peace talks, Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, put forward the 'Chinese Way' (*Zhongguo fangshi*) to handle hot-spot situations. The Chinese Way rules out any forcible regime change, insisting on non-violent conflict resolution and the primary role of the United Nations in the process in order not for Western powers to hijack the negotiation. Despite a finding that the most prominent mediators are not regional or international organizations but big states (Bercovitch 2005, 426), China was in favour of the United Nations' undertaking of the role of the mediator and the meeting was held in the most neutral state of the world, Switzerland. This seems to coincide with a view, albeit not necessarily correct, that even-handedness or impartiality is key to successful mediation. China argues for resolving the

⁴³ It was composed of then-UN-Arab League joint special envoy Kofi Annan, the foreign ministers of the five permanent member states of the UNSC, and representatives of the Arab League, the EU and the UN.

⁴⁴ The second round of Geneva II conference started on 10 February 2014.

less controversial issues before handling the most difficult ones that would involve the future of Assad in the new government.

UN mediation has continued even after the resignation of Brahimi as peace envoy and the accompanying failure of the Geneva II process in May 2014. Staffan de Mistura was appointed in the following July as the UN Special Envoy for the Syrian Crisis. He has been working on a plan for ‘local ceasefires’, starting in the northern city of Aleppo (BBC News 2014). Although it goes beyond the scope of this paper to discuss and evaluate the effectiveness of the mediation, the US began in early 2015 to be more receptive, at least verbally, to Russian-mediated peace talks between the warring sides and quietly dropped its previous demand that Assad be excluded from a transitional government in Syria. John Kerry, US Secretary of State, even went further in saying in March 2015 that the United States would have to negotiate with Assad for a political transition in Syria (Reuters 2015). The main reasons for this change of tack are the installed Geneva process after Brahimi’s resignation in May 2014 (Jopson, 2014), the deadlock in the war between the Syrian government and the insurgent groups and more importantly the rapid rise of ISIL/ISIS in Syria and Iraq (Barnard and Sengupta 2015; Gordon and Barnard 2015; Tisdall 2015). Russia hosted four-day inter-Syrian talks in late January 2015 in which the Assad government and some of the opposition groups participated. They were, however, shunned by the Western-backed Syrian National Coalition and the main insurgent groups fighting on the ground. The participants reached the 11-point ‘Moscow Principles’ by the end of the talks and agreed to meet again in a month (Barmin, 2015, Erlich, 2014).⁴⁵ China’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Liu Jieyi, echoed that the participants ‘agreed on many points that would be included in the solution of the problem that they face’ (cited in Sputnik News 2015). Vladimir Putin held a meeting with Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia’s defence minister and Deputy Crown Prince (second in line for the throne), in June 2015. Envoys from Russia, Saudi Arabia and the US met for the first time concerning Syria in August 2015. The tripartite meeting was followed by one in Moscow between Russian Foreign Minister and his Saudi counterpart over the fate of Assad. Russia also took the initiative to broker a meeting between senior intelligence officials of Saudi Arabia and Syria (Barnard 2015;

⁴⁵ For the ‘Moscow Principles’, see: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2015. The ‘Moscow Principles’ include ‘countering international terrorism’, ‘resolution of the crisis ... by peaceful political means’, ‘unacceptability of outside interference’, ‘unacceptability of any foreign military presence’ and ‘the need to end the occupation of the Golan Heights’. Although the status of the Golan Heights is not an issue of the civil war, the reference to it in the Moscow Principles demonstrates Assad’s claim to nationalism. Israel and Syria were in secret talks on the return of the Golan Heights until 2011 (Erlich 2014, 202-03).

Williams 2015). There are grounds for arguing that political mediation is gradually accepted as *a*, if not *the*, viable means of resolving the civil war in Syria.

Before the French military intervention in West Africa, global and regional mediations were tried in a bid to resolve the Ivorian and Malian crisis. Their failures to avert violence in the countries made the military intervention less ‘imperialist’ and less objectionable to China and India, although they were not direct parties to the mediation. Under the auspices of France, peace talks between the Ivorian government and the rebels in the north, known as the *Forces Nouvelles* (FN), took place in Linas-Marcoussis in January 2003, resulting in a power-sharing Linas-Marcoussis agreement (Koepf 2012, 334). South African President Thabo Mbeki was appointed by the AU as its mediator for the Ivorian crisis in November 2004 when Gbagbo’s relations with France deteriorated (Koepf 2012, 336). Mbeki brokered the Pretoria Agreement between the warring sides in April 2005, which granted the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN the right to certify the electoral process (Meldrum 2005; Piccolino 2012, 15, 20). However, the perceived ideological bias of Mbeki, who regarded Gbagbo as one who fought against French neo-colonialism, by the FN, brought the South African mediation efforts to a standstill. The South African role was taken over by ECOWAS, led by Burkina Faso, in 2006. President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso brokered the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement of March 2007 between Gbagbo and the FN (Charbonneau 2014, 626; Koepf 2012, 336; Wyss 2014, 136). Compaoré was appointed in March 2012 as ECOWAS mediator in the Malian crisis. This was followed by Ban Ki-moon’s appointment of Romano Prodi, a former Prime Minister of Italy, as his Special Envoy for the Sahel and the AU’s appointment of Pierre Buyoya, a former President of Burundi, as its High Representative for Mali and the Sahel in October of the same year (African Union 2012; Théroux-Bénoni et al. 2012). These attempts were welcome by the UNSC in Resolution 2085 (2012), which was supported by China and India. This echoed their aforementioned preference for regionalization of crisis management. Focusing on wiping out the terrorists, the French force stopped short of crushing the Tuareg rebels in the north (Bergamaschi with Diawara 2014, 147). As of September 2015, Algeria has been leading an international mediation team to resolve the conflict between the Malian government and the armed groups in the north (International Crisis Group 2014).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The team is composed of Algeria, the MINUSMA, the AU, ECOWAS, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the EU, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso (International Crisis Group 2014).

Conclusion

This paper aimed to address a puzzle of why China and India were opposed to external intervention in Syria but supported intervention in Côte d'Ivoire (2011), Libya (2011) and Mali (since 2012) in Africa. By studying how they voted in the United Nations Security Council in 2011-2012 and their discourses on intervention, this paper advances an argument that their behaviour can be explained by an interplay between norms and interests by which they embrace and uphold the common norms of anti-US liberal imperialism, preservation of international peace and order (and the associated concern over failed states and terrorism), 'regional solutions to regional problems,' and the use of political mediation to resolve civil wars. The shared norm of opposing US hegemonic intervention with a hidden agenda of regime change is, in particular, shaped by a 'collective historical trauma' and 'post-imperial ideology' as a result of their painful colonization at the hands of Western imperialist powers between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. This collective identity as the Asian victims of the Western imperialism has empowered them to unite around opposition to any *mission-civilisatrice* intervention in Syria,⁴⁷ as well as supporting an inclusive process of political mediation among the parties inside the country, including its Arab nationalistic leader. After the end of the Cold War, the US, as the unipolar power, has been more vigorous in promoting a liberal model of domestic governance, marked by liberal market democracy, to developing states and bringing them into conformity with its standards of domestic governance. Military intervention is not merely a technical practice to save foreign nationals from human rights abuse but rather a vehicle for the US to promulgate its normative model of domestic governance into war-ravaged states,⁴⁸ and this is why Chinese and Indian leaders and elites have been apprehensive of 'neo-interventionism' for its hidden ideological predilection. In contrast, the absence of a confrontation between US-led liberal imperialism and nationalism in the domestic political turmoil in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali and the visible presence of regional consensus on how to tackle the African crises led China and India to be supportive of Chapter VII-type intervention in these countries. This paper also asserts that while the Libya intervention was influential in

⁴⁷ Paris (2002, 656) has argued that the contemporary practice of peacebuilding 'should be construed as a modern version of the colonial-era *mission civilisatrice* ...'

⁴⁸ We draw on Paris 2002, who mainly refers to international peacebuilding operations. Robinson (1996) explains why the US has since the mid-1980s shifted to promoting 'polyarchy', a version of 'low intensity democracy', in its external intervention programmes. Polyarchy is not popular democracy that enables the lower classes to exercise power but refers to an 'elite rule by transnational capitalists and agents or allies, in which the participation of the masses is limited to choosing among competing elites in tightly controlled elections'. It is in essence a form of democracy that is conducive to the growth of neoliberal global capitalism (Robinson 1996, 49; cited in Robinson 2013, 230).

the norm formation process and China and India have since then been more concerned over how R2P, especially its Pillar 3, would be implemented on the ground, the intervention *per se* was not a pivotal ‘game changer’, as these norms have taken shape *prior to, during* and *following* the intervention.

The significance of this paper is fourfold. Firstly, whereas other researchers have attempted to explain China and India’s shifting policies towards military intervention by focusing on Libya and Syria and the transition in the policy stances only, we advance a more comprehensive account that covers Chapter VII-type interventions in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali that happened around the same period of time. Accordingly we put forward several factors that can, taken together, explain better China and India’s seemingly inconsistent stances on external armed interventions. Secondly, we argue that norms and material interests should not be understood as often being in tension with each other, and that rational and social or intersubjective factors are inseparable from each other. Instead, we contend that they interact with and penetrate each other in a dialectical relationship in which norms define for actors – China and India in this paper – what constitutes their legitimate interests, empowering them to pursue their interests, and in the pursuit of their interests, the actors are tempted to reinforce or change prevailing norms. Norms do not only ‘inform how political actors define what they want to accomplish’ (Katzenstein 1996, ix) but also what they believe to be legitimate to pursue. However, like ideas, norms do not float freely in political space; they are rather anchored, among others, in historical experience (Katzenstein 1996, 3, 21, 22). So, thirdly, we maintain that given their historical encounters with the West, China and India of the twenty-first century should be understood as *re-emerging* powers. The horrors of war with the imperialist West, in particular Britain, the prevailing hegemonic power, and the subsequent collective historical trauma and post-imperial ideology have defined their present-day *sui generis* national identity as two non-Western, re-emerging powers, driving them into embracing and adhering to the norms that both repudiate *mission-civilisatrice* use of force against a sovereign state and uphold a state-centric, pluralist world order not dominated by the hegemon. The internalized social norms and the collective identity validate each other and inform the two re-emerging powers’ interpretations of and policies towards military intervention. That explains why they are highly apprehensive of the use of force by the US against Libya and Syria, as opposed to their support for French intervention in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali. Their overarching norm is to maintain a pluralist international order to reduce the threat of international disorder which, for them, often comes from a patronizing, interventionist hegemon sparing no effort to infringe on the sovereignty of,

or to even invade, inferior states. We also point to a political process by which norms over the legitimate use of force are contested between the major powers in the West and the re-emerging powers in the East. Finally, as a result of the resurgence of these two traumatized Asian powers and their common preference for non-military regional diplomacy and political mediation as the means of conflict resolution, one may expect that third-party mediation would be more frequently used or called for in tackling intra-state conflicts and so it would be worth the effort to have more in-depth scholarly studies of mediation conducted by non-Western states.

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