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Abstract

Responsibility is a key theme of recent debates over the ethics of international society. In particular, rising powers such as Brazil, China, and India regularly reject the idea that coercion should be a feature of world politics and portray military intervention as irresponsible. But this raises the problem of how a society's norms can be upheld without coercive measures. Critics have accused them of "free riding" on existing great powers and failing to address the dilemma of how you deal with actors undermining societal values. This article examines writing on responsibility and international society, with reference to the English School, to identify why the willingness and capacity to use force—as well as creative thinking in this regard—are seen as important aspects of responsibility internationally. It then explores the statements made by Brazil, China, and India in UN Security Council meetings between 2011 and 2016 to uncover which actors they see as responsible and how they define responsible action. In doing so, it pinpoints areas of concurrence as well as disagreements in their understandings of the concept and concludes that Brazil and India have a more coherent and practical understanding of responsibility than China, which risks being labelled a "great irresponsible."

Debates over responsibility in international society go to the heart of how politics functions at the global level. In establishing chains of responsibility, we define relationships between

actors, attach identities to them, categorize their material and social power, and suggest what ethical obligations exist within their social sphere. As such, analyzing responsibility is vital to understanding how agency operates internationally and how it constitutes social relations within the international system.

Over the last two decades two particular debates on responsibility in world politics have emerged. The first revolves around who is responsible for maintaining international society. The UN Security Council remains the primary forum for global security debates, but its membership is frequently criticized, and it has failed to reach agreement on how to manage a series of crises during this period.[1] When it came to the interventions in Kosovo in 1999 and Iraq in 2003, for example, Western states took it upon themselves to circumvent the Council and lead coalitions to uphold humanitarian norms or international law as they interpreted them;[2] and in doing, so they faced—and continue to face—a backlash from the international community. More recent attempts to work within the UN system have encountered resistance, as in efforts to pass Security Council resolutions addressing the Syria crisis which have been met by seven vetoes to date from non-Western permanent members.[3]

Similarly, efforts by Western states to pursue policies on nonmilitary security issues, such as climate change, the global financial crisis, and development, have led to coalitions of states challenging their agenda and their right to impose it on others—such as the BASIC group (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) at the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, and IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa) during the Doha Development Round. Recent years have also witnessed a broadening of global clubs to encompass more non-Western states (such as the G-20) and the emergence of new ones that define themselves in opposition to Western forms of global governance (such as the BRICS). As global power shifts away from the formerly dominant Anglo-European powers, their legitimacy and authority to decide and act on behalf of the international community has been cast into doubt. But there is a question

mark over which states are willing or able to take up the burden of maintaining international society's institutions and norms. Rising powers such as China and India have been labeled "free riders," accused of claiming the privileges of great power status without shouldering the burdens this position brings.[4]

The second debate is over what constitutes responsible action. Western states have been censured by domestic critics and other states for their irresponsibility in resorting to force prematurely, blocking trade and development deals for protectionist reasons, and contributing to economic instability through their deregulation of financial markets.[5] Powerful non-Western states have in turn been accused by Western states of acting irresponsibly by preventing armed humanitarian intervention, engaging in their own protectionism, and failing to support the United Nations and other international institutions financially and politically.[6] A burgeoning literature on "rising powers" sees Asia and the Global South challenging Western understandings of how international society should function, while at the same time states from these areas frequently define themselves as upholding traditional norms of sovereignty and nonintervention that, according to their view, are threatened by the West.[7]

This article explores the idea of responsibility in light of these debates. Specifically, it aims to tease out how three significant rising powers—Brazil, China, and India—articulate the concept of responsibility in the setting of the Security Council, thereby providing a deeper understanding of how they interpret the concept, how far they challenge the assumptions of Western states, and what effects these ideas might have on the norms and practices of international society. These three states were chosen as their common association in a variety of multilateral forums, attracting acronyms including the BRICS, BICs and BASIC, make them a logical focus of analysis on non-Western approaches to responsibility. They are "rising powers" in the sense that the economic growth rates and military spending of China

and India place them on a trajectory to become the most powerful states in future decades, albeit at different rates, while Brazil's economy briefly overtook that of the United Kingdom in 2011—supposedly heralding a shift of economic and political influence toward the Global South.[8]

The first section examines the concept of responsibility and the variety of ways it can be interpreted in order to establish a theoretical context for the later empirical analysis of its rhetorical use by Brazil, China, and India. The term tends to be used unreflectively in academic and policy circles, but this analysis will reveal tensions between agent and structurally generated interpretations that play out in practice. It also provides a useful basis for the second section on the English School. English School writers, arguably above all other disciplinary approaches to international relations, have offered the most detailed examination of how responsibility is operationalized in international society; and their research into the role of great powers in maintaining this society provides a rich analysis of the logical underpinnings of the Anglo-European order. Setting out this framework is vital for evaluating how far and in what ways it is being challenged by new configurations of states. The third section investigates how Brazil, China, and India articulate the concept of responsibility in the setting of the Security Council. An analysis of the language in official Council statements by these countries reveals the extent to which they wish to challenge assumptions about the distribution and practice of responsibility in the future. I contend that China's position, framing responsibility as being incompatible with the use of force, is incoherent from the English School perspective and faces a growing challenge from other great powers as irresponsible. India's and Brazil's more moderate positions, though problematic, are nevertheless far more constructive, because each has posited concrete ideas on how to respond to dilemmas over security governance and the use of force.

THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY

In order to understand how rising powers conceive of themselves and are conceived of by others as responsible actors, we must first look at the different ways that the concept of "responsibility" can be understood. Theorists and laypeople alike often describe responsibility in terms of either identity or action.[9] When it comes to identity, we use the adjective *responsible* to suggest that an actor exhibits certain laudable characteristics—maturity, prudence, discretion, forbearance. In other words, for some, responsibility is an attribute or quality that an actor possesses "regardless of a specific action."[10] The advantage of seeing responsibility as an attribute rather than a single action is that it captures the way actors define themselves over time and across a range of actions and situations. However, philosophers have disagreed over the degree to which identities have autonomy outside particular social contexts and practices.[11] Who we are can never be entirely defined internally, as the work of identity construction is primarily done socially through an interactive process of self-definition and the interpretation and behavior of others.[12] This can lead to cognitive dissonance if an actor perceives itself as responsible, while observers nonetheless view it as irresponsible.

Furthermore, role theorists have noted that actors play social roles, such as "responsible adult" or "responsible power," based on preexisting expectations of what these entail.[13] As a result, what constitutes being "responsible" may to a large extent be predetermined at the social rather than individual level.[14] Nevertheless, it would be an overstatement to suggest that individual actors play no part in their own identity formation. How we see ourselves is shaped by our interpretation of our past interactions, which are unique to us as individuals – lending individuals a level of autonomy from current social pressures. It is thus best to see identity construction operating as a symbiosis between

autonomous, internally-derived characteristics and an external structure of ascribed roles and understandings.

The other way of describing responsibility is in terms of our actions: behaving responsibly involves responding to the needs of others.[15] A fundamental aspect of this interpretation is the assumption that an actor has the capacity to act.[16] To be responsible, an actor must be able to respond in a way that would have a positive effect on the outcome. Agency comprises cognitive awareness as well as material capability.[17] As Anthony Lang, Jr., puts it, "Responsibility . . . requires that an individual has the agency required to intend, plan, and execute the actions."[18] If an earthquake or tsunami causes human suffering in a developing state, there is often the expectation that wealthier countries have a responsibility to respond. Simply by being aware of the need and by having the capacity to act, one becomes responsible for doing so. In a global setting, more powerful actors are seen as responsible for maintaining international peace and security by virtue of their military capability. However, even weak actors can find themselves incurring burdens of responsibility on the basis of capacity. For example, in the last few years Syria's neighbors have found themselves having to accept significant numbers of refugees due to their geographic proximity to the conflict. Their capacity to act is stretched thin but is still intact, and so their responsibility remains. Significantly, a change in capacity is generally understood to effect a change in responsibility. Thus Julian Culp states, "It seems relatively uncontroversial to think that rising powers possess greater responsibility to contribute to global public goods because of their greater capacity to do so."[19]

Inherent in much of the talk about responsible action is that responsibility implies a moral obligation or duty.[20] To say we are responsible for someone suggests an obligation to look after their wellbeing. In the above scenario involving a tsunami, richer countries have a "capacity obligation" to respond even though they did not cause the natural disaster.[21] When

capacity alone drives a response, this constitutes a "thin" chain of moral obligation, ultimately compelled by membership in the loose community of humanity.[22] Thicker moral connections derive from prior social relationships, such as familial ties, kinship, community, or trusteeship. Obligatory responsibilities can also derive from social position, as the above discussion of social roles implies. Actors can be ascribed a "status obligation" based on their position within the social hierarchy, with those at the top assumed to have the greatest responsibility for the wellbeing of others and the maintenance of society as a whole.[23]

This latter aspect highlights the way actors are not only responsible *for* others but also responsible *to* them on the basis of social bonds and prior behavior. Being responsible implies being accountable as well. Actors are responsible for the processes they set in motion—what may be termed "contributory obligations." If their industrialization has caused environmental damage, or if their military actions led to wider regional conflict, they are responsible for ameliorating the effects. When it comes to institutions, if a state has helped to establish them, then it is expected to work to maintain their norms and functions.

The level of responsibility of a given actor is never fully determined by its specific contribution to outcomes. For one thing, actors can be both individually and collectively responsible at the same time. In international politics, states are individually responsible for their actions as well as collectively responsible in a more diffuse way for the actions of their allies and the institutions, groups, and coalitions to which they belong.[24] The larger and more powerful the state, the denser the web of networks of responsibility that are in operation. The different levels of contribution to social problems such as climate change have led to calls for "common but differentiated responsibilities" to mitigate them.[25] These requests are motivated by the sense that some states have contributed more to climate change, but also entail recognition of different capacities among states to respond.

Responsible action, on the other hand, is evaluated in relation to the characteristics of the act and the situation. We expect action to be timely, proportionate, prudent, consequential, effective, and legitimate, but the precise act itself may vary according to the context. As with much ethical theory, there are debates over the relative importance of intentions, the moral quality of the act, and the nature of the outcomes when determining whether a certain action is responsible or irresponsible.[26] Designating an action as responsible also depends in part on whether the behavior is appropriate for the actor's role or status. As such, evaluations of responsible action are imbued with considerations of identity and legitimacy.[27] It is also important to remember that these evaluations are produced within a societal context and depend on the collective interpretation of other members of that society. Therefore, debates over responsibility reveal not only the character of the individual actor in question but also prevailing social norms and relationships.

ENGLISH SCHOOL THEORY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The major contribution of the English School to international relations theory lies in its analysis of international society. While accepting realist assumptions about the anarchical nature of the international system and the primacy of states as the key actors at the international level, English School theorists note the importance of social institutions and practices among states. These provide regularity in and make sense of global interactions. Over time, states have developed complex norms of behavior in war, diplomacy, international law, and trade, among other spheres. Thus, despite the reality of global anarchy, world politics is not a realm of pure chaos but a functioning society with long-standing patterns of behavior and beliefs that shape agency.

Furthermore, English School writers suggest that while states have a theoretical equality, in practice the burdens of responsibility for maintaining the norms and rules of international society are borne most heavily by great powers—states with the greatest share of military, economic, and social power. This situation emerged following the Napoleonic wars via the Concert of Europe, in which inequalities in the society of states became institutionalized in the European balance of power system.[28] Certain key states were afforded the opportunity to decide on behalf of weaker powers, and the latter were compelled to bandwagon with more powerful ones.[29] This inequality is embodied today in the UN Charter and the UN Security Council, where five permanent members are afforded a veto.[30] Adam Watson describes the Council as a "collective hegemonial authority," enjoying the unique privilege of being the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes legitimate behavior in the security realm, with all other states being bound by its decisions.[31]

For English School writers, this exalted position comes at a price. As Hedley Bull once asserted, "Great powers cannot expect to be conceded special rights if they do not perform special duties."[32] In particular, they are expected to act in response to crises within international society if they wish to retain their legitimacy and authority. Ian Clark argues that this operates at two levels: great powers are expected to reach agreement among themselves about how to deal with societal challenges (horizontal concert) as well as guide and represent the wishes of wider international society (vertical hierarchy).[33] Above all, these states are meant to provide leadership and exhibit farsightedness, implying that short-term self-interest must at times be sacrificed to advance the wider public good.[34] Indeed, Andrew Linklater asserts that English School writers such as John Vincent and Hedley Bull saw the very survival of international society as being dependent on the capacity of great powers to show "political imagination and practical wisdom."[35]

Scholars have identified three tensions apparent in the operation of this system of unequally distributed responsibility. The first is the extent to which the great powers can be relied upon to act in a responsible fashion. Bull himself coined the term "great irresponsible" in critiquing the behavior of the dominant powers during the cold war.[36] The idea that international society depends on great powers acting responsibly is refutable on the basis that great powers regularly fail to do so, yet international society still exists. Indeed, far from being responsible, Ken Booth has described great powers as gangsters and the society of states as a global protection racket.[37]

The second tension relates to the social and cultural bases of international society. Early English School theorists highlighted the importance of the European origins of many of the mores and practices of that society and noted with concern that the rise of non-European actors might threaten its operation.[38] Later writers acknowledged both the socialization processes encouraging common beliefs and behavior in international society as well as the more complex history of global interaction.[39] Nevertheless, the extent to which action in international society relies on shared values and beliefs to function remains an important and open question. Ironically, the most radical challenge to the norms of international society has come not from new members of the great power club but from the established powers, who have questioned the principles of state sovereignty and nonintervention in favor of communal responsibility for human rights standards.[40] If this were accepted by all great powers, this would be unproblematic. However, non-Western great powers have either resisted these developments or advanced alternative interpretations. The idea of conditional sovereignty recalls nineteenth-century assertions of a "standard of civilization" and seems to conjure up uncomfortable historical memories of the imperialism and racism that drove great power behavior during European dominance.[41]

The third tension is centered on the question of how international society maintains itself. If certain members of this society threaten its stability, then the great powers are supposed to use punitive measures to bring them back into line—measures that ultimately include military force. The Christian Realist writer Reinhold Niebuhr once asserted that "all social cooperation on a larger scale . . . requires a measure of coercion," and saw force as "an inevitable part of the process of social cohesion."[42] Assumption of great power status presents a dilemma to states such as Brazil, China, and India, which were once colonized and whose identity is defined in part by their struggle to resist coercion by external powers. Are they prepared to enforce social cohesion?[43] If not, can they be entitled to claim the special privileges that great power status brings—such as permanent membership in the Security Council?

Of course, viewing willingness to use force as a measure of legitimacy carries uncomfortable undertones of Nietzsche's will to power and the idea that might equals right—ideas that themselves challenge the rule of law and international order. These rising power states retain strong memories of their experience of colonialism,[44] and so tend to define their responsibility in terms of contribution to global public goods rather than through the use of force.[45] Yet in an anarchical society the potential exists for member states to emerge that subvert or actively threaten the society's stability, and thus force must remain an option of last resort—hence its explicit authorization under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. While acknowledging the importance of nonintervention for international order, writers such as Bull, Vincent, and Nicholas Wheeler assert that a collective right of intervention is necessary at times of humanitarian need.[46]

SECURITY COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY: AN INTERPRETIVIST ANALYSIS

The remainder of this article analyzes statements made by representatives from Brazil, China, and India to the Security Council from January 1, 2011, to January 1, 2016, to try and understand how they conceptualize responsibility internationally. This five-year period is significant as it encompasses the Arab Spring and the series of associated dilemmas over intervention in Iraq, Libya, Mali, Syria, and Yemen. Building on the previous two sections, the analysis examines responsibility both as an identity trait of an actor and as a type of action, exploring how these states construct a sense of who the responsible actors are, and what constitutes responsible action, in a given situation. It does so in light of the assumptions that inform the English School: the way these powers conceive of and talk about responsibility *matters* because states are in constant dialogue about proper conduct in international society; and furthermore, using force is a necessary element of maintaining that society's order. The resulting analysis illustrates how each actor developed its thinking about responsibility over time and adapted it in light of ongoing events and the responses of other states.

During this time China, as one of the Permanent Five, sat on the Council for the entire period; Brazil was elected to serve for two years as a nonpermanent member from 2010 through 2011; and India was elected to serve on the same basis from 2011 through 2012. Nevertheless, Brazil and India frequently contributed to debates on the invitation of the President, even when not officially serving on the Council. This section subjects those contributions to an interpretivist analysis as it seeks to uncover the meanings and understandings projected rhetorically by these states. Interpretivism sees "beliefs, meanings and language [as] constitutive of human actions and practices."[47] Thus, it is important to analyze the language that the three countries used to describe responsibility and their beliefs and meanings as evinced in Council discussions, as we can understand these to shape current and future practices.[48] To do so, I have identified explicit references to responsibility (for

example, "the government of x is responsible"), synonyms implying responsibility (such as "accountable," "answerable," "blameworthy," or "obliged"), as well as words connoting responsible identities (for example "mature," "guardian," "protector," or "upholder"). In addition, I scoured these texts for representations of responsible or irresponsible action, either via the diction used (for example, "x has fulfilled its duty," "x has been reckless," "x has contributed," etc.) or by the framing (for example, "as a responsible power, we have done x").[49] A detailed reading of these debates led to the identification of 245 statements of potential relevance spanning the five-year period, which form the data set of this analysis.[50]

Responsible Actors

When it comes to responsible actors, there are similarities in the ones that Brazil, China, and India identify. One group that all three countries regularly called upon to act is the "international community." For example, China argued in 2011 that "the international community should continue to push for a political settlement of the question of Palestine."[51] Similarly, India asserted in 2015 that "the international community must take an unequivocal and resolute position against terrorism and violent extremism."[52] Meanwhile, Brazil has suggested that "the international community, as it exercises its responsibility to protect, must demonstrate a high level of responsibility while protecting."[53] Each sees this community as exercising agency and implicitly notes an obligation for it to do so.

However, there are differences in the number of times each state identifies the international community as a responsible collective group, and this is important. For China, the international community dominates its discourse. It is the most regularly cited actor, significantly above others, such as particular states or multilateral groups, with at least 227 references. As the international community is an imprecise term, the effect of this is to render the location of responsibility extremely vague. Indeed, China's framing of its own

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responsibility is conveyed in a general and unspecific fashion for much of this period. For instance, it often notes that "China supports" a particular policy or initiative (48 times), but China's contribution is usually not delineated. This could simply be a stylistic feature of China's diplomatic discourse, but it nevertheless means that China's statements lack language of concrete action and tangible policy contributions.[54]

Brazil also refers to the international community regularly, at times praising its efficacy in preventing organized crime,[55] while elsewhere decrying "the international community's failure in dealing with the underlying causes of conflicts."[56] Yet, in contrast to China, Brazil often specifies how its own actions are contributing to the exercise of responsibility by that group. Examples include the 2012 statement that "eleven Brazilian observers have served with the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria for the past three months"[57] and the 2015 assertion by the Brazilian representative that "as chair of the [Peacebuilding Commission's] Guinea-Bissau configuration, Brazil hopes to count on the support of the international community in assisting Guinea-Bissau."[58] In this way, Brazil's agency and its link to that of the wider international community are made more explicit.

When it comes to India, its references to the international community are sparser. That said, Indian representatives do identify India as part of this group and thus imply that India is implicated in any duty of responsibility that flows to and from it. For example, "In our view, which we share with most members of the international community, there can be no reason or motivation that can possibly justify terrorism."[59] India also provides precise examples to illustrate its own contribution to responsible agency in international society. In particular, it regularly cites its record of support for peacekeeping. Indian representatives argue that "United Nations peacekeeping is one of the key instruments available to the international community to protect people from the scourge of war and lawlessness. India has contributed, through ideas and resources, to global efforts towards protecting civilians."[60] In

2014, India boasted it had "deployed more than 170,000 troops in 43 out of the 64 United Nations peacekeeping operations so far," and posited that "our experience shows that robust international cooperation among the concerned Member States of the United Nations is the most sustainable method for addressing conflicts between them."[61]

Another actor identified by the three countries as a key locus of responsibility is the Security Council itself. Again, there seems to be a level of agreement among Brazil, China, and India on the Council's role as a responsible collective actor. In particular, all three identify the Council as having primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Nevertheless, they all raise concerns about the expansion of that body's remit. For instance, China asserts that the Council "lacks expertise in climate change and the necessary means and resources " to address that issue, and it noted that "the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol have been commonly accepted as major channels for responding to climate change."[62] India likewise argues that "the United Nations has a Framework Convention with a toolbox of ways and means of addressing climate change, none of which is available to the Security Council."[63] Brazil agrees, based on its assertion that "security tools are appropriate to deal with concrete threats to international peace and security, but they are inadequate to address complex and multidimensional issues such as climate change."[64] Yet, Brazil does not label the Council itself as inadequate, and so is less explicitly hostile than the other two nations toward the idea that it might take on the responsibility of tackling climate change.

China identifies a "principle of common but differentiated responsibility" in operation under the UNFCCC and Kyoto frameworks—one that is favorable to China on the basis of its developing status.[65] This would presumably be less applicable if brought under the auspices of the Council, since in that forum China has permanent membership and so might be expected to shoulder a greater burden of responsibility. Rather than couch this in terms of

self-interest, China avers that "the Council is not a forum for decision-making with universal representation. Its discussions are not aimed at putting together a broadly accepted programme."[66] This argument is echoed in India's statement that "climate change needs the collective understanding and support of all Member States. Action must therefore lie in the UNFCCC."[67]

What all three share, then, is a sense that the Security Council should focus on *military* security matters and avoid encroaching on nonmilitary security governance, which they view as the responsibility of the UN General Assembly or specialist agencies.[68] Where they differ is in how far they perceive the Council to be a legitimate, responsible actor. On the one hand, each of them participates in Council debates and often urges Council members to take responsibility for action. India took its seat in 2011 with the affirmation that "we understand the expectations that accompany our Council membership," promising to work closely with the permanent members to promote development and security.[69] Yet India and to a lesser extent Brazil each draw attention to the problematic nature of the Council's membership and present this as having negative effects on its ability to act responsibly. Repeatedly, India's representatives emphasize that the structure of the Council needs reform and that the permanent and nonpermanent categories of membership should be expanded.[70] It also argues that the successful promotion of the rule of law as a core value of the UN system is predicated on Council reform.[71] In sum, India views the current narrow Council membership, particularly of the permanent category, as hampering the body's legitimacy, and thus negatively affecting perceptions of its right to take responsible action on behalf of the wider international community. Brazil also asserts that "only a real reform of the Council's structure will make this body more representative, transparent, efficient, and legitimate."[72]

By contrast, China, although supportive of reforming the Council's working methods, is muted on the question of membership, stating that "the Security Council should continue to

strengthen its interaction and dialogue with non-Council members and pay more attention to the opinions of relevant Member States that are connected to the Council's agenda."[73] China tends to affirm the Council's legitimacy implicitly by referencing the history of its founding, which in China's estimation derives from the heroic struggle against Nazi Germany and imperial Japan in World War II.[74] Brazil and India, however, interpret the historical basis of the Council's legitimacy more negatively. Rather than enhancing its authority, both see its 1945 origins as evidence that it no longer fits the contemporary reality of power and responsibility in the early twenty-first century.[75]

China also diverges from Brazil and India in the relative importance it attaches to its membership of global clubs and multilateral groups.[76] Although in 2015 it makes reference to its involvement in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and its initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security, it does not mention other bodies to which it belongs in this five-year period, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as possible responsible actors in the security field.[77] Thus, for China, the Security Council is the only body of significance for its security decision-making. By contrast, India and Brazil frequently describe how clubs such as IBSA play a role in providing aid to the Palestinian authority and Haiti via the IBSA Fund, and an IBSA delegation that visited Syria in August 2011 is cited by India as making constructive efforts to promote peace.[78] All three states call for greater coordination between the Council and regional organizations, such as the African Union and the Arab League, but India goes further in suggesting that IBSA and the African Union should work together in "promoting South-South perspectives on development and security" separately from the Security Council's purview.[79] Such citations are conveyed as evidence of good faith by Brazil and India as contributors to the wider public good of security, but they also imply that clubs such as IBSA have a role in security provision autonomous from that of the Council.

Beyond the international community and the Security Council, the only other actors that China identifies as bearing responsibility in world politics are national governments. Whether it is discussing security sector reform, development, or conflict resolution, China continually repeats the position that national governments should bear the primary responsibility in many cases. Crucially, when it comes to conflict management, China argues that "the primary responsibility in protecting innocent civilians from the harm of conflict and wars lies with national Governments,"[80] and emphasizes that in discharging this responsibility "it is essential that the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations be strictly complied with, particularly those concerning respect for national sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity."[81] It is therefore notable that, with regard to the conflict in Syria, China has continually resisted efforts to blame the Syrian government for violations of international humanitarian law. This stands in contrast to Brazil, whose representatives have repeatedly stated that the Syrian government was responsible for the violence against civilians.

When it comes to defining themselves as responsible actors, as noted above, India and Brazil both identify their positive contributions to peacekeeping and development initiatives as evidence of their responsibility. India often does this by drawing on its history. It combines India's colonial experience and subsequent struggle for independence with its democratic character to legitimize its claim of being responsible. In 2011 its representative noted that "India brings to this table almost sixty years of experience in overcoming many of the challenges of transforming a colonial legacy into a modern dynamic nation of a billion people who are trying to meet their aspirations within a democratic system dedicated to the rule of law."[82] Brazil tends to highlight its contribution to peace in its region as providing the credentials for its identity as a responsible actor, exemplified by its statement that "along with our neighbours, we are consolidating South America as an area of peace, democracy, and

cooperation . . . free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction."[83] Brazilian representatives also emphasize their country's rejection of the use of force and experience in the noncoercive aspects of diplomacy, such as by declaring that "Brazil values and encourages efforts in mediation, good offices, early warning, and conciliation measures."[84]

As discussed above, China was vaguer in its presentation of itself as a responsible actor, at least in the early part of the period in question. Its representatives largely spoke in generalities, such as "China is closely following the unfolding situation in Syria,"[85] or "China favours the Council's more active and practical involvement in this issue."[86] References to specific policies or China's own behavior early in this five-year period were rare, but this situation gradually changed in response to criticism over its use of the veto regarding Syria. When Russia and China vetoed a resolution on October 4, 2011, China was more explicit than usual about its actions, noting that it "always participated positively and constructively in the consultations on the relevant draft resolutions."[87] When it issued a second veto on February 24, 2012, it faced significant criticism from the United Kingdom and the United States as well as from nonpermanent Council members.[88] This is perhaps why it felt moved to be more overt on March 12, 2012, both about its actions and its identity as a responsible actor. Unusually, the Chinese representative specified that China would "provide $2 million in emergency humanitarian relief to the Syrian people" via the International Committee of the Red Cross. It then went on to assert that "as a permanent member of the Security Council, China stands ready to shoulder its full responsibilities, engage in patient and full consultation with all sides on an equal basis, and push for an early political settlement of the Syrian crisis."[89]

By the time it exercised its veto a third time, in July 2012, China was being directly accused of irresponsibility by other Council members. As the U.K. representative argued,

"By exercising their veto today, Russia and China have failed in their responsibilities as permanent members of the Security Council to help resolve the crisis in Syria."[90] The U.K. representative went on to assert, "We shall continue to work with the Envoy, the Secretary-General, and responsible members of the international community"—implying that China was outside this latter category.[91] In the face of this criticism, China declared that it had "no self-interest in the Syrian issue" and asserted,

> We have consistently maintained that the future and fate of Syria should be independently decided by the Syrian people, rather than imposed by outside forces. We believe that the Syrian issue must be resolved through political means and that military means would achieve nothing. That is China's consistent position on international affairs.[92]

Thus, China felt compelled to articulate an overarching rationale for its behavior, and the one it chose constituted a rejection of military coercion. The implication of this viewpoint is that responsible actors are those that eschew the use of force. China later defended its position on Syria as "consistent and responsible" on the basis that it supports "a political settlement of the issue in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing international relations."[93] In contrast, China suggested that "a few countries have been eager to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, to fuel the flames and to sow discord in complete disregard of the possible consequences."[94] Given the history of UN Security Council resolutions leading to military force and regime change in Iraq and Libya, it is both rhetorically effective and understandable that China was cautious about supporting condemnation of the Syrian government, lest such a condemnation be used to legitimize the use of force at a later date. Yet the Brazilian and Indian representatives, who were also critical of calls for the use of force in Syria, did not feel the need to vote against the three resolutions that China vetoed. India voted in favor of the resolution on July 19, 2012, on

the basis that it supported the work of the Joint Special Envoy, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.[95] In short, India and Brazil are not willing to close off collective UN action in Syria in case it later legitimizes force, and they do not see condemnation of Syrian government abuses as a violation of sovereignty, unlike China.

To summarize, evidence from the UN Security Council debates indicates some agreement among Brazil, China, and India when it comes to defining responsible actors in international society. All three accept the Council as the primary decision-making body in the security field; all three express concern that the scope of this body's responsibility should not encroach on the work of the General Assembly and UN agencies; and all three indicate that being a responsible power entails contributing to diplomacy and avoiding the resort to force. Yet Brazil and India see the legitimacy of the Council as being compromised by its unrepresentative nature, affecting the authority and effectiveness with which it assumes responsibility, whereas China is muted on this issue. That said, China used its veto three times to prevent Council resolutions condemning the Syrian government. Brazil and India, by contrast, either abstained or voted in favor, suggesting a greater reluctance to oppose the will of the majority of the Security Council despite shared concerns that Western states were gearing up for intervention.

Responsible Action

Having examined how these states identify responsible actors, I now turn to their construction of responsible action. First, it is important to note that beliefs about which actors are responsible shape the kinds of action that are then, in turn, framed as responsible. For instance, advancing the "international community" as a responsible actor does not then lead to favoring concrete political or military action, as that would require institutional structures that would narrow participation to specific members with defined responsibilities. It also

militates against coercive diplomacy due to the greater range of states that would have to agree to support punitive action. As India's representative noted in 2011, "The international community can encourage, motivate, and facilitate. It cannot impose solutions."[96] This may be why China so often promotes this community as the preeminent responsible actor. China promotes responsible behavior as that which provides "constructive assistance" and prescribes "dialogue, consultation, and other peaceful means" to "achieve proper solutions through inclusive political processes."[97]

This viewpoint is most starkly expressed in its statement on September 27, 2013: "China opposes the use of force in international relations."[98] It is, of course, one thing to say, as China does in the next sentence, that "military means cannot solve the Syrian issue"; but to frame opposition to military force as a stand-alone and uncompromising principle of China's approach to international society is highly problematic from the English School perspective, which views coercion as necessary for upholding a society's norms. China's rhetoric in this statement raises the question of how it would confront, interdict, or prevent actors from committing genocide or otherwise destabilizing international peace and security. It also sits uneasily with China's defense budget, which increased by an average of 12.9 percent per year between 1989 and 2010 and was increasing by double digits for much of the period under scrutiny.[99] Therefore, it clearly does not reject the use of force per se, only in the service of certain societal goals.[100]

India conveys a similar skepticism about coercion in its statements, arguing that "coercive measures should be avoided and used as a measure of last resort, implemented with extreme care and caution."[101] Like China, it too universalizes this concern as an underlying norm of international society, asserting that "international law is based on the principle of consent."[102] Indian representatives in the Council criticize a "trend towards increased reliance on the use of force as a mechanism for resolving . . . conflicts" and portray this as being

irresponsible and based on a lack of patience and political will rather than a prudent choice of action.[103] This position is justified by linking it to India's prior experience of contributing to UN peacekeeping: "As the major troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations, we are more familiar than most with the limitations of force."[104] In that sense, they imply that practical considerations are driving their reluctance to resort to force rather than China's emphasis on pure principle. Similarly, India's assertion that it "has always opposed and will continue to oppose the use of force as a primary reaction to conflict" is subtly more permissive than China's position, since it adds the qualifier "as a primary reaction" and not as a reaction per se. Nonetheless, India's statements at the Council during this time do not provide a substantive argument on when and how coercion is permissible.

Discussing the dilemmas of peacekeeping in 2014, the Indian representative asks, "Does the peacekeeper shoot to protect?" but does not answer his own question.[105] Raising an incident when two Indian peacekeepers died protecting refugees from an armed mob on December 19, 2013, he dramatically captures the dilemma of using force in the service of humanitarian aims: "Had they opened fire, hundreds of lives would have been lost. Would those lives have been civilians or combatants? And the troops who availed themselves of their superior fire power, would they have been peacekeepers or war-makers?"[106] Here again, however, the Indian representative does not answer his own rhetorical questions, and so the larger question of when and how to use force responsibly is left unaddressed.

A similar difficulty arises from Brazil's approach to international responsibility. There are frequent references in Brazil's statements to the negative effects of the use of force.[107] As a result, they reject what they present as a tendency to draw an "almost automatic link between the protection of civilians and the use of force."[108] For Brazil, prevention is a more important facet of responsibility than military action.[109] It condemns sanctions because they create "a logic of punishment and isolation, instead of a dynamic of dialogue and

persuasion."[110] This appears to mirror the position of China and India. Yet Brazil differs from these states by making an imaginative contribution to the debate. Its concept of Responsibility While Protecting (RwP) acknowledges the necessity of coercive force at times, but the concept goes further by seeking to contain coercive force within a framework of legal controls and political authority. As Oliver Stuenkel and Marcos Tourinho note of RwP, "Never before had questions of who should intervene, under what legitimate authority, and with which mechanisms of transparency and accountability been debated so explicitly in a setting with such a broad audience and at this level of detail."[111] Such is a significant achievement, even if Brazil later retreated from pursuing the doctrine.

As with China, Brazil rejects the utility of force in Syria[112] and criticizes the "hastened resort to coercive measures,"[113] but does accept that it is necessary at times in the face of humanitarian emergencies. RwP might be seen as offering a more permissive take on military action, but in practice Brazil's assertion that "one casualty is one too many, no matter how noble the intentions" places an impractical burden on intervening forces.[114] It is part of the nature of war that civilians are liable to be killed, and so presenting such casualties as intolerable has the effect of rendering all forms of military intervention irresponsible. Indeed, Brazil later modified its position in response to criticism of RwP's sequencing.[115]

Interestingly, Brazil draws a distinction in the Council between "collective responsibility" involving non-coercive means and "collective security," which is described as involving "a case-by-case political assessment by the Security Council."[116] This seems to imply that responsibility as a collective concept lies outside the military realm and relates only to non-coercive measures.

In sum, Brazil, China, and India describe the precipitate resort to force as irresponsible. They also critique the use of coercion by external actors to compel a change of policy by a national government as being contrary to the spirit of the United Nations. As

such, they problematize the role of coercion in maintaining international society's vertical hierarchy. In addition, all three raise concerns about horizontal coercion among the members of the UN Security Council. China, for example, asserts that "the Council should avoid forcing through texts over which there remain serious differences, so as to safeguard the solidarity of the Council."[117]

India has critiqued the working methods of the Council, bemoaning the "practice of taking decisions among the five permanent members to the exclusion of other Council members."[118] This implies that the permanent members constitute an internal hierarchy within the Council and among great powers, which undermines the solidarity of this body and leads to de facto coercion by compelling other members to go along with a decision reached in secret.[119] As noted, India also questions the legitimacy of the current makeup of the Council and calls for reform of its membership as well as greater dialogue between members and nonmembers.

If, as Niebuhr and the English School argue, coercion underpins a functioning international society, then the disquiet expressed in this regard by each of these states will make it difficult for them to adopt the role of "great responsible" in the future. Still, an alternative means of exercising responsibility is put forward in the discourse of these states. Restraint, dialogue, patience, and respect for the agency of others are all concepts advanced by Brazil, China, and India as crucial for responsible diplomacy at the level of the Security Council. Although each differs in its specific interpretation of who the responsible actors are, they all tend to favor an interpretation of responsibility that is non-coercive, deliberative, and consensual. It is conceivable that this kind of responsibility could function alongside the more militaristic understanding of states such as France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For example, Brazil, China, and India see differentiated responsibility as a positive aspect of the climate change regime and argue that this same kind of rationale should

be applied to the security field. Yet these states also often imply that the exercise of coercion is irresponsible, an assertion that is more problematic. It is one thing to exclude oneself from acting coercively, but to discourage others from using coercion to uphold international peace and security seems to posit the utopian possibility of an international society functioning according to a logic that goes against its anarchical nature.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the differing intellectual contributions that these states make to the practices of international society. If English School scholars are correct that imagination is crucial to the survival of that society, then these putative great powers offer significantly different inputs into its creative workings. Brazil advanced the RwP doctrine and argued for cultural plurality among member states during this period. India provided a note on improving the working methods of the Council, a letter on UN peacekeeping operations, and has long advocated reform of Council membership. China, by contrast, offered neither note nor letter, nor any doctrinal contribution of substance. Indeed, it presented no philosophical framework for thinking about international society at all, with the exceptions of the aforementioned blanket rejection of the use of force and a brief allusion to the "five principles of peaceful coexistence" in 2014, which are said to have driven China's engagement with the world since they were formulated in 1954.[120] If responsibility requires the exercise of imagination, then China has failed to think responsibly.

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis has revealed a resistance on the part of all three states to the notion that coercive force is a facet of responsible behavior. Rather, those actors often emphasize forbearance and patience. In the cases of Brazil and India, resistance to the use of force was paired with attempts to offer imaginative contributions to dilemmas, such as humanitarian

intervention and Security Council reform. Each provided tangible evidence of its support for peacekeeping and development as well as its involvement in peace initiatives in particular regions. By contrast, China provided little intellectual creativity in these areas. Its presidencies of the Council passed without any substantive efforts to shape new developments. While China's representative made occasional reference to his country's assistance in regional development initiatives and peacekeeping efforts, these were rare and tended to come in response to criticism of China's irresponsibility in not condemning human rights abuses in Syria.

Brazil and India's positions on the use of force are ambiguous. India raised a number of issues with the practice of peace enforcement without elaborating a systematic response. Moreover, in practice, India has actually used force in its region while turning a blind eye to human rights abuses by its neighbors—in Sri Lanka, for instance. For its part, Brazil's innovation of RwP risked placing an impossible burden on the conduct of military missions. Nevertheless, in proposing new ideas, these states elicit responses from other states in international society and challenge conventional thinking. On the other hand, China's contribution to the public good of international peace and security, on the evidence of its own statements, amounts to dispatching envoys to Syria, increasing its peacekeeping contributions to South Sudan, and preventing the exercise of coercive force under a UN Security Council mandate.[121] For some, this in itself might constitute responsible behavior compared to the erratic resort to military action by other Council members, such as the United States. Yet to refuse to theorize when and how coercion should be practiced is to ignore one of the most vital aspects of responsibility in this sphere.

Recalling our earlier theoretical discussion, being responsible requires the capacity and willingness to respond to crises. For English School theorists, this ultimately means using coercive force in times of need to uphold international society's norms.[122] The importance of

this analysis is to show the stickiness of this conception of great power responsibility. Thus, France and the United Kingdom, despite their relative decline, arguably remain great powers because they are able and willing to use force globally in response to threats to international society, such as the rise of the Islamic State. Brazil and India admit that force does have a role in maintaining international order, even as they seek to curtail its use in all but the most extreme cases. China's efforts to define great power responsibility differently, in terms of rejecting force and contributing to security governance in other ways, are struggling to gain traction among other Security Council members. As its military power grows, such contradictions are only going to become more stark. If other states will not accept its redefinition, China will be labeled a "great irresponsible."

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put their own forces in the service of such missions and frequently criticize their conduct and outcomes. See Oliver Stuenkel, "The BRICS and the Future of R2P: Was Syria or Libya the Exception?" *Global Responsibility to Protect* 6, no. 1 (2014), pp. 3–28.

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[10] Warner, *An Ethic of Responsibility*, p. 32.

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[72] October 29, 2013, S/PV.7052.

[73] November 19, 2012, S/PV.6865.

[74] Zhang, "China and Liberal Hierarchies," p. 802; January 29, 2014, S/PV.7105.

[75] November 23, 2011, S/PV.6668; February 23, 2015, S/PV.7389.

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[80] February 12, 2014, S/PV.7109.

[81] August 19, 2013, S/PV.7019.

[82] February 11, 2011, S/PV.6479; October 21, 2014, S/PV.7281.

[83] August 21, 2014, S/PV.7247.

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[114] November 9, 2011, S/PV.6650.

[115] Stuenkel and Tourinho, "Regulating Intervention," p. 394. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for making this point.

[116] November 9, 2011, S/PV.6650.

[117] November 26, 2012, S/PV.6870.

[118] October 29, 2013, S/PV.7052.

[119] November 23, 2011, S/PV.6668.

[120] August 21, 2014, S/PV.7247.

[121] China deployed its first infantry battalion on a UN peacekeeping mission in October 2014. See eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2014-10/16/content_4544073.htm. Although China's contributions have been higher than those of other permanent members recently, that arguably says more about the latter's miniscule effort in this regard.

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