From 'Globocop' to 'NoGoCop': Intervention, R2P & Sovereignty in the Chinese Era

Much attention has been paid to the 'rise of China' in the twenty-first century and the implications of this. Some argue that the United States (US) will maintain its hegemonic role. Whereas, others contend that China is set to overcome the US as the world's dominant power and, in the words of Christian Reus-Smit, "we are in the midst of a power transition" (2014: 341). If China overtakes the US as the world's hegemon, then we are likely to see the biggest and most important change in the structure of international society since the end of the Cold War. China's view of international order differs to that of the US, thus "if the predictions about China overtaking the United States to be the dominant superpower in the next few decades are true, it is important to see how China would order the world" (Callahan, 2008: 750). Some, like Robert Art, predict that "China will do what all great powers do; not simply react to its international environment, but instead act to shape that environment in ways that are conducive to its national interests" (2010: 362). But, how would such a move alter the US led international society we see today?

The US has long assumed the role of "world policeman" (Muravchik, 1996: 1) often promoting and upholding liberal values, such as human rights and international law, via unilateral military interventions. Contrastingly, China claims to seek "peaceful coexistence" where intervention is internationally sanctioned and kept to a minimum (Gungwu & Yongnian, 2007:68). Here, we see competing visions of how stability can be maintained within international society and perhaps even how great powers should act; neither of which are without criticism. The US' use of unilateral action, often not internationally sanctioned, arguably undermines the legitimacy of its power and may even worsen situations (See Kagan, 2004; Cottrell, 2011) Whereas, China's limited interventionist outlook, as expressed through its use of its veto, can sometimes obstruct international attempts to provide humanitarian assistance or resolve conflict situations. This paper seeks to expand on this discussion by further exploring the differences in Chinese and American conceptions of international order through case studies of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine and military intervention. In order to do this, I will give a theoretical discussion on these concepts, outline the position of both states in relation to the concepts, and examine implementation of R2P in Libya and Syria. I will also explore their roles in the UN Security Council (UNSC), definitions of sovereignty and cultural identities. Finally, considering this in the context of Hedley Bull's views on great powers outlined in 'The Anarchical Society' (2002) and their role in upholding global stability, this essay will argue that great powers have a responsibility to defend human security and maintain international order. However, the rise of China may challenge this view not least in part because China's conception of the role and responsibilities of great powers differs to that discussed by Bull and recently shown by the US.

Great Responsibilities, R2P and Sovereignty

According to Chris Brown, to say that a state is a great power is to say that is has special rights and duties and "simply by virtue of their capacity to act, they are commonly and understandably held to a higher standard of responsibility… firmly established in the popular conscience" (2004: 6; see also Bull, 1980: 437). However, Brown observed that this is not simply a normative concept, as permanent membership of the UNSC gave "the status of great power… a clear legal expression" by recognising them as the legitimate decision maker on military intervention (see 2004: 8). As identified by Bull, the recognition of great powers with special responsibilities "embodies a principle hierarchy that is at logger heads with the principle of the equal sovereignty of states" (1980: 438; see also Donnely,

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2006; Simpson, 2004; Dunne, 2003). Bull defended this hierarchically structured international society on the grounds that the great powers have a responsibility to maintain order (see 2002: 194-223). As permanent members of the UNSC, the US and China have used this power and upheld their responsibility to different degrees. China often uses its power of veto, maintaining its responsibility to uphold the norms of sovereignty and non-intervention which are enshrined within the UN Charter. Conversely, when obstructions occur in the UNSC, the US has been known to act unilaterally and outside of the official Security Council decision-making process; perhaps placing issues of human rights and international law above codified international norms. It is here we can see an initial contrast between the US and China in their visions of responsibility within international society.

After its adoption in 2005 at the World Summit, R2P arguably became one of the duties great powers are expected to fulfil. R2P is an effort to standardise the international response to instances of mass atrocity crimes and was conceived, in part, from the failure of the international community to prevent the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. Initially the brainchild of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), R2P was intended to replace the highly selective and political notion of humanitarian intervention, which dominated the 1990s, with something much more formal. Deconstructing the concept further, James Pattison describes how R2P ascribes three duties to the international community when faced with the commission of mass atrocity crimes: to prevent them from occurring; to react to their occurrence in a timely, efficient and effective manner; and to assist in the rebuilding and reconstruction of the societies affected by these acts (see 2012: viii). Furthermore, Pattison argued that military intervention is "only one of the potential means available" for the enforcement of R2P and that it should only be taken as a last resort when all other non-military and diplomatic avenues have been exhausted (see 2012: viii).

However, intervention is not the only concept that R2P effects, it also has implications for the traditional Westphalian notion of state sovereignty. The ICISS report describes a notion of sovereignty that is no longer absolute and where "a state has the responsibility to uphold its citizens' human rights" and if it fails to do so its sovereignty is "temporarily suspended" with the responsibility of protection transferring to "the international community" (Pattison, 2012:3). Thus, R2P adjusts our understanding of sovereignty entirely making it conditional insofar as "the principle of non-intervention yields to the responsibility to protect" and is granted only when this duty is met (ICISS, 2001:xi). This challenge to the paradigm of sacrosanct state sovereignty has been a core feature of twenty-first century international society where we have witnessed the birth of, what Kurt Mills described as, a "new sovereignty" (see 1998), commonly referred to as "sovereignty as responsibility" (see Pattison, 2012: 3; see also Deng et al, 1996), that we see at the fore of developments such as R2P and the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, ultimately where China and the US differ is in their views regarding this tension: is a state's right to sovereignty absolute and inalienable or is it *conditional* and dependent on it fulfilling its duty to protect its citizens, with China favouring the former and the US the latter. However, despite this apparent distinction, China would be unlikely to admit that sovereignty should be allowed as a means to commit war crimes or genocide.

These differing views on R2P and sovereignty held by the US and China are to an extent founded in their differing identities (see Wendt, 1995; Hopf, 1998). The US' identity is grounded on the values of freedom, democracy and justice that are embedded in its founding principles and depict that: "all people have the right to life and liberty, not all Americans, all people" (Rubio, Showtime, 2017). The prominence of this liberal identity reflects in the US' approach to foreign policy, and subsequently R2P, with John Ikenberry describing the US as a "Liberal Leviathan" (see 2011) intent on promoting (or even enforcing) its identity globally. For example, in his comments at the beginning of the US's 2015 National Security Strategy, former President Barack Obama maintained that: "American leadership is essential to a rules-based international order that promotes global security and prosperity as well as the dignity and human rights of all peoples" (as cited in The White House 2015: 1). Expanding on this point, the National Security Strategy asserts that the US has an "obligation… to lead the way in reinforcing, shaping, and where appropriate, creating the rules, norms, and institutions that are the foundation for peace, security, prosperity, and the protection of human rights in the 21st Century" (The White House, 2015: 23). However, the cost of this leadership role may be high.

The idea of the US as the 'global policeman', or world leader, can be divided into two schools of thought: the multilateralist and the unilateralist (see Brown, 2004: 11-12). According to Brown, whilst both maintain that "the power of the US brings with it great moral responsibility" how this is enacted varies (2004: 11). The multilateralists

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argue that it is desirable and imperative that "the US acts with restraint in the world", whereas, the unilateralists "are willing to try to use US dominance to impose its particular conception of the good on the world" (Brown, 2004:12). Moreover, Brown argued that this distinction can be grounded in the broader debate regarding the relationship between order and justice within international society:

multilateralists characteristically stress the values associated with order and stability… privileging 'order' over 'justice'. Unilateralists take the radical view that stability and order are not to be valued for their own sake; a stable international order that preserves injustice is not to be valued simply because of its stability (2004: 13).

Competing notions of justice are thus imperative to understanding R2P. Martin Luther King remarked that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (King, 1963), but ironically the US is often accused of acting unjustly and thus creating greater instability. Whether it be allegations of torture and/or human rights abuses in Abu Gharib and Guantanamo Bay or the alleged illegal intervention in Iraq, debates regarding the legitimacy and ethical dimensions of US action are questioned. Moreover, the election of Donald Trump to the Office of the Presidency provides further complications regarding the US' approach to R2P and role as the world's leader. Initially, Trump indicated a preference for the aforementioned multilateralist approach, arguing that: "we cannot be the policemen of the world. We cannot protect countries all over the world" (2016). Such a quote perhaps suggests that under Trump the US would retract from its role as a 'Liberal Leviathan' and be reluctant to uphold its traditional liberal values abroad. However, only 77 days into his first term, Trump ordered punitive missile strikes (see Lang, 2009) on a Syrian airbase in response to an alleged chemical weapon attack by President Bashar al-Assad's government on civilians in Khan Shaykhun; something Trump suggested not only violated international law but also the human rights of the Syrian people. Thus, it remains unclear if Trump's US will actually retreat as the world's policeman or continue with the approaches followed by the previous post-Cold War administrations in promoting/enforcing its liberal identity at the global level.

In a similar vein to the US, China's approach to R2P is also based on its cultural identity and founded on its support for the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence': "mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence" (Gungwu & Yongnian, 2007: 68). This means that China's foreign policy is less interventionist than that of the US, with Beijing maintaining that: "the determination to follow the principle of sovereignty and non-interference should never be shaken" and that "the responsibility to protect its citizens should finally reside on the state government" (Liu & Zhang, 2014:408). As such, China can be said to display a different idea of norm promotion to the US. For example, even though China's values are maintained internally, as of yet it has made no attempt to aggressively promote these internationally: "China is neither a missionary culture nor a values superpower…It is not trying to make other people into China" (The Economist, 2017). While China seeks to maintain and increase its influence regionally, it is less active than the US globally. Nevertheless, China does prescribe to the role of the international community to implement R2P: "If a state violates or fails to fulfil this obligation, it must accept international responsibility, and the international community should shoulder this responsibility, meaning the right to exercise R2P" (Liu & Zhang, 2014:412). Finally, China's authoritarian communist system and reported human rights abuses have led to Freedom House rating the current political situation as 'not free' (Freedom House, 2017). Thus, whereas the US promotes citizen agency, democracy and individualism, China promotes the state as agent regardless of its internal governance structure. Furthermore, as will be shown below by the case studies of Libya and Syria, China's approach to R2P and sovereignty suggests a preference to protect the stability of the state system from internal and external forces rather than a desire to protect the people from the state.

Whilst I agree with China's restrained approach to military intervention as a general rule, where states fail to protect their own citizens from mass atrocity crimes or are themselves the perpetrators of said offences I ascribe to a position that supports R2P and, as a means of last resort, military intervention. Thus, although discretion, with regards to UNSC sanctioned military action, is important, as a 'great responsible' China is bound by a duty to protect individuals from mass atrocity crimes and should not veto action with this intention (Citizens for Global Solutions, 2014).[1] China's appeal to sovereignty is perhaps understandable because, as argued by Tiewa Liu and Haibin Zhang, "a healthy and powerful sovereign state is beneficial to the stability, good governance and balanced development of a country and international society" (2014: 411). However, when a state fails to protect its citizens, or

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worse abuses them itself, injustices are committed and not implementing R2P, allowing injustice to continue, also has broad consequences for the stability of international society.

Libya and Syria: R2P In(action)

Military intervention as a means for implementing R2P, was sanctioned for the first time by the UNSC in relation to the 2011 Libyan Crisis. President Obama provided humanitarian justifications for the 2011 intervention, first sanctioned by UNSC Resolution 1970:

in the face of the world's condemnation, Qaddafi chose to escalate his attacks…Innocent people were targeted for killing…Confronted by this brutal repression and a looming humanitarian crisis, I ordered warships into the Mediterranean (2011).

Similarly, and perhaps surprisingly, China also appealed to humanitarian justifications when explaining their decision to support Resolution 1970, arguing that: "it is of the greatest urgency to secure the immediate cessation of violence, avoid further bloodshed and civilian casualties, restore stability and normal order as soon as possible, and resolve the current crisis through peaceful means" (UN, 2011: 4). Moreover, China then merely abstained from the UNSC's vote on Resolution 1973, effectively allowing the legitimate implementation of R2P. However, China's position has since changed and it has been somewhat critical of NATO's expansion of their UNSC mandate of protection. Chinese officials have described action in Libya as: "a successful surgery with a dead patient" and argued that "it is patent that this kind of 'protection' is a failed and irresponsible one, applying 'protect' as the cover of the brutal 'intervention'" (Liu & Zhang, 2014: 419). Furthermore, China have also suggested that the R2P intervention was simply a guise for regime change: "it has been proven once again that the SC resolution has been used as a blank check… taken full advantage of by the Western states to overthrow the Gaddafi administration" (Liu & Zhang, 2014: 418). Expanding this point, the US, and their allies, have often been accused of double standards, propping up regimes when it has suited them and thus China may be right to question whose interests are being served through intervention led regime change. Chinese scholars have critiqued US led action in Libya, suggesting that: "the bottom line of R2P is that it should never be used as an instrument to promote regime change… the people will be exposed to a more dangerous environment…far from the mission of R2P" (Liu & Zhang, 2014:421). However, separating the goals of R2P from desires for regime change are not always possible or useful because, as highlighted by Anthony Lang, R2P "includes the responsibility to help change the conditions that allowed crimes against humanity to be committed in the first place" (Lang, 2009: 62). Nonetheless, NATO's overzealous expansion of their R2P mandate in Libya can be said to have had negative consequences for the protection of civilians in Syria.

The ongoing civil war and atrocity crimes in Syria have brought the concept of R2P once again to light, with Adrian Gallagher describing the Syrian Crisis as: "the most glaring failure to protect civilians from the worst, an R2P failure of the first order" (2014:2). Despite calls from the international community and civil society, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), for the UNSC to "step in" and "stop the atrocities" (Human Rights Watch, 2016), and despite growing pressure for action from recipient countries claiming to be overloaded by the refugee crisis, the Security Council remains at deadlock with China and Russia continually vetoing attempts at intervention[2]. Now, whilst Russia's open support for the Assad regime make Russia's motives apparently clear and largely political, China's responses need further exploration; as they have been less transparent as to with whom their loyalties lie in Syria. China has continually appealed to the notion of sovereignty in relation to the Syrian Conflict. As outlined above, an absolutist notion of sovereignty is central to China's identity and subsequently their foreign policy principles. The Chinese representative to the UN, Wang Min, confirmed this when he argued that: "we believe that the international community should fully respect Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, the independent choice of the Syrian people, as well as the result of political dialogue among various parties of Syria" (Min, 2012a). Likewise, in a separate statement Min defended China's actions as being compatible with the UN Charter: "our fundamental point of departure is to safeguard the purposes and principles of the UN Charter as well as the basic norms governing international relations, including the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference…to safeguard the interests of the Syrian people" (Min, 2012b).

The response, however, of the P5, of which China is part, has been criticised. For instance, former UN Secretary

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General, Ban Ki-Moon, stated that: "the five permanent members of the Security Council have a particular responsibility to demonstrate leadership. One concrete step forward would be for them to agree to exercise restraint in the use of the veto in situations involving atrocity crimes" (2016: 14). Similarly, Ki-Moon's concerns were echoed by his replacement as Secretary General, António Guterres, who claimed that:

The SC has the primary responsibility for international peace and security. I call on the Council to unite and exercise that responsibility. For too long, international law has been ignored in the Syrian conflict, and it is our shared duty to uphold international standards of humanity. This is a prerequisite to ending the unrelenting suffering of the people of Syria (UN News, 2017).

However, there is an underlying tension present because the UN system also maintains that "actions *without* Security Council authorization threaten the very core of the international security system founded on the Charter of the UN" (Pattison 2012: 62). This has led to some, such as Mike Aaronson, declaring "a crisis of international intervention" (Aaronson, 2014: 57); where countries like China continue to block UNSC action unilateral, unsanctioned action may be preferable to none; despite disapproval from the international community.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge, as Liu and Zhang do, that "reflection upon the use of R2P in Libya has influenced the attitude of the Chinese Government on the Syrian issue" (Liu & Zhang, 2014: 415). The resulting regime change in Libya, which was not specifically agreed by all at the UNSC, has been criticised: "even though action was granted by the SC, it did not change the intention of these countries to realise 'regime change' under the banner of R2P" (Liu & Zhang, 2014: 418). Therefore, the legacy of Libya, and perhaps even regime change interventions before it, has left China suspicious of Western intentions, with Michael Swaine arguing that: "whether justified or not, Beijing not only does not believe in the efficacy of coercive actions in the Syrian case, but also has become even more intensely suspicious of Western motives in calling for humanitarian intervention" (2012:10). Moreover, Ruan Zongze has suggested that China remains convinced that "the purpose of the West is not to solve the crisis as soon as possible so as to… end humanitarian disasters and promote political dialogue and democratic process in Syria, but to achieve regime change in the country" (2012). Thus, the West's overzealous actions in Libya have created a situation whereby China has now become reluctant to support interventions elsewhere for fear of them being used for more than merely humanitarian purposes.

The caution and suspicion held by China remains prominent, despite a significant leadership change having occurred in the US. Chinese officials have interpreted the recent US airstrikes in Syria as having a "hidden motive" as to act as a "warning to North Korea" (Phillips, 2017). Furthermore, Swaine has suggested that US interests in Syria go beyond their humanitarian overtones with "the U.S… pushing for the overthrow of the Syrian government… to eliminate Iran's only ally in the region, and thereby increase pressure on Tehran" (Swaine, 2012: 8). Conversely US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson claimed in relation to the airstrikes that: "America would come to the defence of innocent civilians 'anywhere in the world'" (as cited in Borger et al, 2017). Thus, it can be argued that there are two visions explaining why the US wants to intervene in Syria: it is either a meddling great power or a benign saviour. Moreover, although humanitarian groundings for intervention are strong it would be naïve to suggest that the US' actions are purely altruistic and not part of a wider strategic plan; which could bring about unintended consequences (see Hagan and Bickerton, 2008).

These unintended consequences are not lost on China who continually maintain that kneejerk military action can often cause more harm than good:

Western policy toward Syria reflects a larger pattern of intervention in strife-torn countries … that has resulted in greater chaos, violence, and hatred. Some accuse the West of using the excuse of humanitarian intervention to smash governments it considers as threats to its so-called national interests and relentlessly replace them with those that are Washington- friendly (Swaine, 2012:8).

Anthony Lang provides support for China's claim that military intervention can result in more instability: "military interventions designed to create more respect for human rights are actually contributing to the creation of an unjust and violent international order" (Lang, 2009: 77). Lang also frames such intervention as 'punitive' in nature and that

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they "appear to be making the international system more violent and unjust… undertaken by the US in its strategy of hegemonic leadership, they have increased conflict and unrest throughout the world" (Lang, 2009: 1). Returning to concepts of 'justice' and 'order', while China appeal to a vision which prioritises order over justice, US unilateralists argue that injustice threatens order. However, as identified by Pattison, "illegal humanitarian intervention undermines international order" (Pattison 2012:62). Applying the precautionary principles of R2P, "just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospects" (Pattison 2012:3), merely serve to highlight where China's criticisms lie. China challenges the authority of the US, the intentions of regime change and the prospects for improving the environment in Syria. However, whilst there is validity to these concerns, China's current approach to Syria does not help resolve the ongoing conflict nor will it help bring an end to human suffering there.

Nevertheless, in line with its role as a rising 'great responsible', China has offered some constructive alternatives to military intervention, many of which understandably show a preference for peaceful, diplomatic solutions. For instance, Jennifer Chang argued that:

non-interference in each other's internal affairs does not mean doing nothing. China is still adhering to its non-interference principle because Beijing supports decisions made by the Syrian people and advocates political, as opposed to military, means to resolve the conflict (2013).

Likewise, Liu and Zhang observed that: "both Chinese officials and scholars advocate ensuring that the R2P norm is not mainly a means to authorise military intervention, but rather a mechanism to implement more comprehensive methods" (Liu & Zhang, 2014:414). In other words, China is not opposed to helping to manage and resolve conflict but it believes non-military methods are the best approach.

In contrast, rather than being solely in favour or opposed to military intervention on humanitarian grounds, Dominic Tierney has suggested that the US' responses to humanitarian crises follows a cycle influenced by timing and public opinion:

compelled to act by a mixture of moral concerns and security interests the subsequent intervention is often branded as a failure. A negative 'syndrome' emerges, and Americans say 'never again.' During the next emergency, the US stands aside and civilians are slaughtered. Memories of the failed military intervention recede, guilt sets in, new security interests emerge, the US cavalry gathers once more on the horizon—and the cycle begins anew (Tierney, 2016).

The US approach to the Syrian conflict is reflective of this cycle. Trump's early, pre-Presidential rhetoric suggested he was in favour of a multilateralist approach, tweeting this in September 2013: "to our very foolish leader, do not attack Syria – if you do many very bad things will happen & from that fight the US gets nothing!" and "stay away and fix broken US" (as cited in Sen, 2017). During his campaign, Trump criticised the cost of US foreign policy, particularly conflicts in the Middle East, arguing that: "we're spending $6 trillion dollars on wars in the Middle East, while our own country falls into total disrepair. Now Hillary wants to start a shooting war in Syria, in conflict with a nuclear-armed Russia, which could lead to World War 3" (2016). However, since his election, he has authorised airstrikes in Syria and openly criticised the Qatari administration; hardly evidence of a more restrained US foreign policy. What was somewhat more surprising was how Trump has continually defended his foreign policy actions by referring to the necessity to protect the same liberal values as his predecessors: "as long as America stands for justice, then peace and harmony will, in the end, prevail" (Trump, 2017). Likewise, speaking after the missile strike in April 2017, Trump condemned the Syria regime for: "using a deadly nerve agent, Assad choked out the lives of helpless men, women, and children. It was a slow and brutal death for so many. Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this very barbaric attack" (Trump, 2017). What is interesting here, is Trump's appeal to peace, harmony and 'helpless men, women and children'. This is a clear appeal to human rights principles founded in R2P and the very principles he spoke against exporting worldwide in his campaign. How genuine his intentions are, or his claims were in his campaign, how effective 'bombing for peace' will be and whether the action will help or hinder Syrians remains debatable. But, the early signs are that Trump is at the very least as willing, perhaps even more willing, than his predecessor for America to continue its role as 'world policeman'. Therefore, it is unlikely that the immediate

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future will see any shift in the US' policy towards R2P and as such its views and actions will remain diametrically opposed to those of China.

R2P, Legitimacy and World Order

While the general principles of R2P are unchallenged, differences and disagreements do exist as to when and where it should be implemented. According to Roland Paris, there are five issues surrounding the implementation of R2P: the mixed motives problem; the counterfactual problem; the conspicuous harm problem; the end-state problem; and the inconsistency problem (2014: 570). These he describes as "structural problems", which "greatly complicates the task of preventive humanitarian intervention" and "arise from tensions in the strategic logic of preventive humanitarian intervention, which is at the core of R2P" (2014:579). Finally Paris argues that these structural problems greatly complicate the task of preventive humanitarian intervention, and together they give rise to a seemingly unwinnable dilemma for the R2P doctrine: on the one hand, if there is no intervention in the face of looming mass atrocities, R2P is likely to be criticized as phony or hollow. On the other hand, when a preventive operation is launched, even if it achieves its initial goal of averting an atrocity, both the intervention and R2P are still likely to be judged harshly (2014, 570).

Furthermore, questions of legitimacy, authority, intent and accuracy are key to our evaluations and understandings of R2P. Many of these questions were addressed in the UN Secretary General's 2009 report entitled 'Implementing the Responsibility to Protect'. According to the report, "precautionary principles" must be met; "just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospects" before R2P can be implemented (Pattison, 2012:3). Expanding on these concerns, Tim Dunne and Nicholas Wheeler observed that the US is often accused of a "largely rhetorical commitment to 'the universality of human rights', except as a weapon used selectively against others (Dunne & Wheeler, 2004: 16). In fact, some have even questioned whether R2P is based on universal values at all, with Lang stating that: "rather than a larger constitutive norm emanating from the UN system, this trend is the result of American political culture being transposed to the international level" (Lang, 2009:69). For China, sovereignty is paramount and associated with principles of self-determination and resistance to imperialism. These norms are intertwined with China's identity and its place in the international system is defined by them. If we consider human rights to be a universal principle, regardless of culture or ideology, it may simply be the *implementation* of R2P which is culturally relative. China's concerns with R2P relates to their belief in the UNSC as the sole legitimate authority for intervention. According to Lang, the ICISS report highlighted the "centrality of the Security Council in authorizing the use of military force, particularly in cases of humanitarian intervention" (Lang, 2009:73) and thus without Security Council support multilateral action R2P will be ineffective and open to criticism. Legitimacy is crucial for R2P interventions because, as argued by Reus-Smit, "when we describe something as legitimate we are saying that it is normatively acceptable" (2014:345). Moreover, Reus-Smit contends that legitimacy can translate to a source of authority because it depicts "the social perception that an actor, its plans and objectives, and its actions are rightful" (2014: 342). Thus, if the US and China cannot agree on the use of R2P, or on the normative values behind it, it loses substance within international society. However, the disagreements between the US and China over Syria show that separating facets of a state's identity from their foreign policy outcomes is almost impossible. But, as disagreements continue between the US and China over the semantics of R2P interventions, it does not bring the Syrian people any closer to peace.

Moreover, the relationship between the abilities, norms and ideologies of great powers and legitimacy in the eyes of the international community is therefore significant for the implementation of R2P and for the wider international order. In his 'The Anarchical Society', Bull identified the great powers as one of his five order maintaining institutions (2002: 16-17). China and the US differ in their approach to this each positing a different argument with regards to whether sovereignty or human rights and justice maintain stability. This difference of opinion is representative of the challenge between a "long overdue internationalization of the human conscience" and "an alarming breach of an international state order dependent on the sovereignty of states and the inviolability of their territory" (ICISS, 2001:VII). This tension may have broader implications and could lead to further instability, even conflict, as previously seen during the Cold War when the US and Soviet Union held equally diametrically opposed opinions. Disagreement surrounding the implementation of R2P has implications for both human rights and global stability because although unilateral US intervention is often controversial, protecting universal human rights by upholding the doctrine of R2P is

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a vital component for the stability of international society. The Syrian refugee crisis shows how humanitarian disasters within a state can bring forth significant global impacts. Therefore, for the sake of international stability, it is perhaps better to ask how R2P should be implemented rather than whether it should be at all. The reconciling of the US and Chinese positions here is vital for the establishment of an order that is more just than the one seen during the Cold War.

However, the extent to which such a reconciliation between Chinese and American views is possible has been debated. John Mearsheimer has argued that "China cannot rise peacefully" because in the zero-sum game of international relations any decline in US legitimacy and thus power will translate into a gain for China (2010: 381). Likewise, Joseph Nye identifies China as "a revisionist state eager to overthrow the established international order as its strength increases" and which aims to "challenge America's position as the dominant power in the world" (Nye, 2015: 63-68). Thus, China may actively seek to delegitimise the US and the liberal norms in order to put its own stamp on the global order. However, up to now China has displayed caution in relation to its approach to international society. Chinese policymakers appear hesitant to challenge the current global order and recognises the UN and international law as the sole legitimate authority in international affairs. While this position is admirable, it may also indicate that China may be too hesitant to fully embrace the role of a 'great responsible'. If R2P truly is a duty of great powers, as argued in this paper, then China's veto of intervention in Syria shows that it has failed to uphold this responsibility. Moreover, ignoring atrocities and blocking potential UNSC action to address, prevent and punish them not only undermines the legitimacy of the Security Council but also China itself. With increasing pressure to accept the responsibilities, duties and burdens of great power status, as well as the potential economic and political benefits of becoming fully integrated into international society, how China balances these with its traditional norms is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, as highlighted by Liu and Zhang, "the central government has begun to emphasise the 'responsible great power' role of China, and to recognise the basic principles of human rights, while at the same time protecting itself and its national interests through strictly defining the scope of R2P implementation" (2014: 406).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have compared the approaches of the US and China to R2P and military intervention. Considering Bull's depiction of great powers as 'great responsibles' with a managerial role in international affairs, I argued that great powers have a moral responsibility to maintain human security and global stability. Examining the implementation of R2P in Libya, I identified China's criticisms of the process and US-led actions as well as identifying differing normative standpoints. I argued that an overzealous interpretation of the UNSC's Libya mandate by the US has delegitimised the concept of R2P and US soft power. This has subsequently affected China's decisions on Syria and perhaps even prevented R2P being employed where it is sorely needed.

The differences between China and the US with regards to R2P are based on their understandings of sovereignty and opinions towards who has legitimate authority to intervene. These differences are based on differing cultural and historical identity and normative values prioritised by China and the US. Briefly discussing the competing views with regards to justice and order, I concluded that sovereignty is conditional on states protecting the human rights of their citizens. Great powers, those states with a greater capacity to act, have a responsibility to do so, particularly at times of humanitarian crisis. China's cautious approach and their appeal to multilateral and legitimate interventions is admirable, but their veto of intervention into the humanitarian crisis in Syria is not. Unilateral US intervention is often controversial, with many questions asked regarding their motives and authority. As such, those supporting R2P interventions should endeavour to gain a UNSC mandate because this will ensure that the action holds legitimacy in the eyes of the world. However, sometimes unilateral actions to protect innocent civilians may be the better of two evils when the alternative is to sit back and do nothing. Ultimately, human security is key to global stability and all great powers have a moral responsibility to ensure both.

Finally, I considered the wider context of international order and the extent to which China represents a threat to US hegemony. As China continues to rise it has become more apparent that China and the US have different approaches to the role and responsibilities of Great Powers. If China does in fact overtake the US as global hegemon we are likely to see a very different approach to international relations, including the implementation of R2P and military intervention to uphold international norms and values. Whether China will become global hegemon and how

the world is likely to change if it does, is yet to be seen.

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Notes

[1] My position as a Western researcher probably influences my opinions towards R2P and the role of great powers, however Chinese scholars may argue that by using their veto in the UNSC, China is acting responsibly by upholding international norms, like non-intervention.

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