

Rising Power and Norm Containment: An Examination of China's Shifting Attitudes Towards the Responsibility to Protect in the 21st Century

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Abstract.

The Responsible to Protect (R2P) manifests the prolonged tug-of-war between sovereignty-oriented states and the rule-based international community. Among states participating in the human security/national security debates, China distinguishes itself out due to its strong allegiance to sovereignty and non-interference, cultural relativist perception of human rights, and vigilance against the Western-centric global order as a rising power. Despite its endorsement of R2P in 2005 and substantial contributions to the United Nation peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs), China exhibits a paradoxical attitude towards forcible humanitarian actions. Supporting the UN African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in 2006, Beijing soon became suspicious towards R2P in Libya in 2011, and eventually struck down eight R2P-related resolutions on Syria from 2011 to 2020. This research examines the fluidity and political contingency on China's exhibited position on R2P in the 21st century. Through the constructivist-rational institutionalist prism, it wedds the process-tracing method with a critical discourse analysis of Darfur. The finding demonstrates that it is the norm containment strategy that enables this rising power to micromanage its commitments and scrutinize the compliance procedures of R2P. As China begins to accumulate more material and ideational power, it evolves gradually from a creative resistor to a competing entrepreneur and proposes the alternative norm with Chinese characteristic: Responsible Protection (RP). Theoretically, this research contributes to scholarships on norm dynamic and contestation and two-way socialization in global governance. Empirically, multi-archival and bilingual records reconstruct historical contexts of China's evolving perceptions of sovereignty, intervention, and human rights, three key concepts in both international relations (IR) and international law (IL).

Keywords: China, Forcible humanitarian actions, Norm Dynamics, Rising power, R2P, Use of force.

Introduction

On July 7, 2020, China and Russia jointly vetoed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) draft resolution on renewing Syrian cross-border humanitarian mechanism. Amidst the COVID-19 and Rohingya crisis, China's most recent veto became a symbolic obituary of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), whose advocates vehemently condemned Beijing for adding "another nail in its coffin" (Berman and Michaelsenb 2012). Subject to the "fairly sharp othering" discourse, a rising China is often oversimplified as either an iconoclastic free-rider "irrelevant to emerging post-Cold War norms," or "simply an insurmountable obstacle, so far out of step that it should be ignored." (Adler-Nissen 2014; Zarakol 2010; Johnston 2003; Ooi and D'Arcangelis 2017; Davis et al. 2004; Laskaris and Kreutz 2015; Davis 2010)

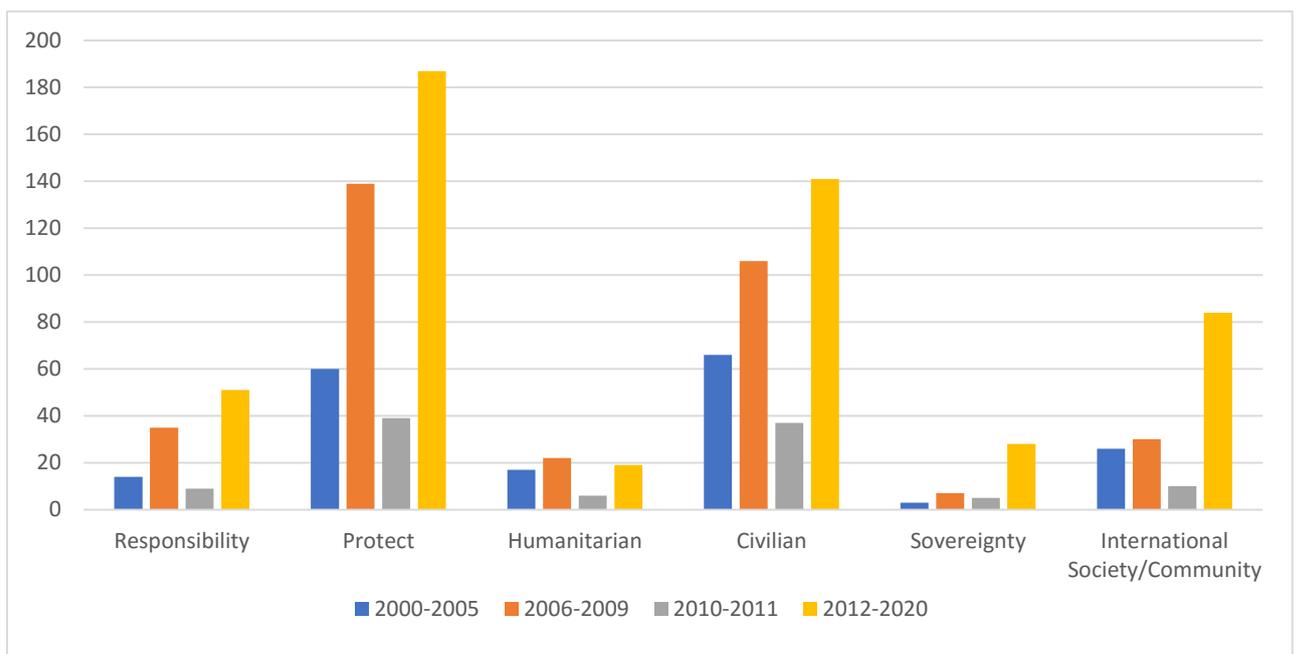
However, a close examination of China's strategic behaviours towards humanitarian interventions in the UNSC from 1971 to 2020 lends little credence to this claim. Beijing was never too aloof from contentious discussions. Not only did China supported 130 out of 195 UNSC resolutions from 1971 to 1979 and 196 out of 209 UNSCRs in the 1980s, but "unique and exceptional" humanitarian catastrophes that shocked "the moral conscience of mankind" in the 1990s also compelled China to abstained from (42 of 642 votes) or actively facilitated (598 of 642 votes) authorizations of operations in Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, and East Timor (Walzer 2000, 107; Wuthnow 2011, 35). Since 2008, it has evolved into the second-largest financial contributor responsible for 15.21% of total UNPKO budgets. (UN Peacekeeping 2020; Carlson 2002).

Nor was China's approach to forcible humanitarian actions simply an anti-western naysaying. Traumatized by the 1999 NATO bombing of Chinese embassy, China vehemently opposed the nascent concept of R2P, which may empower the West to "style themselves as human rights judges" and "entail the triumph of 'might is right,' in a new era of gunboat diplomacy." (UNSC 1993, PV.3238; UNSC 1994, PV.3385; Kouchner 1999) Albeit its "hardest line" marked by the Kosovo episode, China embraced the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, supported UN missions in 2006 Darfur in 2006, and vetoes those in 2007 Myanmar and 2008 Zimbabwe (Foot 2011). The growing suspicion reached the climax in 2011 when China abstained from controversial Resolution 1973 in Libya (UNSC 2011, PV.6498). The fear of putting the old wine of "brutal intervention" into the new R2P bottle forced Beijing to become more determined and creative to scrutinize its substance and application (Le 2012). Advocating to replace R2P with a Chinese "Responsible Protection", it also became a UNSC gatekeeper to strike down eight R2P-related resolutions on Syria from 2011 to 2020 (Ruan 2012).

Table One: China’s Discourse on Civilian Protection and R2P in UNSC: 2000-2020

Stages	Responsibility	Protect	Humanitarian	Civilian	Sovereignty	International Society/Community
2000-2005	14	60	17	66	3	26
2006-2009	35	139	22	106	7	30
2010-2011	9	39	6	37	5	10
2012-2020	51	187	19	141	28	84

Figure One: Visual Representation of China’s Discourse on Civilian Protection and R2P in UNSC: 2000-2020



The heterogeneity of China’s attitude towards forcible humanitarian actions— avoidance and vigilance (1973-2005); acquiescence (2006-2009); growing suspicion (2010-2011); contestation (2012-Present) (Fung 2016; Liu 2012; Chen 2016)—raises several questions. **Given its allegiance to sovereignty, its cultural relativist understanding of human rights, and its protracted scepticism towards West-dominant international rulebooks, why did China endorse UN peacekeeping and R2P at the expense of its flexibility and autonomy?** Was Beijing’s compliance a result of exogenous pressure from international society or of its internal initiative and agency as a rising power? How can China resist purposed normative shifts and deviate from expected compliance without instigating norm-breaking allegations? What are

implications of China-R2P/UNPKO relations on its strategy to reconcile freedom of sovereign states and fundamental interests of the international community as a whole?

Methodology and Research Design

This research wedd process-tracing method with critical discourse analysis of China’s response to humanitarian interventions in Darfur (2006), Myanmar (2007) and Syria (2012). Process-tracing reconstructs historical contexts, observes and explores causal mechanisms, and delivers “sequences of independent, dependent, and intervening variables.” (Collier 2011) The “hoop test” questions the relevance of working hypotheses, and “longitudinal within-case tests” investigates the stability of proposed mechanisms in different settings (Mantilla 2017). The critical discourse analysis targets China’s position papers, public debates, UNSC resolutions/draft resolutions, press conference, and newspapers to highlight rhetoric politics, institutional manipulations, and norm entrepreneurship/antipreneurship. The combined qualitative methods intend to apply the “neo- Lakatosian approach” that offers a “macro-causal analytic” model and “thick and historicized” analysis, to provide a novel answer to the China puzzle (King and Sznajder 2006; Kentikelenis and Seabrooke 2017).

This research integrates three types of sources: multilingual and multi-archival records on public and private government documents, elite interviews, and China’s UNSC voting records. First, given often clandestine nature of close-door diplomacy, it aims to analyse memorandums and cables in Chinese Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and unpublished internal correspondence and diplomatic exchange in UN Archives. P5 members’ National Archives provide supporting documents to reconstruct the causal procedure. Newspapers and media record in Lexis-Nexis academic, Xinhuanet, and Renmin Newspapers contain information on negotiations, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and diplomatic calculations. Second, it conducts elite interviews with former Chinese ambassadors, Permanent Mission at the UN, Chinese Civilian Peacekeeping Police Training Centre, former P5s ambassadors, relevant organs of AU, ASEAN, and League of Arab States, and relevant Chinese and Western scholars. Third, it examines China’s UNSC voting record from 1971 to 2020. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data distinguishes this research from similar attempts to analyse Beijing’s political and strategic calculations “indirectly through the systematic study of” only “public documentation or through the testing of observable compliance patterns.” (Mantilla 2017; Nielsen and Simmons 2015, 197; Morrow 2014)

Results: Norm Containment Mechanisms

This research lends voices to overlooked resistors and conceptualizes *norm containment*, a strategy for Beijing to scrutinize the scope and application of the emerging norm, rebalance

allegiance to sovereign inviolability with consent to R2P and UNPKOs, and deviate from expected compliance without instigating norm-breaking allegations.¹

A. Definition and Motivations

This research defines norm containment as an agent's conscious defence of the normative status quo and resistance against deleterious and harmful implications derived from the incompatibility between purported external/supranational norms and regional/local realities. Norm containment is a reactive and defensive action regarding an external and authoritative normative entity. It encapsulates a specific group of actors (states situating on the relatively lower end of ideational and material spectrum), a defined end-goal (refraining from complete norm compliance while escaping accusations of norm violation), and a particular target (complex norms with uncertain legality, contested legitimacy, and layered prescriptions on various actors with divergent "levels of specificity") (Welsh 2019; Welsh and Banda 2010; Dixon 2017). In a heterogeneous world entailing agents with different material, ideational, and normative capabilities, there exists a hierarchy that centralizes dominant states and marginalizes newcomers with insufficient material and ideational resource and discourse power. Despite socialization, perfect alignments between universal principles and agents' expectations under particular cultural, social, and normative context are extremely rare if not impossible. While aftermath of a normative shift may comport well with opponents' interests and identities, imminent loss in flexibility incentivizes dissidents suffering from "acute senses of marginalization or a security predicament" to prioritize normative status quo over long-term cost-benefit analysis (Acharya 2018).

Why do states resort to norm containment? The fundamental motivation roots in weaker states' limited access to global rule-making procedure. Unjustly denied their right to representation and participation, disenfranchised states seek alternative channels to preserve their identity, social status, and legitimacy. While norm resisters appear both within and out of Western communities, resisters in the West "are not weak in terms of internal social-political cohesion and regime legitimacy," thereby providing non-Western dissidents with protagonism in norm containment (Acharya 2018, 63).

Besides aggressive normative contexts, weaker states are subject to hostile institutional conditions under which they obtain limited authorities and influences on status quo regimes through institutional reform and institutional subsidiarity (Chen 2020). However, marginalized states face great difficulties establishing outside and competitive institutions. Their "exist or threat to exist" trigger insufficient "additional voices" and attentions to facilitate the momentum of reform (Hirschman 1970; Morse and Keohane, 2014). Norm containment, therefore, remains a hedging strategy to "limit the scope for great power caprice or unilateralism at least in the

¹ The fundamental typology and conceptualization derive from the author's master research project (Yang unpublished), and the author hopes to continue examining rigour and applicability of these hypotheses in her PhD studies.

regional context” (Acharya 2018, 50) by aligning normative apparatus more with their particularistic perceptions, identities, and preferences.

More importantly, peripheral states obtain a dual identity and undertake incoherent and sometimes self-contradicting tasks. The demand to escape from domination and deprivation is accompanied by the careful avoidance of generating consternation among dominant powers. Intimidated by hegemonic onslaught and abandonment, weaker states are less inclined to overthrow the status quo and become a revolutionary agent. Even though the system is constructed to privilege established powers, they choose to work from within and utilize the existing normative structure to climb up the ladder of reputation and status incrementally. Norm containment situates peripheral states between passive norm-followers and radical norm-breakers, allowing them to accumulate authority and influences, get their voice heard by a global audience, and diversify West-dominated supranational principles with their rulebooks.

B. Mechanisms

Discrete agents design two approaches to express their discontent: substantive and procedural contestation (Welsh 2012). Substantive contestation targets framing, interpretation, and legitimacy/validity of entrepreneurial norms, aiming to reset standards of appropriateness. Although states may find emerging norms in conformity with their core values and self-narratives, their fundamental goal is to reveal that normative shifts are not as innocent and progressive as proclaimed by proponents, who are often beneficiaries of great power hypocrisy. Procedural contestation exploits the discrepancy between one-size-fits-all norms and ineffective implementations conditioned by institutional capacity, regional reality, and the clash of civilization. Through local and international forums, resisters set roadblocks to prevent a critical mass from rallying around this norm, slowdown proselytization, and invite diversified audiences to explore different forms of applications.

Because norm entrepreneurs endeavour to justify normative changes by either identifying an imminent and fundamental crisis that reveals moral and practical deficits of the established normative infrastructure or presenting an innovative principle to respond to crises, marginalized agents obtain three opportunities to contain the normative shift. First, they rely on “entrenched norms” that are clear, widely acknowledged, and good-in-itself (Bloomfield 2015, 12). The espousal of embedded principles enables dissenting states to collaborate with vested interests with various backgrounds/preferences. Hinging on path-dependency and psychological inertia against change (Largo 2000; Peters et al. 2005), defenders of existing orthodoxy argue that there are neither imminent crises nor Grotian moments that render a reform necessary. Second, uncertainty and unpredictability associated with change predispose purported normative changes to the proportionality test. Even if the extant normative structure has trouble keeping up with global expectations and resolving problems at hand, alternative norms cannot ensure that normative change’s rewards are commensurate with costs of paradigm shifts. Third, status quo defenders argue that normative changes are not the only solution to instant problems. Instead of dismantling existing normative infrastructures, they rely on institutional subsidiarity and norm supplementary, which presents alternative institutional and normative resources to consolidate universal norms and particular realities (Acharya 2018, 56).

Applying two contestation strategies in three scenarios introduced above generates six mechanisms of norm containment. Substantive contestation brings three mechanisms to fore: *discursive legitimization*, *discursive intervention*, and *norm subsidiarity/supplementation* (2018, 190). *Institutional constraint*, *institutional blockage*, and *institutional subsidiarity* fall under procedural contestation. These mechanisms are not mutually exclusive. While different contexts may trigger a logical and temporal sequence among these options, successful applications or mishaps of one option do not necessarily and automatically lead to another. States with unique normative and institutional advantages may use them in bundles. Although numbers of mechanism invoked have no direct causal linkage with desirable outcomes, it is reasonable to argue that a comprehensive consideration of relevant mechanisms facilitates the formulation of winning arguments for norm resisters.

Discursive legitimization refers to states' attempt to invoke clear, fundamental, and widely accepted norms to resist normative shifts. Anchoring normative debates around grundnorms with "high degree of validity" and "growing convergence," (2018, 58) dissidents place a heavier psychological and evidentiary burden on norm entrepreneurs, who need to justify that entrenched norms fail "catastrophically and produce outcomes that vary radically and damagingly from expectations." (Bloomfield 2015, 323)

Strengthens of discursive legitimization are amplified when coupled with *discursive intervention*, a mechanism used to expose problematic nature of purported norms. Since norms are products of compromises with the vague language and margins of appreciation to "enable their content to be filled in many ways and thereby appropriated for a variety of different purposes," (Krook and True 2012) a drastic contrast between embedded norms and highly contested entrepreneurial principles cast doubts on legality, legitimacy, and persuasiveness of the latter. Discursive intervention entails three types of tactics: cautious avoidance, framing and reinterpretation, and pragmatic prediction of problematic outcomes. While all acknowledge the factual information (Cohen 2011), they contest subjective and interpretative framework of novel norms to water down restrictive obligations of norm compliance or instigate further discussions to obstruct norm application.

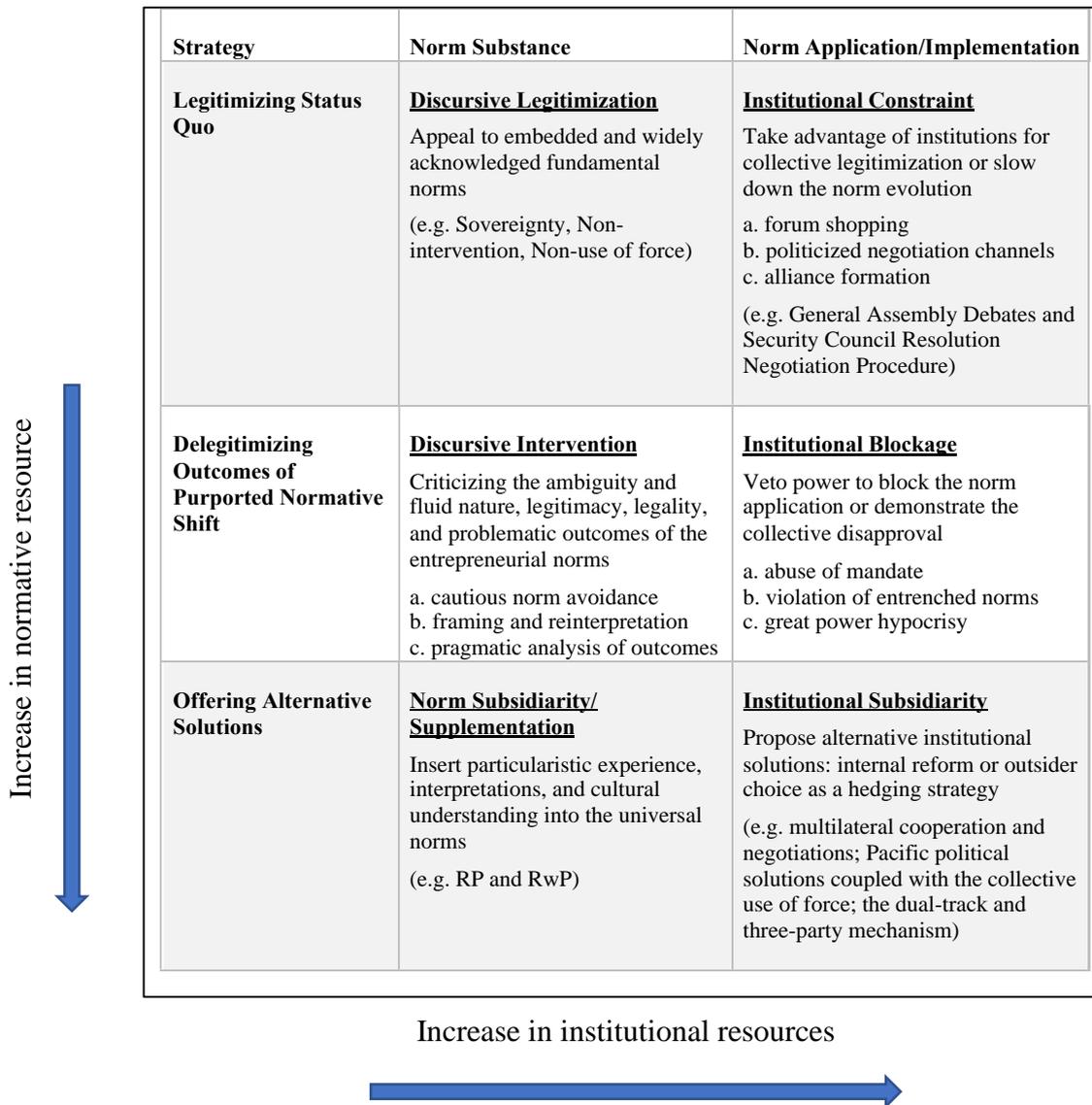
When emerging norms move from the stage of creation to institutionalization, states with procedural advantages in international organizations resort to *institutional constraint* and *institutional blockage*. Institutional constraint enables norm dissidents to select platforms and methods of negotiations to demonstrate a collective legitimization of normative status quo. It takes forms in forum shopping by replacing entrepreneur-friendly platforms with hostile environment with "self-reinforcing sequences" and "institutional reproduction effects." (Mahoney 2000, 513-515) Whereas P5s with gatekeeping veto powers prefer the UNSC over the UNGA, others consider the latter as more appropriate to resist the great-power-permission and circumvent political paralysis created by ideational confrontations in decision-making procedures. States also form alliances to disrupt institutional consensus to weaken state practice and *opinio juris*, two fundamental elements for emerging norms to harden into international customs with defined legality and binding effects (*North Sea Continental Shelf*, ICJ 1969). Another tactic of institutional constraint is the use of politicized negotiation channels. Due to often confidential and clandestine nature of diplomatic negotiations, participating states choose highly politicized and less transparent diplomatic channels to slow down norm evolution and

applications. Institutional blockage is a UNSC-specific mechanism for P5 and their allies and is more assertive than institutional constraint. Allegations of mandate abuse, violations of entrenched norms and international law, and great-power hypocrisy serve as veto justifications and demonstrate collective disapproval of the purported normative shift.

Alternative solutions, both normative and institutional, do not necessarily appear in every norm containment situation. They either support or supplement existing norms/institutions or dispute their validity and effectiveness. For “inward-looking states reluctant to take on the burdens and responsibilities associated with a leading role on the world stage” but striving to circumvent aggressions and opprobrium from dominant powers (Pu 2019,16-17) *norm subsidiarity* and *institutional subsidiarity* function as a hedging strategy. Proposing new norms and institutions as outside options, dissenting states alter “balance of bargaining powers and overcome constraints” of expected compliance, compelling norm entrepreneurs to make compromises (Chen 2014).

While there is no hierarchy among these mechanisms, a departure from responsive defences to assertive attacks on problematic normative shifts manifests an increase in states’ agency and discourse power. Frequent engagements with institutional contestations demonstrate ascending status, authority, and control in institutions. Flexible arrangements between contestation mechanism enable agents to move back and forth along the role-spectrum and take incremental approaches according to circumstances. When a newcomer is gradually socialized as a responsible and respected member, it rebrands itself from a creative resistor to a competing entrepreneur and ultimately a norm entrepreneur to dominate rule-making and value-promoting procedures (Bloomfield 2015, 22). Sensing hostility and opprobrium among regional and international audiences, rising powers also retreat from a proactive entrepreneur to a defensive resistor, “hiding its capabilities and bide its time.” (Pu 2019, 4)

Table Two: Norm Containment Mechanisms



Strategy	Norm Substance	Norm Application/Implementation
Legitimizing Status Quo	<p><u>Discursive Legitimization</u></p> <p>Appeal to embedded and widely acknowledged fundamental norms</p> <p>(e.g. Sovereignty, Non-intervention, Non-use of force)</p>	<p><u>Institutional Constraint</u></p> <p>Take advantage of institutions for collective legitimization or slow down the norm evolution</p> <p>a. forum shopping b. politicized negotiation channels c. alliance formation</p> <p>(e.g. General Assembly Debates and Security Council Resolution Negotiation Procedure)</p>
Delegitimizing Outcomes of Purported Normative Shift	<p><u>Discursive Intervention</u></p> <p>Criticizing the ambiguity and fluid nature, legitimacy, legality, and problematic outcomes of the entrepreneurial norms</p> <p>a. cautious norm avoidance b. framing and reinterpretation c. pragmatic analysis of outcomes</p>	<p><u>Institutional Blockage</u></p> <p>Veto power to block the norm application or demonstrate the collective disapproval</p> <p>a. abuse of mandate b. violation of entrenched norms c. great power hypocrisy</p>
Offering Alternative Solutions	<p><u>Norm Subsidiarity/Supplementation</u></p> <p>Insert particularistic experience, interpretations, and cultural understanding into the universal norms</p> <p>(e.g. RP and RWP)</p>	<p><u>Institutional Subsidiarity</u></p> <p>Propose alternative institutional solutions: internal reform or outsider choice as a hedging strategy</p> <p>(e.g. multilateral cooperation and negotiations; Pacific political solutions coupled with the collective use of force; the dual-track and three-party mechanism)</p>

Discussion: China’s Agile Maneuver of R2P in Darfur

“The most serious humanitarian crisis of the early 21st century” to receive the first UNSC’s R2P reference (Chen 2016), Darfur is the point of departure to examine China’s norm containment. Reflecting Beijing’s softening stance on R2P in the first two stages, this six-year conflict tested its diplomatic maneuvers in UNSC debates, Sino-Sudan bilateral negotiations, and a Sudan-AU-UN troika. This chapter reconstructs the historical process of China’s engagement with the Darfur crisis. Analyzing China’s rational and normative considerations, it demonstrates its creative engagement with domestic, regional, and international actors through norm containment mechanisms in the Darfur mayhem.

Catastrophes under the Spotlight

In February 2003, the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality (JEM) seized Gulu, marking the beginning of the prolonged bloodshed in Darfur (Herr 2020). Preoccupied with the second civil war between the North and the South, the Khartoum government recruited Janjaweed militias counter the rebels. However, Janjaweed militias indiscriminately targeted civilians and their properties in armed conflicts, and the SLA and JEM collaborate with the Sudan's People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). This civil war transformed into a humanitarian catastrophe, killing 300,000 people and displacing at least 2.5 million (UNAMID Documents 2006).

To contain spill-over effects, African Union (AU) strived for a Darfur-Khartoum ceasefire settlement amidst international negotiations of a North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement. On April 8, 2004, the N'djamena Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement (HCFA) established the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to monitor the ceasefire and restore regional peace and stability (Darfur Peace Agreement 2006). Unfortunately, AMIS's constrained mandate only recognized ceasefire monitoring and protection of monitors. The AU with limited funding, equipment, and personnel left R2P in the hand of Sudanese government and failed to eradicate the systematic menace (O'Neil and Cassis 2005) .

Two years after the regionalization of the Darfur crisis, the exhausted AMIS turned to the UN and asked blue helmets to take over. The UNSC invoked R2P language in UNSC 1706 and authorized United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) for peacekeeping and civilian protection in August 2006. Given Sudan's vociferous objections to non-consensual humanitarian interventions, the UNSC injected regional colors into this international operation and proposed the UN-AU Hybrid Operation (UNAMID) in UNSCR 1769. Although R2P references were deliberately omitted to prevent disagreements, UNSCR 1769 recognized the remedial responsibility of the international community to defend oppressed Darfurians.

In retrospect, this test case of R2P unfolded in three stages: nationalization (February 2003-April 8, 2004), regionalization (April 9, 2004-August 31, 2006), and internationalization (After September 1, 2006) (Zeng 2012). The only P5 member to ally with Sudan, China was portrayed as a cold-hearted and rapacious patron of human rights violators that fueled the civil war for economic and political perquisites. However, a close investigation of Beijing's strategic and normative concerns lends little credence to this accusation. The next section lays out rational and social dynamics that compelled China to grope the stone and across the river.

“Oiling” the Civil War?

The Sino-Sudan economic linkages dated back to 1990s when ineffective operations of Western companies and US 1993 economic sanctions on Sudan left a vacuum. Under the open-door policy, China entered this isolated state with demands of energy and technical expertise. Responsible for 64% of Sudanese international trade, China instigated a dramatic growth in Sudan's oil export from 266,126 tons in 1999 to 6.5 million tons in 2006 (Hoslag 2008). Holding “47% stake in second largest oil consortium in Sudan,” (Hoslag 2008) China National Petroleum Corporation worked closely with Khartoum to establish infrastructures and provide jobs for local population. When Sudan transformed into a competitive oil-exporter in 1999,

President Bashir praised China for “its best performances and biggest contribution in establishing Sudanese industries.” (Yu and Wang 2008; Deng 2010)

Although economic cooperation contributed to the lifeblood of Sudanese economy, it is not an indispensable element that eclipses Beijing’s rational calculations. Compared to other African and Arabic oil-suppliers, Sudan lacked production capability to fulfill China’s demand. While the Sudanese crude oil counted for only 6.32% of Chinese oil imports in 2007 (Ministry of Commerce 2008), its production of 900 million tons in 2009 was much lower than China’s own production of 2000 million tons, losing both absolute and relative advantages to Saudi Arabia, Libya and others (BP Statistics 2010; Lee et al. 2012). When economic nationalism in Sudan emerged in 2003, China faced fierce competitions among Japan, India, and Malaysia. Unable to reclaim economic monopoly, Beijing gradually lost interest in “offering the financial incentives to its oil companies to invest” in the war-torn state (Lee et al. 2012).

Political considerations complicated China’s stance on Sudan. The fourth African state to form diplomatic relations with PRC in 1959, Sudan is a strategic ally and a recipient of Chinese economic and military aids. Albeit its reluctance to interfere with internal affairs, Beijing was vigilant against the Darfur crisis. Not only did rebel groups abducted Chinese nationals and disrupted China’s geopolitical calculations in both Chad, which did not part way with Taiwan until 2006, and in broader Africa, but secessionist groups in the South also presented a dangerous precedent for Taiwan to disturb the Asian theatre. The shield of sovereign inviolability was further pushed back when the rising Beijing applied charm offensives of dollar diplomacy and peacekeeping diplomacy. As China juggled national security, political interests soft powers in Asia, Africa, and international stage, attempts to disentangled business from politics became problematic.

Unfortunately, Beijing’s multilayered calculations were falsely condensed into oil-sucking neo-colonialism by Western society. Using discourses of “fueling/oiling the civil war” and “China’s thirst for Darfur’s blood” to demonized Beijing, human rights campaigns represented by Save Darfur Coalition (SDC) targeted the 2008 Olympics as an ideal venue and framed “genocide Olympics” to shame China as an enemy of the mankind (Kristof 2006, 2008; Prunier 2008). In 2007, US Congress and its European allies threatened to boycott the Beijing Olympics. Six months before the opening ceremony, China’s Permanent Mission to UN received a letter by “eight Nobel Peace Prize laureates, thirteen Olympic athletes, and forty-six parliamentarians around the world.” (Budabin 2009) Cherishing the Olympics as a major test of its great-power image and responsible-stakeholder identity for the domestic and global audience, this rising power was subject to substantial social opprobrium.

Given the complicated interplay between rational and social factors, two voices emerged within the CCP. Deputy Foreign Minister Zhou Wenzhong proposed the business-first approach. “Business is business,” explained by Zhou, “and we try to sperate politics from business [since] the internal situation in the Sudan is an internal affair.” Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing believed that “Darfur was not worth damaging to China’s international standing.” (Large 2008) As Minister Li argued (Li 2005):

“China supports security dialogue, regional security co-operation mechanisms and stronger multilateral security co-operation, as a way to address security threats and challenges facing all countries. The multi-field, multi-level and multi-channel co-operation within the international community has become the realistic choice.”

The crisis at hand presented Beijing with a quandary. Upholding principles of sovereignty and non-interference, which “has proved to be lucrative in carving out economic deals in Sudan and elsewhere in Africa,” China striving for an image of responsible stakeholder realized that it was too costly to neglect the international collective effort halt the unprecedented bloodshed (Holslag 2008). Consequently, Beijing resorted to all containment mechanisms but institutional blockage. Constructive engagement with R2P enabled China to align the UNAMID with its self-narratives and preferences and become an effective mediator between the global North and South.

China-Africa Brotherhood

Prone to a hostile international community with Western-dominated normative infrastructure, Beijing first utilized Sino-Sudan bilateral channels as a subsidiarity institution. Institutional subsidiarity rests on three mutual elements: adherence to sovereign inviolability as former colonies, profound skepticism towards western-rulebooks and great power hypocrisy, and “rogue state” labels under the international human rights regime that triggered systematic criticism (Talyor 2006). “Since we acted and talked in a way understandable and acceptable to our African friends,” explained by Liu Guijin, Chinese special envoy to Sudan, “the common language between China and Africa enabled us to play a unique role in Darfur.” (Liu 2006)

Within this bilateral channel, Beijing enjoyed considerable normative and institutional advantages. Beijing interpreted the Darfur catastrophe not as an humanitarian crisis but rather a development crisis rooted in African-Arabs ethnic struggles, the resource deficiency, confrontations between the nomadic and agricultural economic model, and ecological problems. Delivering \$11.65 million development assistance and demanding Chinese enterprises in Sudan to provide “water, electricity, and health service,” (Ahmed 2010) Beijing applied discursive intervention to ease sense of emergency in Darfur and consolidate its image as a loyal ally. Moreover, the mutual identity and interests and economic ties enabled the isolated Sudan became more receptive and dependent on the socialized China as a trustworthy mediator. Ali al-Sadig, the speak person of Sudanese MFA, expressed Khartoum government’s confident reliance on its faithful partner: “We are convinced that China was not, and did not expect, to be an instrument for the American pressure against Sudan, and any American move towards Beijing is fruitless.” (Al-Sudani 2007)

During the stage of nationalization, Beijing responded to Khartoum’s demand of Chinese assistance against the West and countered R2P proposals with defensive discursive legitimization. “Adapting the language with which Khartoum explained the situation in Darfur,” (Ahmed 2007) Beijing harnessed Sudan primary responsibility to protect its citizens and warned the international community to refrain from Darfur’s internal affairs without Sudan’s consent, the prerequisite for the purported coalition of the willing. “You cannot alienate

the Sudan government,” said Ambassador Wang. “Without them, the UN mission will fail.” (UN S/RES/1556 2004) Diplomats further points to principle of neutrality defended Khartoum: “It is necessary to keep appropriate pressure on the parties, and we don’t support sanctions or constant pressure, [which is] no good for a peaceful resolution to the issue.”(AP 2005; UNSC 2005)

When crises transcended national borders in 2004, discursive legitimization became insufficient. Beijing launched a series of diplomatic missions to find political solutions to stop atrocities before the UN or regional actors decided to take over through a coercive measure. From 2004 to 2006, China was a faithful “messenger” envisioning a congruence between Sudan and regional actors (Hoslag 2008). Beijing proposed new military and economic cooperation opportunities as carrots for the stubborn Khartoum. In December 2005, the Chief of Staff of Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA), Liang Guanglie, received the Sudanese Air Force Commander Mohamed Abdelgadir in Beijing, allegedly offering to “sell fighter jets” to “further development of bilateral friendly and cooperative relations between two armed forces.” (Xinhua Agency 2005) Four months later, the Central Military Commissioner Xu Caihou agreed to “boost exchanges and cooperation with the Sudanese army” when meeting with Sudanese Defense Minister Abdel Hussein, who “appreciated China’s stance on Sudan’s [approach] to Darfur.” (Xinhua Agency 2006) In May 2006, Chinese delegates visited for new economic cooperation. Meanwhile, China continued to use discursive intervention and institutional constraint on regional platforms to contain contents and prescriptions of the AMIS. Attending the African Union Summit and League of Arab Summit in January 2006, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Guozheng tenaciously demanded the inclusion of Sudan’s consent as the precondition of the AMIS. As the chairman of UNSC session in April, Ambassador Wang Bangguo did not offer any comment on the AMIS (China Daily 2006).

When President Bashir’s vehemently opposed the UN-takeover in August 2006, China became more assertive. In September, Premier Wen Jiabao publicly expressed China’s “concern about the stability in Darfur” and stressed the necessity of UN-coordinated peacekeeping operations (Press Conference 2006). The increasing pressure tempered by recognition of sovereignty was exemplified by Ambassador Wang Guangya, who confirmed that “a message of the UN taking over as a good idea” had been sent to Sudan, “and it is up to them to have considered it.” During the China-Africa Cooperation Forum in November, President Hu Jintao urged Bashir to show “flexibility” and “find an appropriate settlement, maintain stability, and constantly improves humanitarian conditions in the region.”(Xinhua Agency 2006) Visiting Sudan in February 2007, President Hu presented a four-principle roadmap demanding Khartoum contemplate constructive roles of the AU and UN. Supplementing high-level summits and negotiations, three Chinese special envoys committed in shuttle diplomacy from 2004 to 2009 to galvanize Sudan’s consent to the Annan Plan, as demonstrated by Table Three (Sun and Jin 2009; Wuthnow 2009; Wu 2010).

Table Three: Sino-Sudan Bilateral Diplomatic Engagements (2004-2009)

Date	Event
August 16, 2004	Special envoy Lu Guozeng visited Khartoum, with aid of 5 million RMB
April 23, 2005	President Hu Jintao met with Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in Jakarta
September 7, 2006	Vice-President Zeng Qinghong met with Sudanese Assistant President Nafie Ali Nafie
November 2, 2006	President Hu Jintao met with President al-Bashir in the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; Hu claimed that "China understands" Sudan's opposition against UN peacekeepers but called for further dialogues
January 16, 2007	Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun visited Sudan preparing for President Hu's visit in February, urged respect for sovereignty, opposed sanctions
February 2-3, 2007	President Hu Jintao met with President al-Bashir during his visit to Sudan and asked Bashir to play "constructive role" in Darfur in exchange of economic benefits: forgives \$80 million debt, announces \$117.4 million in development aid, reduces tariffs on some Sudanese goods
March 28-31, 2007	Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Wu Bangguo and State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan met with Sudanese Assistant President Nafie Ali Nafie; Tang urges Sudan to show "flexibility" on purported UN-AU peacekeeping
April 7-9, 2007	Assistant FM Zhai Jun visited refugee camps in Darfur, met with local officials, and claimed that situation is "basically stable." He urged Sudanese government to show "flexibility."
May 19-23, 2007	Special envoy Liu Guijin visited VP Taha, and encourages "flexibility," inspected camps, and claimed that situation is "basically stable."
June 22-23, 2007	Special envoy Liu visited Khartoum and welcomes Sudan's acceptance of hybrid force, praised the AU-UN-Sudan dialogue "effective."
July 19, 2007	President Hu Jintao met with Sudanese First Vice President Salva Kiir Mayardit in Beijing
October 24, 2007	Special envoy Liu Guijin visited Khartoum
November 24, 2007	Vanguards of Chinese engineering units arrived in Darfur as part of the UN peacekeeping operations
February 1, 2008	Special envoy Liu Guijin visited Khartoum and Darfur
June 11, 2008	President Hu Jintao and Vice President Xi Jinping met with Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha in Beijing
July 11, 2008	State Councilor Dai Bingguo met with Sudanese Presidential advisor Mustafa Osman Ismail
July 29, 2008	Vice President Xi Jinping met with Awad Ahmed al-Jaz, special envoy of the Sudanese President
August 29, 2008	Special envoy Liu Guijin visited Khartoum
March 27, 2009	Vice President Xi Jinping met with Awad Ahmed al-Jaz, special envoy of the Sudanese President

Whereas institutional subsidiarity created an alternative sphere which preserved China's flexibility to reinterpret R2P and influence its partner, Beijing was astonished to see Sudan's deflection and resistance and remained vulnerable to global accusations. To maintain the status quo and win some time for bilateral negotiations, China resorted to the UNSC, a battlefield where it obtained more discursive and institutional advantages.

Battles at the UNSC

Among twenty-one Darfur-related UNSCR from 2004 to 2007, China casted fifteen affirmative votes and abstained for six times. Without vetoes as institutional blockage, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) on six abstentions, explanatory remarks by Chinese ambassadors, and five

briefings of special envoys exhibits Beijing's substantive and procedural contestations to contain the Darfur crisis within conventional political and diplomatic spheres.

A. Discursive Contestations

Table Four exhibits Beijing's discursive legitimization and intervention in the UNSC debates. To neutralize and sanitize the crisis, China avoided "catastrophe, disasters, atrocities," and strong rhetoric that demonstrates the extraordinary and sense of emergency. R2P language and references to civilian/population protection was consciously omitted. Consistent applications of economic terms promoted the discursive shift from state-initiated oppressions to a development quandary within Khartoum's internal jurisdiction, rendering four R2P crimes and International Criminal Court (ICC) inapplicable. While China softened its rigid stance on sovereign inviolability and embraced constructive role of the international community, the AU and Sudan remained equally significant, with the latter being the primary bearer of duty to resolve the bloodshed. Unlike sanctions that intensify discrepancies between high politics and regional distress, good-faith negotiations and consent-based UN peacekeeping operations targeted the root cause and were more effective for conflict resolution and peace restorations.

Table Four: China's Discourse on R2P in Darfur 2004-2007 (Word Frequency Analysis)

	R2P Language	Conventional Political and Diplomatic Discourse
Nature of Darfur Crisis	Genocide—0 War Crime—0 Ethnic Cleansing—0 Crime against Humanity—0 Crisis/Conflicts —8 Disaster/Calamity/Atrocities/Catastrophe—0	Development—28 Poverty/Poor/Backward—9 Humanitarian Crisis—7
Solution to Darfur Crisis	Sanction—27 (1) Arm Embargo—3(1) Protection of Civilians/Populations—0 International Community—87 International Criminal Court (ICC) —3(0) Use of Force—0	Sovereignty—10 Equality—21 Territorial Integrity—10 Negotiation/consultation/monitoring /Dialogue—62 Humanitarian Assistance—17 Economic/Development/Technical Assistance—17 African Union 86 UNSC/authorization—55 Consent—12 Peacekeeping—119 Government of National Unity (of Sudan)—87

Discursive legitimization and intervention enabled China to resist the sweeping momentum in three ways. First, by “welcoming and appreciating...enormous and indispensable contributions” made by the international community and refraining from vetoes (UNSC S/PV 5519; 5423; 5153; 5158; 5040; 5015), China applied the “positive self-presentation strategy” to escape from the ad hominem attack from the Western society (Van Dijk 1997). Discourses including “negotiations, humanity, and development assistance” highlighted apolitical and universal values, increasing the legitimacy of abstentions and exonerating Beijing from potential backlashes. Acknowledgement of political solutions diluted the severity of Darfur distresses and contested certitude and necessity of R2P operations. Second, highlighting complexity of issues, problematic timing, unclear criteria for sanctions, and hasty push for adaptations, China predicted a pessimistic outcome of the normative shift, which failed check spill-over and imposed substantial sunk cost on international society. Third, China argued that R2P-coated interventions were neither the only resort nor the most effective solution, as evident by its development and humanitarian assistance to Darfur. As the parallel between “saving Kosovo” and “saving Darfur” instigated suspicious against Western norm entrepreneurs, especially the US with the Somalia syndrome and the Global War on Terror (GWOT) ambition (Lee et al. 2008), Beijing reduced external opprobrium and attracted like-minded states to collectively preserve the normative status quo.

Another often omitted tactical advantage in China’s discursive contestation was bilingual discourses applied by Chinese ambassadors at the UNSC. Compare to English language that illustrates “linear branch-like connections” and an individualistic worldview, Chinese discourse is more “paratactic” with a “circular” emphasis on interdependence and enclosure (Zuo 2008). Choosing different languages according to situations enables ambassadors to exploited attitudes of discussions and manipulate negotiations’ orientations and outcomes. US Ambassador Jones Parry recalled this unique strategy by Ambassador Wang: “In the council, he speaks in Chinese, but at the same time he listens to the English translation. Sometimes he pauses, and then

switches into English to say something similar to the translation but nuanced from it...which captures the main thrust of what the developing world wants.” (Traub 2006)

B. Institutional Constraint

As a UNSC gatekeeper to refine prescriptions and obstruct the passage of resolutions, China enjoyed substantial procedural flexibility. Institutional advantages were strengthened in the post-Iraq War era when the US and UK with “diminishing credibility as norm carriers” failed “take a lead in building a council’s consensus.” (Holslag 2008) Instigating “a polarization of opinions about and the mobilization against” R2P operations (Zurn 2018), Beijing observed three types of potential allies. The first group represented by Venezuela and Arabic states were proponents of conventional sovereignty, denouncing that “R2P has no basis in the UN Charter or international law.” (UNSC S/PV5225 2005) The second group were skeptics of R2P’s uncertainty and abuses. While India argued that “even after 2005 there have been attempts to disingenuously use R2P...at the highest levels in the international community,” (UNGA/63/PV99 2009) Pakistan rejected this “Trojan Horse” that “was introduced 10 or 15 years ago under another name – the right of intervention.” (Ibid) The third group perceived R2P as Western attempts to maintain the core-periphery disequilibrium. Unless “existing trust deficits spawned by historical injustices” were resolved, R2P “remined a hollow concept... to legitimize unilateral coercive intervention in the internal affairs of States. (UNGA/63/PV97 2009)”

Championing dissenting states, Beijing in 2004 initially obstructed the Darfur issue from being brought to UN negotiation tables. When Annan’s report to the UN rendered this attempted blockage ineffective, Ambassador Wang adroitly switched his strategy. Encouraging Algeria and Pakistan to table draft resolutions as bargaining chips, China threatened to block a US resolution that labelled the Darfur crisis as a genocide. As recalled by US Ambassador John Danforth, coercive languages on Sudan’s violations of R2P and sanctions “were objectionable to certain members of the Security Council.” (AP 2004) UNSCR 1556 after China’s tenacious discursive intervention “used UN-speaking for exactly the same thing,” dropping genocide arguments and lessening pressures on Khartoum that “neglected the protection of their own people.” (Traub 2006) The collective disapproval of R2P and contestation of *modus operandi* compelled UNSCR 1556 to adopt a fluid and open-ended sanction with neither specified “further actions” nor enforcement mechanisms to monitor implementation (Wuthnow 2009).

Alliance formation was coupled by forum shopping. Beijing strategically utilized UNSC clandestine channels to reduce the transparency of decision-making procedures and increase procedural difficulties. Preparing for the list of sanctions for UNSCR 1591, China appealed to “the closed door committee of the Security Council,” a highly politicized organ in which states unilaterally choose sanction objects with no further need to justify their decision (Cortright and Lopez 2002). As a result, UNSCR 1673 contained only four peoples rather than seventeen as objects of sanctions on the original list (Wuthnow 2009). When the Human Rights Council (HRC) presented a report by the High-Level Mission (HLM), which applied R2P language under Western pressure in 2007, China cooperated with Arab and Asian states to contest “differing understandings and interpretations of this concept” and urged the UNSC to defer to UNGA for “continuing negotiations and a broad consensus.” (UNSC S/PV 5703 2007) To

appease these dissidents, HRC altered the HLM composition and reestablished ad hoc group of mandate holders,” which less was aggressive and dropped R2P reference in the final report (Bloomfield 2015).

Delaying tactics constituted the third fabric of institutional constraint. China often threatened to “block measures in any case and making the resolution lose all its credibility” as a leverage (Wang 2004). The institutional manipulation reached its climax in 2007 when Beijing assertively persuaded Sudan to accept the UNAMID. To protect bilateral negotiations, China dismantled three Western attempts to impose sanctions within three months (Wuthnow 2009). On March 13, the US pressured the UNSC for a sanction to buttress the UNAMID at “a time of growing impatience.” (US Fed News 2007) This proposal encountered firm oppositions from China, which “never ever believes” in sanctions and forced the US to engage another round of negotiations (Lynch 2007). Relying on his recent meetings with President Bashir and visit to refugee camps in Darfur on April 11, Envoy Zhai demonstrated Sudan’s gradual acceptance of the UNAMID and urged international society to “pay attention to the way of consultations with the Sudan government in order to achieve better results” instead of sanction-wielding, which would “create further problems or complicate the issue.” (Lynch 2007)

On April 17, the US collaborated with UK and France identified a second chance. Relying on the Interim report of the Panel of Experts that discovered Sudanese government’s attempt to disguise its flight with UN labels, they argued that Sudan’s violation of UNSCR 1591 deserved a punitive sanction. Ambassador Liu Zhenmin worked with Russia and South Africa to highlight ongoing bilateral diplomatic negotiations between Khartoum and Chinese envoys: “I think in a few weeks or a few months there will be some result from the political process, and it’s better not to move” in the wrong “direction.” (Lederer 2007) Facing repeated warnings from BRICS, the western advocacy gradually faded and eventually disappeared on April 19.

The third wave occurred on May 29 when US threatened to adopt President Bush’s “Plan B” to impose the unilateral sanctions on Sudan, which remained recalcitrant to the Annan plan (AFP 2007). Preoccupied with shuttle diplomacies, Special Envoy Liu called to postpone the adaptation of UNSCR 1672 and 1706 and ask international society to give “the peaceful resolution of Darfur issue a little more time and resolutions a few more opportunities.” (VOA 2007) Ambassador Wang lashed out of “quite unfortunate” sanctions that “might make the fragile situation a bit more complicated.” (Lederer 2007) Demanding in-depth negotiations on the UNAMID, Ambassador Wang explained: (VOA 2007)

“I’m sure that you are aware that when the first draft was introduced, China and a number of others and the Africans were not happy with it. We thought that draft was out of balance. With the help of the Africans, there’s a draft that’s been improved. But I still think in a number of areas, that members still have difficulties, including China.”

Framing the Darfur crisis as a conventional conflict demanding political solutions, China scrutinized pace and method of proposed operations with its allies and prevented “confusion-sowing” R2P from gaining more tractions within the UNSC (Bloomfield 2015). As commented by the Human Rights Watch, “each step of the way seem to be getting weaker and weaker”

under Beijing’s diplomatic maneuvers (Traub 2006). Following its consent to UNSCR 1679, this creative resistor observed potential risks in norm implementation. Consequently, it promoted a conflict resolution mechanism with Chinese characteristics: a dual-track-three-party design.

Table Five: Major UNSCR on Darfur (2004-2007) (Wuthnow 2009)

Date	Res. #	Purpose	China’s Vote
July 30, 2004	1556	Imposed an arms embargo against non-government actors, welcomed AU mission.	Abstention (13-0-2)
Sept. 18, 2005	1564	Threatened oil sanctions, opened human rights inquiry, urged “rapid expansion” of AU mission.	Abstention (11-0-4)
March 24, 2005	1590	Established UNMIS, requested UNSG to identify ways for UNMIS to liaise with AMIS.	Yes (15-0-0)
March 29, 2005	1591	Established sanctions committee, widened arms embargo, authorized individual sanctions.	Abstention (12-0-3)
March 31, 2005	1593	Referred situation in Darfur to the ICC.	Abstention (11-0-4)
April 25, 2006	1672	Imposed travel ban and financial restrictions on four individuals.	Abstention (12-0-3)
May 16, 2006	1679	Endorsed AU decision on need for steps to transition AMIS to a UN operation.	Yes (15-0-0)
August 31, 2006	1706	Expanded mandate of UNMIS to include deployment to Darfur.	Abstention (12-0-3)
July 31, 2007	1769	Authorized UNAMID to take over from AMIS.	Yes (15-0-0)

Dual-Track-Three-Party

The idea of synchronizing the conventional state-to-state diplomacy with international coordination was nothing new in Chinese foreign policy. From the 1954 Bandung Conference to the North Korea Nuclear and Peace Negotiations in the 2000s, China with “non-western identity and grave concern over national disintegration” struggled to simultaneously maintain its ties with states concerned and remain a well-behaved member of international society (Lee et al. 2008). The Darfur episode presented two beneficial conditions for China to establish a parallel between political solution and UN-dominant coalition of the willing and sit Darfur, the AU, and the UN at the same negotiation table. First, the Western society was reluctant to lead a reform of normative apparatus on humanitarian interventions. Tragic memories in Iraq and Afghanistan compelled the West to think twice before approaching Islamists Sudan (BBC 2008). Unwilling to excessively pressure Khartoum, a potential ally to GWOT that may also disrupt the HCFA, the US encouraged the AU to step up and allowed “the Americans and Europeans to wash their hands of the crisis.” (Daly 2007) Second, the UNAMID with “a predominantly African character” and troops “sourced from African countries” (UN Documents 2007) remained largely a non-Western operation. A non-Western state that obtained

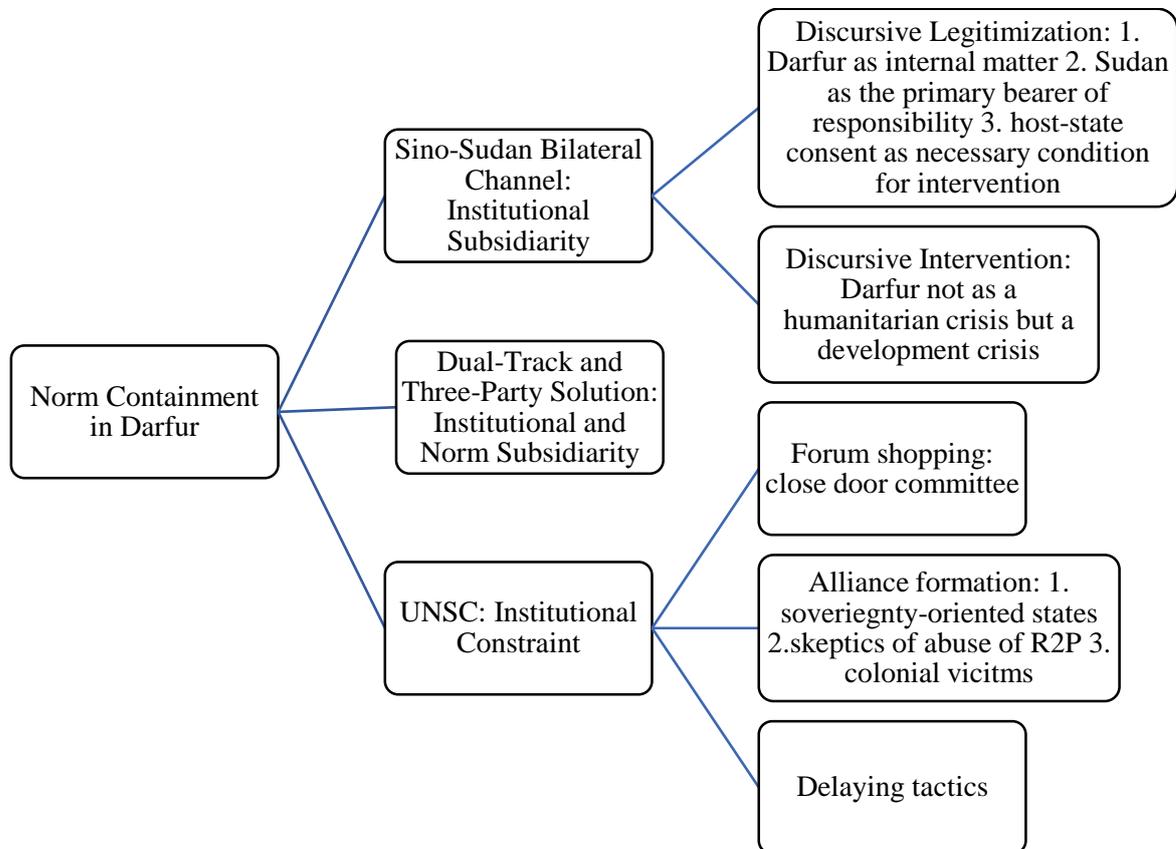
host-state's consent and invitations with ease, China enjoyed considerable credibility and legitimacy as a competitive entrepreneur.

Institution subsidiarity enabled China to resist R2P-coated humanitarian interventions in two ways. First, consent-based Chapter VI UNPKOs prevented great powers to use R2P-coated interventions for regime change. Emphasizing Sudan's primary responsibility to restore peace and protect populations, R2P-lite languages in the three-party formulation "enabled anti-interventionists to legitimize arguments against action." (Liu 2015) Second, despite the UNAMID's hybrid nature, China dispatched 781 soldiers and civilians to Sudan, accounting for "39.1% of its total" UNPKO missions in 2010 (UN Peacekeeping 2008). Benefiting from charm offensives of "no-strings attached" economic aid in Africa and its financial and military contributions to UNPKOs, China obtained substantial credibility in both the AU and UN, which can dilute humanitarian interventions proposed by Western states and preserve Beijing's flexibility and autonomy.

This conflict resolution model with Chinese characteristics also functioned as a norm subsidiarity. Supplementing contingent/conditional sovereignty underlying R2P, the innovative formulation presented a disaggregated sovereignty in a multi-layered international society. Analogous to domestic social contracts, international social contracts exist between state and regional/international organizations. Whereas organizations are both carriers of collective identity and "custodians of legitimacy and authority," (Contessi 2008) they have to respect states' sovereignty, agency, and equality. Moreover, the trisector formulation between Sudan, the AU, and the UN presented China with a new "hub-and-spoke" model that placed it at the hub to maximize its autonomy and credibility (Wang 2019). China's flexible understanding of a sovereignty-oriented delegatory model became an innovative roadmap for future conflict resolutions.

In conclusion, the Darfur crisis is a textbook case of China's norm containment strategies that "preserved the vestiges of its firm stance on non-interference without appearing to completely turn a blind eye to mass atrocities." (Teitt 2011) Integrating rational concerns with social pressure, Beijing cautiously chose the bilateral channel and the UNSC to reinterpret the civil war and cherry-pick solutions that comported with its rational and normative interests. Resisting the immature R2P, it proposed a dual-track-three-party formulation and remodeled the fluid UNAMID into a consent-based Chapter VI peacekeeping operations under regional apparatus. Not only did Beijing's "constructive policy" and "interfere without intervention" received high praise from Sudan, the AU, and even the US and European states, but it also proposed a new blueprint for conflict resolution to circumvent the emerging R2P principles (Liu 2007). However, Beijing's agile maneuvers did not prevent R2P from becoming a political rhetoric for regime change. The flagrant deception and betrayal in Libya crisis compelled China to contemplate this normative dynamic in 2011.

Figure Two: Summary of China's norm containment in Darfur



Conclusion

This research hopes to present a three-folded contribution. Theoretically, it sheds lights to the limitation of the “methodological fundamentalism” and proposes a constructivist- rational institutionalist framework under a pluralistic understanding of IR theories to bridge the rational-normative divide and buttresses the constructivist turn in IR literature by limiting applicability and relevance of “sweeping realist claims.” (Fearson and Wendt, 2012; Mantilla 2017, 485). Conceptualization of norm containment highlights tactical and structural advantages enjoyed by marginalized agents, whose identity falls on a spectrum from “creative resisters,” “competitor entrepreneurs,” to “rival entrepreneurs.” (Bloomfield 2015, 331; Cambell-Verduyn 2015) The attempt to wed international relations with international law and integrate rising power scholarship into the norm dynamic literature advances an interdisciplinary pathway to examine states’ agency amidst the legalization of international political order. The general goal is to facilitate conversation between critical normative perspectives from Asian epistemic communities and theories of regime-building, economic integration, and power transition in the Western context. Empirically, current IR scholarships either divide China-humanitarian intervention relations into Cold War and Post-Cold War era or tend to regard UNPKOs and R2P, two intertwined international norms on evolution of on forcible humanitarian actions, as two distinct research topics. Consequently, the “primary- source-based history” of both forcible humanitarian actions’ development and China’s evolving response to UNPKOs and R2P mitigates temporal and thematic gaps in the literature.

The year of 2020 present three political significance. First, it marks 15th anniversary of R2P, whose originally scope and understanding of human protection, interests, and security demands further scrutiny in the current global pandemic, climate refugees, and internally displaced populations. Second, it marked the 70th anniversary of the UN, a 1950s institution to address the 21st-century's problems that faces crisis of legitimacy, credibility, representation, and identity due to the ongoing West-Rest battles spearheaded by Sino-US antagonism. Furthermore, this year has presented a new pathway to reinterpret challenges and opportunities of globalization for China, which approaches 50th anniversary as the P5 member and the 100th anniversary for CCP's establishment in 2021. An examination of multilateral and geopolitical governance challenges emerging from China's material, normative, aspirational, and strategic claims over global order and politics in the 21st century dismantles the oversimplified "China threat theory" and clarify Beijing's role in the post-COVID era.

While small-N research design has no ambition to uphold generalizability of norm containment, it is reasonable to examine rising powers that share similar identities, values, and ambitions with China, and investigate whether norm containment strategy remains applicable to all BRICS states regarding forcible humanitarian actions. Another direction is to examine whether norm containment is applicable to other issue areas, including trade negotiations at World Trade Organizations, Paris Peace Accord, and pandemic control at World Health Organizations. How should China reconcile its conflicting identities and facilitate effective cooperation in global community of a shared future, and facilitate effective cooperation? Only by directly facing a game-challenging crisis can one find reward answers and game-changing opportunities.

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