When pragmatism prevails over principle:

The limits of China's non-interference policy

MA Thesis Asian Studies

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Introduction

Great things are expected of great countries. Certainly, in many ways China can already be considered a great country, and in other respects one could argue it is on its way to becoming one. What makes a country great? Population size, surface area, economic prowess or military strength? Or should we look at harder to measure and less tangible qualifications? We could argue a country is great if its people are guaranteed a large number of civil liberties, when they live in a harmonious society or where they simply are the happiest. In this thesis the focus is also on when things are not as great as they should be. Following the Arab Spring and its subsequent events, many civilians lost their lives in large-scale conflicts. Often these civilians were targeted by their own states, while these same states should in fact have a duty to protect their populations. This duty stems from the sovereignty of states, which creates a responsibility, i.e. "the responsibility to perform the tasks expected of an effective government" (Deng, et al., 1996, p. xviii). Does China also bear this responsibility because of its 'greatness'? The acknowledgement of this responsibility or duty is a Western acknowledgment. In this thesis we will therefore apply a Western way-of-thinking in assuming that great countries will take responsibility. But what exactly is this responsibility and to whom do countries have a responsibility? The term 'responsibility' is usually considered to be a moral or legal obligation towards a person, thing, or task. The focus in this thesis is not only on the responsibility China has vis-à-vis Chinese citizens abroad, but also towards foreign citizens in foreign nations who are suffering state-sponsored abuse. Since there is no international legal framework in which states have a responsibility to act in defence of non-nationals, we consider the responsibility in this case to be a moral obligation. Especially from a Western point-of-view, it is a duty we expect great nations to fulfil.

The puzzle we are trying to solve is whether China is putting pragmatism ahead of principle. We will try to prove that China's traditional non-interventionist foreign policy is untenable in a globalizing world. The economic reforms that started in 1978 have ushered in a new era that created an economic world order in which China is connected to almost every other nation in the world. The 'going-out (走出去)' policy launched in 2001 made it even more impossible for China to ignore events abroad. The concept of the responsibility to protect (R2P) and China's view on this principle will be discussed in the first chapter. One of the things we expect from a great country is its active contribution to conflict resolution, to both domestic and international conflicts. China, first and foremost simply due to the size of its population and being the second economy in the world, is not exempt of these expectations. In the second chapter of this thesis we will therefore look at what China does to live up to these expectations. Special attention will be paid to China's view on sovereignty, its role in the United Nations (Security Council) and its contribution to peacekeeping operations. Chapters 3 and 4 will be dedicated to respectively Libya and Syria, two war-torn nations that up until today still make daily headlines. They are prominent cases because they illustrate two different approaches by the Chinese government to – at first glance – similar issues. Traditional Chinese principles such as non-interference in other countries' affairs are tested by events in the Middle East, simply due to the fact that China now more than ever is involved in these countries, especially economically. Globalization has linked China to states all over the world, making it increasingly difficult not to interfere. To sum up, the first part of this thesis will be a theoretical approach to the issues surrounding non-intervention. There we will illustrate how China's foreign policy on this topic was constructed, and how it has changed. In the second part we will see confirmations from case studies that pragmatism is indeed gaining the upper hand over principle.

Chapter 1 - Responsibility to protect

In this first chapter we will be discussing the concept of responsibility to protect (R2P). The notion of R2P could influence China's foreign policy, so it is important to take an in-depth look at it. Firstly, we will look at an explanation of how the concept of R2P was constructed, how it developed over the years and in which ways it was applied within and outside of the UN. Secondly, we will specifically discuss China's position on core principles of R2P and elaborate on the ways R2P has influenced the execution of China's foreign policy.

Evolution of R2P

Deng et al. (1996, pp. xvii-xix) were the first to introduce an idea that links state rights with duties, birthing the notion of 'sovereignty as responsibility'. It is this idea that rests at the basis of the concept of R2P, which was introduced by The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in December 2001. ICISS is a body established by the Canadian Government in September 2000 which aimed to reconcile the clash between intervention for the protection of human lives and a state's sovereignty rights. More specifically, ICISS tries to "develop a global political consensus on how to move from polemics – and often paralysis – towards action within the international system, particularly through the United Nations" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001, p. 2). The concept of R2P has evolved out of dissatisfaction about the way the international community was unable to respond to "mass atrocity crimes in Rwanda and elsewhere in the 1990s" (Garwood-Gowers, 2012, p. 3). The release of the *The Responsibility to Protect* report in 2001 immediately incited numerous debates, eventually leading to a worldwide general acceptance of the norms introduced in the document. The main idea in the report released by ICISS was that

states have a responsibility vis-à-vis their citizens to protect them from serious abuse (such as mass murder, rape, starvation, etc.). When states are unwilling or unable to enforce this responsibility, this task falls upon other states, meaning that a need to intervene arises (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001, p. VIII). The most revolutionary notion in the report is that it changes state sovereignty from "an absolute term of authority to a kind of responsibility" (Thakur, 2006, p. 251). In the original 2001 report, R2P was based on three elements: the responsibility to prevent a population suffering egregious abuse, the responsibility to react if said crimes do occur, and the responsibility to rebuild after an intervention (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001, p. XI). Four years later, at the 2005 World Summit, many heads of state and government accepted the concept of the responsibility to protect, and pledged to act according to its principles (UN General Assembly, 2005, p. 31).

The three elements R2P was originally based on in the ICISS report were converted to three so-called pillars in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (WSOD), which are:

> (1) The responsibility of the state to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, and from their incitement; (2) the commitment of the international community to assist states in meeting these obligations; and (3) the responsibility of member states to respond in a 'timely and decisive manner' when a state is manifestly failing to provide such protection (Luck, 2008, p. 1).

The first pillar was already grounded in international law, while the second and third pillar increased the burden on state governments to wield their authority in such a way that is ensures its populations enjoy their deserved protection (Teitt, 2009, p.

211). So while especially the first pillar strengthens earlier created moral commitments, the second and particularly the third pillar have a more profound impact on the sovereignty of states. One of the key differences between R2P in the original ICISS report and the three pillars in the 2005 WSOD is the notion that military action, when it is required according to the third pillar, is only permitted in accordance with the existing UN Charter Chapter VII (Garwood-Gowers, 2012, p. 4). This chapter outlines that the authorization of military action is a tool available only to the Security Council, whereas the ICISS report also puts a degree of power in the hands of others. It permitted the use of force outside of the authority of the Security Council, stretching this right not only to the General Assembly, but also to regional organizations. It states that "[t]he Security Council has the 'primary' but not the sole or exclusive responsibility under the Charter for peace and security matters" (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001, p. 48). The WSOD limited the scope of this responsibility to the Security Council only. China – as a permanent member of the UN Security Council – has an impact on the implementation of R2P and on the initiation of military interventions, as we will see further on. In April 2006, the World Summit's commitments on R2P were reaffirmed in the Security Council in resolution 1674 (UN Security Council, 2006). This reaffirmation only succeeded because a link between R2P and military action was excluded from the resolution, a precondition that China – among others – insisted on. The core of resolution 1674 was a reiteration of paragraphs 138-40 of the 2005 WSOD (Teitt, 2011, p. 304).

R2P in practice

In 2007, Ban Ki-moon pledged to strive to translate the concept of R2P 'from words into deeds' (Ki-moon, 2007). Applying the theoretical framework of R2P to

actual humanitarian crises has proven to be a difficult task. In many cases since its introduction, R2P has been referred to in order to urge countries to get into action when grave threats to human life were present. However, its application has known varying degrees of successfulness, as some states argue that R2P can be abused as an imperialistic tool by (Western) governments to intervene in other countries' domestic affairs. The first crisis for which R2P was specifically mentioned as a justification to intervene was in 2006 in Security Council resolution 1706 concerning the Darfur crisis. Although this resolution passed the UNSC with 12 votes in favour, two permanent members – China and Russia – abstained from voting. Another example where R2P was put forward was in the wake of Cyclone Nargis in May 2008. This tropical storm primarily hit Myanmar, resulting in an estimated 84,500 casualties and 53,800 persons disappearing. To date it is the second deadliest natural disaster in the region, with inadequate disaster relief operations often mentioned as an import factor aggravating this tragedy (Swiss Reinsurance Company Ltd., 2009, pp. 12-13). France's Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, argued that "Burma's denial of access to cyclone victims constituted an R2P case because the deliberate massive suffering and death caused could be defined as crimes against humanity, which R2P is supposed to address" (Cohen, 2008). This attracted criticism from Indonesia, Vietnam, South Africa, and also China. They argued that the cyclone and its consequences were an internal matter and did not threaten international peace and stability, thus it was not necessary for the Security Council to intervene. They also pointed out that R2P should not apply to natural disasters. One final example in which R2P has been referenced is the Libyan Crisis. Multiple Security Council resolutions have been informed by R2P to legitimize intervention in an attempt to stabilize the region (see e.g. (Resolution 1970, 2011a; Resolution 1973, 2011b; Resolution 2016, 2011c; Resolution 2040, 2012a)). These resolutions and the Libyan

Crisis will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. Because the guidelines that emerged from the principle of R2P as it emerged from the 2005 World Summit are not clear enough, it is difficult to establish which circumstances legitimize the commencement of military interventions. Moreover, since the decision-making power on intervention now rests solely with the Security Council, situations may occur where the UNSC is unable to reach an agreement, and this may have a negative impact on already present humanitarian crises.

Chinese view on R2P

China is known to promote a policy of non-intervention in affairs of other states, so naturally you could expect it to look negatively at R2P. Surprisingly, China was part of the unanimous endorsement of R2P at the 2005 World Summit, and it also supported Security Council resolution 1674. In 2005, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) published a position paper on the United Nations reforms, in which it stated that: "When a massive humanitarian crisis occurs, it is the legitimate concern of the international community to ease and defuse the crisis" (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2005). In the same document, while it acknowledged that "each state shoulders the primary responsibility to protect its own population," it also called for prudence in judging whether a government is able and willing to protect its citizens. Adding to this, the MOFA stated that reckless intervention should be avoided. So while China accepted the basic premises of R2P, it also maintains its cautious attitude towards intervention. In fact, some information about China's foreign policy seems to contradict core aspects of R2P. One example is the 'Five Principles for Peaceful Coexistence', put forward by former premier Zhou Enlai:

(1) Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; (5) peaceful coexistence (People's Daily Online, 2007).

Another example can be found in *China's Independent Foreign Policy of Peace*, in which it is stated that:

All countries should settle their disputes and conflicts through peaceful consultations instead of resorting to force or the threat of force. No country should interfere in the internal affairs of another country under any pretext (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2003).

These two examples seem to contradict two criteria of R2P: (1) the 'under any pretext' clause contradicts the provisions in UN resolution 1674 in which some crimes, such as genocide, war crimes and ethnic cleansing, do indeed provide a pretext for intervention; (2) resorting to force is deemed necessary based on R2P, whereas the Chinese foreign policy excludes the use of force as a legitimate course of action (Teitt, 2009). How then, did the Chinese come to endorse the 2005 WSOD and let resolution 1674 pass through the UNSC? First of all, it is important to mention that, as Tiewa Liu (2012, p. 157), puts it: "[The] Chinese government supports the concept – not its whole theory – of Responsibility to Protect (…)." This indicates that China is not entirely unsupportive of the idea of R2P, but still holds some reservations. Moreover, Chinese scholars and experts also seem to have an internal disagreement on the topic. Some Chinese scholars fear R2P can be abused by Western powers to legitimize military intervention, while others see R2P as a bridge or solution to the conflict between the adherence to the non-intervention in other states' affairs principle, and the need to intervene when grave threats to human life are present (Li B. , 2007).

The general attitude of the Chinese government towards intervention can be summed up in four characteristics. First of all, they stress the abovementioned importance of prudence in each matter, and emphasize that every crisis should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Secondly, peaceful means are preferred above resorting to the use of force. Thirdly, all humanitarian intervention action should be taken under the existing UN framework. Lastly, the opinion of the target state's people should be taken into consideration and regional organization should be consulted (Liu T. , 2012, p. 162). These general observations all are of importance to China's specific attitude towards R2P. The criterion that intervening actions should be taken under the UN framework (i.e. with the consent of the Security Council) is one of the main reasons China endorsed the 2005 WSOD. China's insistence on Security Council control over R2P led to this provision being included in the 2005 WSOD and the Chinese endorsement. This way China retained its power to veto any R2P action in the UNSC (Garwood-Gowers, 2012, p. 8). In the R2P evolution process China has engaged in what Prantl and Nakano (2011, p. 214) call 'norm containment'. The Chinese government wanted a strict interpretation of R2P, limited to the key paragraphs of the WSOD. It was only because of this strict interpretation that China allowed resolution 1674 to be adopted. Even after the adoption of this resolution China's attitude towards R2P remained cautious. In debates on the protection of civilians (POC) in armed conflicts in the Security Council China has voiced concerns about R2P on numerous occasions. Former Chinese ambassador to the UN, Liu Zhenmin (2006, pp. 7-8), remarked in December 2006 that:

> [T]he responsibility to civilians lies primarily with the Governments of the countries concerned. While the international community and other external parties can provide support and assistance (...), they should not infringe upon

the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned, nor should

they enforce intervention by circumventing the Governments of such

countries.

From this we can conclude that while China acknowledges that in certain cases

outside involvement is necessary, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states

involved should still be respected. This seems to indicate that Beijing's stance on the

concept is somewhat paradoxical. Later, in June 2007, the Chinese ambassador even

insisted that:

> [Since] there are still differing understandings and interpretations of this
>
> concept among Member States, the Security Council should refrain from
>
> invoking the concept of the responsibility to protect (Li J. , 2007, p. 17).

If China endorsed the 2005 WSOD and voted in favour of UN resolution 1674, why

then would they insist on refraining from invoking the concept of R2P? The focus of

China's foreign policy seems to lie on preventing humanitarian crises rather than

responding to them. On several occasions, Chinese representatives have stressed the

importance of providing conditions that prevent the outbreak of violence and possible

mass atrocities. The first two pillars as mentioned in the 2005 WSOD indeed also are

based on the preventive obligation of states. Apart from this special attention to the

prevention of large scale loss of life, Chinese delegates in the UN have also

emphasized the importance of the non-use of force. In July 2010 for instance, the

Chinese delegate Wang Min noted that "adhering to the three principles of the

consent of the country concerned, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-

defence is the key to success of peacekeeping operations" (Wang M. , 2010, p. 28).

While it is true that the three principles that Wang mentions are cornerstones of UN

peacekeeping, Sarah Teitt (2011, p. 305) notes that the UN *Principles and Guidelines*

state that "force may be used in self-defence as well as the defence of the mandate." So while China is making statements that are in the best interest of peacekeeping operations, pointing to the official guidelines and stating that only self-defence is a legitimate authorization for the use of force is a false justification. If the use of force is deemed inevitable to uphold the mandate, then member states are – according to UN regulations – legally permitted to apply it.

So while in various instances China maintains a cautious attitude, in other POC debates China has actually reaffirmed its support for R2P. In a 2008 POC debate Liu Zhenmin reaffirmed China's support for resolution 1674 by stating that "[it is] the legal framework within which the Security Council may address this issue" (Liu Z. , 2008, p. 8). Other examples for Chinese support are its consistent contribution of military personnel to UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO). An in-depth analysis of this aspect of Chinese involvement in UNPKO will follow in chapter 2.2. To sum up the Chinese attitude towards R2P a number of conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, China's foreign policy is still grounded in the *Five Principles for Peaceful Coexistence*, which puts a heavy emphasis on the sovereignty of states and non-interference. Secondly, China believes any decisions invoking R2P should be taken within the Security Council, which should be the only body that has decision-making power in these matters. The UNSC should look at each incident which possibly warrants intervention on a case-by-case basis. Thirdly, special emphasis should be put on the preventive functionality of R2P and peaceful intervention is preferred above the use of force. Lastly, China's cautious attitude and reservations towards R2P are mostly rhetorical and not set in stone.

Chapter 2.1 - Sovereignty and non-intervention

In this second chapter we will take a closer look at China's (changing) stance vis-à-vis the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention. In chapter 1 we have already established that China's strict adherence to these principles is one of the main reasons for its cautious attitude towards humanitarian intervention and R2P. We will now argue that adhering to the principle of non-interference in other states' domestic affairs is limiting China's capabilities to respond to international conflicts. In the first part of chapter 2 we will take a closer look at China's commitment to these principles, and investigate whether its adherence to these principles has had an influence on its contribution to UNPKO. A detailed discussion of Chinese involvement in UNPKO will follow in the second part.

Sovereignty and non-intervention

Non-intervention stems from ancient China and as such is still rooted in Chinese society. We can trace non-intervention directly back to the concept of *wuwei* (无为) introduced by Laozi in the *daodejing*. *Wuwei* can be read as 'non-action' or 'not-doing', and it is first mentioned in the phrase: "*Wei wuwei, ze wu buzhi*" (为无为，则无不治) (Chinese Text Project, 2015). This phrase can be loosely translated as 'Do not-doing, and there will be no disorder.' This Taoist philosophy seems to still hold true and is applied to China's foreign policy. We will look at non-intervention in a strict sense. This means no interference in other states' affairs except on a diplomatic level and through debates. Non-interference prohibits military intervention, but also non-military intervention such as financials sanctions and travel bans on government officials. The first part of this chapter will proceed with Zhongying Pang's findings that in modern China, the insistence to stick to a principle of non-interference is based on three grounds. In line with the general idea in this thesis in the back of our

minds – that China is becoming a 'great country' – Pang (2009, p. 237) notes the following: "China has to balance its traditional commitment to 'non-interference' with its responsibilities as a great power." Adhering to this traditional commitment is based on the following three grounds, each of which we will discuss in detail further on in this chapter:

1. It is seen as defending China's sovereignty from the 'superpower threat' and other foreign interferences into China's sovereign affairs;

2. The commitment to non-interference helps China create and maintain a deep political affinity with the wider developing world;

3. Adherence to the principle of non-interference helps China to justify avoiding becoming involved in international crises that are not matters of Chinese national interest or in cases where it simply opposes international intervention on principled grounds (Pang, 2009, pp. 244-245).

The 'superpower threat'

'Don't do unto others what you don't want others to do unto you. As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.' These two proverbs from Confucius and the Bible are at the core of China's attitude towards interference into other states' affairs. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, China has had to deal with interference into its domestic affairs in many different fields. Whether it concerned human rights abuse, environmental pollution, or a lack of freedom of press, many – oftentimes Western – states have criticized China for its domestic policies. By promoting a stance of non-interference in other countries' affairs, China hopes to create a weapon of soft power that prevents other states from interfering in their undertakings. This particular stance developed at a time when China experienced a (perceived) 'superpower threat', first from the United States and

later from the Soviet Union. During Maoist China the communist government believed the main threat to its sovereignty came from the United States and the U.S.-allied states in Asia. Later, after the death of Mao in 1976 and the initiation of the Reform and Opening-up Policy (改革开放) by Deng Xiaoping, this threat was mainly perceived to be posed by the Soviet Union. In fact, while Deng's reforms were mainly focused on the domestic economy, most of his foreign policy efforts were aimed at preventing the Soviet Union from "dominating China and otherwise intruding on China's sovereignty" (Sutter, 2008, p. 38). At the same time, largely thanks to Deng's reforms, China's economy began to boom. As China became increasingly involved with the outside world in a positive way – through trade, diplomatic relations and exchanges on other levels – a policy of non-interference became less practical. Interestingly, as Gonzalez-Vincente (2015, pp. 208-209) points out, China's acceptance into the UN as the sole representative for 'China' strengthened its ability to defend the idealistic principle of non-interference in its domestic affairs. So while its UN seat gave China a tool to promote non-interference and possibly gain more control over other states' behaviour, "China's socio-economic reforms represented an ideological turn to flexible and utilitarian pragmatism and away from Maoist dogmatic utopianism." With China assuming a more dominant economic and political role, does it still have to defend itself from a 'superpower threat'? Less so than in the Cold War era does China perceive a threat to come from one or two superpowers, but it still believes it is threatened. Verhoeven (2014, p. 67) remarks that in Communist Party's eyes "liberal democracy threatens authoritarian regimes and that its export destabilizes international relations." This threat does not only affect China, but also stability in other parts of the world. As such, the PRC blames Western-style liberal democracy for the unrest of the last two decades in Africa and the Middle East. Consequently, according to Xi Jinping, China's assistance to Africa –

aimed at courting African states to engage with China rather than Western states –

has 'no political strings attached' (Thomson Reuters, 2013).

Affinity with the developing world

Offering 'assistance' with no political strings attached is one of the ways China

is attempting to get on the good side of other developing nations, especially in

Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa. The non-interference principle is a stance

that many of these developing states have in common, which is oftentimes a product

of bad experiences during a period of colonialization by Western states. In fear of

neo-colonialism, these states all believe that non-interference in each other's

domestic affairs is an important principle for good international relations, as we will

see below. One example of the importance these nations attach to non-interference

can be found in the charter of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):

> ASEAN and its Member States shall act in accordance with the following
>
> principles: (…) (e) non-interference in the internal affairs of ASEAN Member
>
> States; (f) respect for the right of every Member State to lead its national
>
> existence free from external interference, subversion and coercion (Association
>
> of Southeast Asian Nations, 2007, p. 6).

BRICS, an organization for cooperation between Brazil, Russia, India, China and

South-Africa, made a similar statement after its most recent summit in Ufa, Russia:

> We [BRICS countries] emphasize the central importance of the principles of
>
> international law enshrined in the UN Charter, particularly the political
>
> independence, territorial integrity and sovereign equality of states, non-
>
> interference in internal affairs of other states and respect for human rights and
>
> fundamental freedoms (BRICS, 2015, p. 18).

The African Union (AU) has included similar acknowledgments in its Constitutive

Act, albeit with more focus on objectives and duties vis-à-vis other AU member

states:

> The objectives of the Union shall be to: (...) (b) defend the sovereignty,
>
> territorial integrity and independence of its Member States. The Union shall
>
> function in accordance with the following principles: (a) sovereign equality and
>
> interdependence among Member States of the Union; (...) (g) non-interference
>
> by any Member State in the internal affairs of another (African Union, 2000,
>
> pp. 5-7).

The statements above are a testimony to the importance the member states of these

regional organizations attach to upholding the principles of non-interference and

sovereignty. Supporting the same principles helps China maintaining good

diplomatic relations with these states. Although associating itself with the same

rhetoric seems to be a sound strategic move by China, it is questionable whether in

practice it is indeed showing its support for these values. In the second part of this

chapter we will try to find an answer to this question, but first we will look at the third

and last reason behind China's commitment to the discussed principles.

Avoiding involvement in matters not of Chinese national interest

Pang's last argument for China's adherence to the principle of non-interference

in other states' internal affairs is that China does not want to become involved in

matters that are not of its national interest. This is a premise that holds true for many

developing countries, and China is no exception. Simply speaking, domestic affairs

have a higher priority in China's (security) policy and thus the CCP commits more

resources to trying to solve these matters. While every state in the world will put

domestic affairs ahead of international affairs, for China this is a relatively difficult

task. China is a big country and shares a land border with fourteen countries and a sea border with another seven neighbours. By comparison, the mainland of the United States only has two direct neighbours over land (three, if we include Russia through Alaska) and six over maritime areas. Having this many neighbouring states resulted in China putting a higher priority on defending its national sovereignty. As Wang (2010, p. 14) notes:

> China has faced controversies and troubles that most other countries have not had to face. (…) It must be pointed out, however, that the main focus in safeguarding national sovereignty is to seek 'stability' and a 'settlement' in disputed areas, rather than to 'cede' or 'seize' territory.

Considering the amount of resources China has to allocate to managing bilateral relations with all of its immediate neighbours, it is unsurprising that the Chinese government is somewhat reluctant to get involved in conflicts farther away from home. Nevertheless, in the last two to three decades – due to China's increased involvement in international trade – foreign interests have become intertwined with national interests. Increased activity on the global market and an insatiable need for natural resources require China to increasingly look abroad and managing these foreign assets has become another priority in the CCP's policy. The autarkic ideal as envisaged during the Mao era has become a thing of the past, and many Chinese companies – state-led or privately-owned – are doing business in other parts of the world. Some of these countries are politically less stable than others, and thus require more attention in order to maintain a healthy business environment. We can measure the increasing international activity of Chinese companies by looking at outward foreign direct investments (OFDI). China launched its going-out policy in 2001, and in 2012 it was the third largest outward investor, behind the United States and Japan.

Chinese OFDI flow reached US$ 84 billion in that year, of which three-quarters was generated by state-owned enterprises (Sauvant, 2013, p. 1). While Chinese OFDI stock increased from US$ 28 billion in 2000 to US$ 298 billion in 2010, this is still a relatively small amount for such a large country (compared to e.g. Singapore's US$ 300 billion) (Robins, 2013, p. 526). Relevant to the discussion in this thesis is the destination of Chinese OFDI. While originally most of Chinese OFDI ended up in Asia, in recent years especially Africa has received a bigger share of total investments. If we exclude offshore financial centres, in 2013 around 14% of Chinese OFDI stock was located in Africa (Zhou & Leung, 2015). Does increased economic activity in Africa lead to more involvement in conflict management by the Chinese government? In the next section we will take a closer look at Chinese participation in UNPKO.

Chapter 2.2 - Chinese participation in UNPKO

Since the PRC was granted a UN seat in 1971 in favour of the Republic of China (ROC), its diplomatic influence has increased steadily. The PRC took over the ROC's seat as a permanent member of the Security Council, thus being able to veto resolutions. Originally, the PRC opposed all peacekeeping operations. In the first ten years since its admission to the UN three peacekeeping operations were established, in all of which China abstained from voting. From 1981 onwards, China's attitude towards UNPKO became more supportive, and it dispatched a first batch of military observers to a UN force in 1990. Interestingly, as Fravel (1996, p. 1104) notes, China's cooperation "resulted from changes in China's domestic politics. Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, which were predicated on access to international trade and investment, required a more open and cooperative foreign policy." Here we can identify a turning point where China started to pay more attention to multilateral relations, and participating in peacekeeping operations was a logical step in keeping

these relations healthy. So while Deng's reform policy was hailed as initiating the economic upsurge of China, it also had a profound impact on different policies. All together this has led to the PRC currently being the largest personnel contributor to peacekeeping operations of the UNSC permanent members (Murray, 2013, p. 2). It is perhaps not entirely surprising that the start of China's contributions to UNPKO was in 1990. The Tiananmen Square crisis of 1989 had a serious impact on China's image, and its response to the student protests also led to sanctions by the United States and the European Community. Part of attempting to restore the nation's image was not-vetoing humanitarian interventions. As Allen Carson (2002, pp. 31-32) notes:

> [D]uring the 1990s, concerns about portraying China as a responsible, rising power, rather than a dissatisfied and irresponsible one, pushed the government in the direction of accepting limited cases of intervention as a symbol of the PRC's benign intent within the international arena. (...) In other words, an interest in playing the role of "good citizen" on the international stage has led the Chinese to acquiesce to a series of interventions about which many in Beijing have real reservations.

This first mission for which China contributed personnel was the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), for which it applied to provide troops in November 1989. In 1990 Chinese military observers were actively deployed in this mission which was the UN's first peacekeeping operation (created in 1948). Although this seems a watershed moment in China's peacekeeping history, it only provided five participants (Reilly & Gill, 2000, p. 45). Indeed, in the first years of its participation in peacekeeping missions, China's contribution remained minimal. In 2000 it contributed less than 1% of both the UN budget and the UN peacekeeping budget, a number that is disproportionate for a P5-member with 19% of the world population.

While in 2000 over 35,000 UN military personnel were involved in eighteen different peacekeeping missions, China only participated in five of these, and contributed only 53 participants (Reilly & Gill, 2000, p. 43). Following the participation in UNTSO, in 1992 China also endorsed the establishment of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). While the UNTSO mission – as its name implies – was aimed at supervising the truce agreement in the Middle East, UNTAC directly infringed upon the sovereignty of the Cambodian state (Chen, 2009, p. 159). In fact, this is the first mission where China set aside its traditional adherence to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference, in favour of humanitarian intervention. China's contribution to UNPKO has increased steadily ever since. As mentioned before, it is now the largest contributor of P5-members in terms of personnel. One last mission worth noting is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), created in July 2013. This is the first mission for which China provides infantry to protect other UN peacekeepers. In previous missions, China's contribution was limited to observers, engineers and other supporting personnel, so providing fighting troops indicates another change in China's UNPKO policy (Murray, 2013, p. 2). China's commitment to peacekeeping operations can be seen as an indicator that China wants to be become a so-called 'responsible superpower'. To conclude this section on UNPKO, there is another observation worth mentioning.

Besides creating an image as a country with an open-minded and cooperative attitude – a stance that could benefit international trade – there is also a different motivation behind Chinese participation in UNPKO. The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is lacking in actual combat experience, therefore there is a benefit to participating in peacekeeping operations. As Richardson (2011, p. 291) notes:

Peacekeeping provides a means for China to gain operational experience in conflict zones, which is important for a military that has not deployed abroad since the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979. Chinese peacekeepers work with new technologies, learn new skills and also gain experience of co-deploying with foreign militaries in complex missions in difficult environments.

Training its military abroad also provides benefits to China's domestic stability, as it provides China's security forces with experience from 'military operations other than war'. This experience may be applied to for instance riot-control at home (Bates & Huang, 2009, p. 16). While there are some obvious practical benefits to Chinese participation in UNPKO, there are many factors at play that determine China's involvement in humanitarian interventions. The PRC's motivations are not entirely clear-cut, and therefore in the next two chapters we will look at a dissection of two prominent cases in China's international engagement history.

Chapter 3 – Case study Libya

The two remaining chapters of this thesis will be dedicated to case studies of Libya and Syria. These will provide insight into Chinese activities in the region and contribute to a better understanding of Beijing's policy decisions concerning peacekeeping and intervention. Recent developments in the area have had an impact on Chinese affairs and we will look at both countries in turn to determine how these developments have shaped China's involvement in the region. Libya and Syria are relevant cases because they provide contrasting stories on Beijing's foreign policy. Their prominence is also marked by the large-scale involvement of the international community. There are many other examples of countries where China's policy has been shaped by pragmatism, but for this thesis the analysis will be limited to these two cases. Besides the contrast of the need to intervene in Libya and the adherence to non-intervention in Syria, we will also see that Beijing is 'crossing the river by feeling the stones'. In other words, it is learning from earlier experiences and applying this to its policy in new cases.

Chinese economic involvement in Libya

Libya and China have maintained official diplomatic relations since 1978. Before the start of the Arab Spring, economic and trade cooperation between the two countries was mainly focused on three areas: natural resources; private trade; and large-scale construction projects. Oil – crude petroleum is China's most imported good – is the major natural resource that China imports from Libya. In 2010 Libya was one of the ten top oil exporters for China, although in absolute amounts it was a relatively small player (Wang J. , 2012, pp. 37-38). Many Chinese construction companies are active in Libya, and their activities range from building roads and railways to constructing housing areas and university campuses. According to the

Chinese embassy, by the third quarter of 2010 China had invested a total of US$ 43.5 million in Libya, with the bulk of the investments concentrated in the construction sector. Although trade relations between China and Libya are still relatively young, China already plays an important role in Libya's trade economy. In 2009, it was Libya's second largest trading partner, after the EU. In the third quarter of 2010 trade volumes between the two nations reached US$ 4.9 billion, an increase of 46.5% from the previous year (Afribiz, 2012). This increase was largely due to a growth of oil imports from Libya, at a time when Chinese overall crude petroleum imports were still greatly increasing. While China and Libya established increasing cooperation on different levels, there is some noticeable friction between the two countries as well. Beijing and Tripoli are vying for influence across the African continent, and Libyan officials were sceptical about China's intentions in Africa. At the end of 2009, Libyan Foreign Minister Musa Kusa made a statement indicating that the Gaddafi administration was less than welcoming toward Chinese investments in the region: "When we look at the reality on the ground we find that there is something akin to a Chinese invasion of the African continent. This is something that brings to mind the effects that colonialism had on the African continent" (Hook & Dyer, 2011). Whether or not China's leadership was worried about statements like these by the Libyan administration, in the end it did not matter much. The government was ousted and in October 2011 Muammar Gaddafi himself became a casualty of the Libyan civil war. The National Transitional Council (NTC) took over leadership in Libya, and this introduced a new player into the Sino-Libyan diplomatic relations. The impact of China's initial support for Gaddafi on the relationship with the NTC will be discussed further on in this chapter. First, we will look at China's role in the decision-making process in the UNSC regarding the Libyan civil war.

Libya in the UNSC

China's attitude in the UNSC concerning the Libyan civil war can be characterized as having both many similarities with earlier policies, as well as showing some signs of a new diplomatic approach. The first UNSC resolution on Libya was resolution 1970, which was adopted on 26 February 2011 and it entailed referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), an arms embargo, travel bans for several members of the Libyan leadership as well as Muammar Gaddafi's next of kin, and assets freezing (UN Security Council, 2011a). China's traditional adherence to a policy of non-interference was challenged, but the resolution passed. Why did China decide not to veto this resolution which was in conflict with one of its most fundamental foreign policy principles? Since China often aligns its policy with the recommendations and wishes of regional organizations, one explanation is the support for the resolution by stakeholders such as the AU and the Arab League. Evidence for this can be found in a statement by former Chinese MOFA spokeswoman Jiang Yu, who stated:

> We should respect Libya's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and should promote a resolution of the crisis Libya is currently facing through dialogue and other peaceful means. The UNSC should pay close attention to and respect the opinions of Arab and African countries (Huanqiu Net, 2011).

Aligning its policy stance with regional players seems to be a pragmatic approach, since China has a great interest in maintaining healthy diplomatic relations with countries in the region. China wants to offer those countries an alternative to Western investors, and as such is willing to loosen its adherence to traditional standpoints such as non-interference in other states' affairs. We should not overestimate Chinese investments into Africa however. China is Africa's top trading partner, but it only

ranks seventh overall in FDI, trailing far behind the number one source of foreign investments, the United States. Since China is only recently actively engaging in outward FDI, this could change rapidly however. For instance, rising labour costs at home could spur Chinese companies to invest in manufacturing facilities in Africa's low-wage countries (Olander & Van Staden, 2015).

While supporting resolution 1970 indicated a shift in China's intervention policy, adopting resolution 1973 had an even more profound impact on the situation in Libya. China abstained on the vote in the Security Council, effectively sanctioning the creation of a legal basis for NATO's military intervention. resolution 1973, adopted on 17 March 2011, expanded the assets freeze, reinforced the arms embargo and – more importantly – it authorised the establishment of a no-fly zone in the airspace of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in order to help protect civilians (UN Security Council, 2011b, pp. 3-5). The reasoning behind abstaining on the vote was in some respects similar to China's decision to vote in favour of resolution 1970. Li Baodong, China's ambassador to the UN at the time, gave the following explanation:

> China is seriously concerned over the worsening situation in Libya. We support the Security Council in taking appropriate and necessary action to stabilize the situation in Libya and put an end to the acts of violence against civilians at an early date. (...) China attaches great importance to the decision made by the 22-member Arab League on the establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya. We also attach great importance to the positions of African countries and the African Union (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2011).

Once again the Chinese delegation in the UN invoked the support of the Arab League and the AU as a justification for their decision. On the other hand, China was also

engaged in what Calabrese (2013, p. 11) calls a "diplomatic balancing act." In fact, when providing the explanation mentioned above, the Chinese ambassador also expressed concerns that some elements of the resolution were unclear. In the same statement it was stressed that China always remains opposed to the use of force in international relations.

While attempting to balance maintaining healthy diplomatic relations with regional players, and adhering to its own traditional policy, China put pragmatism ahead of principle. They came to regret this decision when the military campaign went much further than anticipated. One week after the resolution was passed Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi expressed grave concerns about civilian casualties and called for an immediate ceasefire in Libya (Cruz-Del Rosario & Wang, 2011). Many regional organizations expressed similar concerns. Three days after the passing of the resolution, Secretary-General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, "deplored the broad scope of the U.S.-European bombing campaign in Libya and said (...) that he would call a league meeting to reconsider Arab approval of the Western military intervention" (Cody, 2011). On a similar note, albeit somewhat later, the AU also voiced its dissatisfaction with the way resolution 1973 was being implemented. Its Peace and Security Council issued the following statement on April 26:

> [The Peace and Security] Council stresses the need for all countries and organizations involved in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1973 to act in a manner fully consistent with international legality and the resolution's provisions, whose objective is solely to ensure the protection of the civilian population. Council urges all involved to refrain from actions,

including military operation targeting Libyan Senior Officials and socio-

economic infrastructure (African Union, 2011, p. 3).

For the greater part, China relied on the assessment of the Arab League and the AU to

decide not to veto the resolution. With hindsight, considering the consequences of the

military intervention Beijing viewed this as a mistake. The scope of resolution 1973

was surprisingly broad, leaving enough room for different interpretations. Paragraph

four on the protection of civilians, which "authorizes member states (…) to take all

necessary measures (…) to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat

of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (…) (UN Security Council, 2011b, p. 3)", in

fact mandates the use of military force. The NATO-led mission Operation Unified

Protector is generally considered to be a successful mission, but not due to the

unanimous or 'unified' support for the operations in Libya. The lack of unanimity was

for the greater part due to the differing interpretations of the mandate that resolution

1973 provided (Van Geel, De Koster, & Osinga, 2013). Several non-NATO members

joined the operation, including Arab League members Jordan, Qatar, and the UAE,

but China was not one of them. China's non-participation in this operation is not

surprising. Not only was there a great reluctance on the Chinese side to let resolution

1973 pass, but also proximity to the region would make it difficult for Chinese troops

to provide any meaningful contribution. Furthermore, participation would be in

conflict with Beijing's view on settling disputes in a peaceful manner.

Evacuation of Chinese nationals

At the start of the U.S.-led intervention China's interests in Libya were already

somewhat diminished, which also might have added to a reduced degree of urgency

regarding the crisis in Libya. At the start of the unrest in Libya, Beijing's initial

intention was to carry on with business as usual, but the crisis evolved in such a

manner, however, that this was made impossible. On 22 February 2011, President Hu

Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao "ordered all-out efforts to safeguard the lives and

property of Chinese nationals in Libya, asking authorities to take timely and effective

measures" (Wu, 2011). Following this statement an operation was initiated to

evacuate Chinese workers from Libya by land, sea and air. In total over 35,000

evacuees were routed through neighbouring countries such as Tunisia and Egypt and

flown to Malta and Greece, to eventually be transported back to China. Although

exact figures are unclear, this presumably amounted to the evacuation of all Chinese

nationals living and working in Libya. It had become clear that the Gaddafi

administration was unable to protect the people living within its border, nationals or

foreigners. This lack of protection for Chinese workers and assets added to the fact

that Beijing was reluctant to protect Libya in the UN (Parello-Plesner & Duchâtel,

2014, pp. 111-115). In previous instance we have seen that the Chinese leadership

sometimes opts to shield authoritarian regimes, which was the case for Zimbabwe

and Myanmar when China vetoed human rights violation resolutions (see e.g. (UN

Security Council, 2008; UN Security Council, 2007)). In other cases, such as human

rights abuse in North Korea, China attempted to prevent the Security Council from

putting this topic on the agenda (see e.g. (UN Security Council, 2014)). The presence

of relatively large numbers of Chinese nationals in Libya seems to have been one of

the main reasons for Beijing to steer away from its traditional path of non-

interference.

Current Sino-Libyan relations

When it became clear that Gaddafi would not be able to defeat the opposition

forces, the Chinese leadership had to make a decision to shift its support away from

him and towards the new government of Libya, the NTC. The relations between

Beijing and the new regime in Tripoli were not off to a great start. Relatively strong ties with the Gaddafi administration before the start of the civil war made that the rebel leadership viewed China with suspicion. Moreover, the Chinese government was the last Security Council member to recognize the NTC as the sole legitimate power in Libya. The timing of this official recognition is no coincidence, since less than a week earlier reports surfaced that Chinese weapons manufacturers allegedly sold weapons to Colonel Gaddafi's army. MOFA spokeswoman Jiang Yu stated the following on the subject:

> The Gaddafi regime sent representatives to China in July to meet individuals from relevant Chinese companies without the knowledge of Chinese government departments. (…) Chinese companies did not sign any military trade contracts with the Libyan side and certainly did not export any weapons to the Libyan side (Anderlini, 2011).

What is important here to note is that these sales talks commenced after the signing of resolution 1970, which put an embargo on weapons trade with Libya. Moreover, all weapon manufacturers in China are state-owned companies, so it is unrealistic to claim that no governmental departments were aware of any negotiations. Abdulrahman Busin, a spokesman for the NTC, is certain weapon deliveries indeed have been made and that China acted in violation with the UN resolution:

> We found several documents that showed us orders, very large orders, of arms and ammunition specifically from China, and now we do know that some of the things that were on the list are here on the ground, and they came in over the last two to six months. (CNN, 2011).

Busin added to this that NTC chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil had "made it very clear that anybody who has helped and supported and stood by Gadhafi over the months would not be greeted well" (CNN, 2011).

Supporting Gaddafi in the past and during the conflict would turn out to have economic repercussions for Chinese companies in Libya. A spokesperson for an oil company controlled by Libyan opposition forces stated that "because of their hostile stance towards the opposition, it would be difficult for countries like China, Russia and India to gain new oil exploration contracts. (…) On the other hand, the NTC will respect earlier contracts" (Liu Y. , 2011). Shortly after the Libyan rebels took control of most of the country, the sentiment towards China was hostile. Some stated that China "gambled on the wrong horse", while others wanted to use the post-war period to "reward friendly nations and punish unfriendly ones." China and Russia were characterized as "unfriendly" countries (Alexander, 2011). While these statements by NTC members and other rebels are quite unambiguous, pragmatism again prevailed. The arms sale was swept under the rug and trade between Libya and China continued as before. In fact, mutual feelings turned around quite quickly. On a visit to China in June 2012, Libyan Foreign Minister Ashour Ben Khayil praised China for its "fair and responsible position concerning Libya." Then Vice-President Xi Jinping's focus was more on economic benefits and promised that "China will encourage its companies to participate in Libya's post-war reconstruction" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2012). Indeed, Sino-Libyan trade experienced a setback in 2011, but quickly recovered in 2012 (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2013). Most recent figures acknowledge the importance of the trade relation between Libya and China. China is the third export destination for Libyan

products (11% of total share), and after Italy (17%) China is the second country of origin for imported products (13%) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2015a).

Lessons from Libya

Shortly after abstaining on the vote on resolution 1973 Beijing already believed that this had been a policy error. What other lessons has China gained from the situation in Libya, which could have an influence on its foreign policy in the long run? Yun Sun (2012, p. 1) describes Beijing's perception of the conflict in Libya as "gaining nothing while losing everything in Libya after abstaining on UNSCR 1973." While China ostensibly did not gain much by abstaining on the vote, it is difficult to argue that it 'lost everything'. As we have seen above, there was no long-lasting impact on Sino-Libyan trade relations. Moreover, refraining from vetoing both resolutions indicated to the West that China was willing to assume the role of a 'responsible power'. Nevertheless, its experiences from Libya did have an impact on Beijing's decision-making process during the Syrian civil war, which we will see in chapter 4. One important mistake China has made was its rigid support of Gaddafi, which lasted long after it was clear the rebel opposition would be the victorious party. Beijing should adopt a more flexible approach to similar diplomatic issues, which would make it easier to adapt to political changes. While the NTC has been eager to resume economic relations with China – also to their own benefit – in other cases a lack of diplomatic loyalty might hurt economic interests. It has been proven in Libya that non-interference is not feasible when both Chinese lives and other assets are being threatened.

Chapter 4 – Case study Syria

In this last chapter we will take a look at Syria. At the time of writing events in Syria still make daily headlines and it has been a conflict-ridden area since the start of the civil war in early 2011. Millions of refugees have fled their country in the wake of the clash between government forces and the opposition. Later on in the conflict involvement of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and its allied militias aggravated the situation even further. Most recent events include the commencement of Russian airstrikes in support of President Bashar al-Assad's forces and an ever-increasing stream of civilian refugees seeking asylum in Europe and elsewhere. In the first part of this chapter a brief introduction to the current situation in Syria is provided. Next, we will look at historical relations between Syria and China, specifically economic and diplomatic relations. Thirdly, we will discuss China's position on Syria in the UN and its voting behaviour in Security Council resolutions regarding the civil war. We will also cover the dynamic between Moscow and Beijing, in light of Russia's long-standing alliance with the Assad regime.

Syrian civil war

Before we discuss Chinese involvement in the conflict in Syria, it is important to provide a basic outline of the events in Syria. In March 2011 fourteen school children were arrested and reportedly tortured for writing the slogan "the people want the downfall of the regime" on a wall in the southern Syrian city of Deraa. This slogan had been used before in the uprisings of Tunisia and Egypt, and this was viewed as an act of rebellion by the Assad administration. Soon after, anti-government protests erupted in other cities around the country, which was met with a violent crackdown by government forces. The conflict escalated even further by the rise of several jihadist groups, ISIL being the most prominent. President Assad

refused to step down, in spite of international pressure and several rounds of

negotiations. Assad is still backed by his allies Russia and Iran, which adds to the

complexity of the situation. The United States started supporting the opposition

forces by providing them with different sorts of aid, including military intelligence

and training. Partly due to the involvement of ISIL in the conflict, this attempt to

topple the Assad regime failed. As part of the war on ISIL, a U.S.-led coalition began

airstrikes in both Iraq and Syria. More recently, Russia has commenced military

operations in the area as well. Allegedly, Russian forces are not only targeting ISIL

jihadists, but are also attacking rebel forces in order to help President Assad maintain

his foothold (The Guardian, 2015). In the meantime, the conflict continues to have a

severe impact on the lives of the Syrian population. According to a UN-supported

report (Syrian Center for Policy Research, 2015), in 2014 over 80% of Syrians lived in

poverty, and over half of the Syrian population (around nine million people) was

dislodged by the civil war.

Sino-Syrian relations

All politics is economics, and vice versa. Economic interests play a significant

role in determining foreign policy. If a country has a large economic stake in an area

where a crisis has erupted, there is a larger propensity that this country will come into

action to protect these stakes. To acquire a better understanding of China's policy

decisions in Syria, we can start by looking at Sino-Syrian bilateral economic relations.

Before the start of the civil war Syrian exports to China amounted to around US$ 90

million. This is a relatively small amount, and only 0.74% of Syrian exports ended up

in China. This means that in 2010 the total export value of Syrian products was

approximately US$ 12 billion. When we look at Chinese exports to Syria, we discover

that over 11% of imported products originated in China, representing a value of US$

2.28 billion. This makes China the number one country of origin for products imported into Syria. Over 52% of Syrian exports consisted of non-crude petroleum and other petroleum oil related products. This does not mean however that China is heavily dependent on Syria for its oil imports. The top three crude petroleum suppliers for China in 2010 were Saudi Arabia (20% of total oil imports), Angola (18%) and Iran (9.5%). From this we can conclude that in terms of China's energy security and economic impact Syria does not play a major role. When we look at 2013 figures, we discover that the civil war has had a severe impact on the Syrian economy, and economic relations between Chinese and Syrian companies became even more insignificant. Syrian exports to China decreased by more than 95%. Compared to the all-time high of 2011 (US$ 2.42 billion), Chinese exports to Syria also dropped by more than 71% (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2015b). So while China's economic interests in Syria have suffered from the outbreak of the civil war, the stakes were not especially high.

Other non-economic relations

Diplomatic relations between Beijing and Damascus became more pronounced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when China started to look more towards the Middle East after the end of the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. In fact, Sino-Syrian negotiations and agreements of different sorts often involved the Soviet Union (and later Russia) in one way or another. As early as 1969, the Syrians turned towards China to secure weapons deals, when they were not content with the delivery of Soviet arms supplies. At a time when Sino-Soviet relations were at a low point – due to the Zhenbao Island incident – this was considered to be a political move by the Syrians to coax Moscow into quicker arms deliveries (Mansfield, 1973, p. 480). The sale of weapons to the al-Assad leadership

continued well into the 21st century, and the Chinese state-owned company Norinco is suspected to have provided the Syrian government with chlorine, an ingredient that can be used in attacks with chemical weapons (Volodzko, 2015). After arms sales became less of an economic necessity, they still helped to increase Chinese influence in the region. Indeed, many Arab countries view increased Chinese influence in the region as a positive development, especially when contrasted with the (former) U.S. hegemony in the area (Zambelis & Gentry, 2008, p. 67). Moreover, China is viewed as an example of a successful political and economic development model, worthy of emulation. The Chinese model, or Beijing Consensus, is welcomed as a viable alternative to the traditional U.S. model. For Syria it is especially true that Beijing's interests in the country do not have energy security at its core. As seen above, not only is oil trade between Syria and China limited, Syria's oil reserves are also very modest when compared to other countries in the region. Syria's close ties with Russia point us on our way towards understanding why Beijing takes such a special interest in the country. As we will see below – and as we have seen before – China repeatedly aligns its foreign policy with Moscow's. In light of the most recent developments in Syria, the Sino-Russo-Syrian trilateral dynamic is one particularly worth exploring, and it may help us gain a better understanding of China's stance on non-interference in this particular case. Firstly however, we will look at the proceedings in the UNSC regarding Syria.

The Syrian case in the UNSC

The Syria crisis was first discussed in the Security Council on 27 April 2011, during a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe. The briefing described the anti-government demonstrations of mid-March and the violent response by the Syrian authorities. Pascoe also mentioned the promised reforms by

the Assad administration, which many Council members – including China – regarded as a positive development. The Chinese representative Li Baodong expressed the hope that "the international community will offer constructive help in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter" (UN Security Council, 2011d). This meeting took place little over a month after the adoption of resolution 1973 on Libya and the establishment of the no-fly zone. While much happened in Syria in the months following the briefing, in the Security Council surprisingly little happened. The first notable event occurred on 3 August 2011, when the President of the Security Council issued a statement

> condemning the widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities. The Security Council calls for an immediate end to all violence, (…) [and] calls on the Syrian authorities to fully respect human rights and to comply with their obligations under applicable international law (UN Security Council, 2011f).

The first draft resolution on Syria, submitted by France, Germany, Portugal and the UK, was put to the vote on 4 October 2011. While the draft did not include any concrete measures to be taken against the Syrian government, it did hold the Assad administration accountable for mass atrocities committed against Syrian civilians. In previous versions of the draft resolution more specific wording regarding sanctions against Damascus was included, but this was left out in order to make the resolution more appealing to countries with a critical attitude toward foreign intervention. This strategy failed however, since both China and Russia cast their veto. The other three BRICS members – Brazil, India and South Africa – abstained on the vote, along with Lebanon. China and Russia had prepared their own version of a draft resolution, which could count on the support of the BRICS countries, but was

never put to a vote. Although Beijing and Moscow were united in their decision to
veto, their motives were slightly different. In the debate following the veto, the
Russian ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, explained that the rejection was
based on their disagreement "with [the] unilateral, accusatory bent against
Damascus." Churkin also emphasized that Moscow was alarmed with "the weak
wording in connection with the opposition and the lack of an appeal to them to
distance themselves from extremists" (UN Security Council, 2011e, pp. 3-4). Russia's
position – as a close ally to President Assad – in this debate is not surprising. The
Chinese representative, Li Baodong, was very brief in explaining the Chinese veto. Li
made no mention of opposition forces, but merely repeated the 'respect the
sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity' maxim (UN Security Council,
2011e, p. 5). Russia and China both commented that their disagreement was based in
part on the rejection of the threat of sanctions against the Syrian authorities, even
though no mention was made of sanctions in the version of the draft resolution put to
the vote. During the debate several mentions were also made of Libya and the
similarities with the situation in Syria. Especially the Russian delegation expressed
worries that the resolution would warrant an intervention similar to the intervention
in Libya. The delegation of the United States refuted this allegation, stating that the
resolution would not be a pretext to military intervention (UN Security Council,
2011e, p. 8).

A second important development in the discussion of the Syria crisis within
the Security Council occurred in January/February 2012. A new draft resolution on
Syria was discussed and put to the vote. Important to note is that this draft was
submitted by the Arab League and China's negative vote can therefore be seen as a
watershed moment in its foreign policy. The draft resolution contained similar

elements to the draft put forward in October 2011, but the demands toward the al-Assad government were even stronger. The most essential provisions in the draft were that it demanded

> that the Syrian government immediately put an end to all human rights violations and attacks against those exercising their rights to freedom of expression. [The Security Council] demands that the Syrian government (…) withdraw all Syrian military and armed forces from cities and towns, [and] guarantee the freedom of peaceful demonstrations (UN Security Council, 2012b, p. 2).

Another important element of the draft was that it called for "unhindered access and movement for all relevant League of Arab States' institutions", essentially establishing a provision that could infringe on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. Most of all, the draft resolution created by the Arab League stressed the need for a political solution in Syria. The plan was to form a government of national unity, "with the participation of the current Government and opposition under an agreed leader" (The Council of the League of Arab States, 2012). The Chinese decision to veto the resolution can be considered remarkable for two reasons. First of all, the text of the Arab League resolution specifically states that "[The Council supports] efforts to end the Syrian crisis without foreign intervention." Indeed, at the outset the Chinese delegation appeared to support the draft put forward by the Arab League, stating: "We support the League's efforts to seek a political solution of the Syrian issue and to maintain stability in the region. We hope to see the success of its mediation efforts" (UN Security Council, 2012c, p. 25). Nevertheless, in the debate following the vetoes of China and the Russian Federation, ambassador Li expressed that

China maintains that under the current circumstances, to put undue emphasis on pressuring the Syrian Government for a prejudged result of the dialogue or to impose any solution will not help resolve the Syrian issue. Instead, that may further complicate the situation (UN Security Council, 2012d, p. 9).

The shift in Beijing's stance happened within less than a week, causing great indignation and disappointment towards the Sino-Russian camp by many of the supporters of the draft. U.S. ambassador Rice even stated that "any further bloodshed that flows will be on their hands" (BBC News, 2012). Ambassador Li once again repeated the importance Beijing adheres to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, and by casting its veto China essentially ignored the non-intervention clause provided in the text of the draft. A second aspect of the Chinese veto that is incongruent with earlier policy is the fact that Beijing did not align its stance with the regional institutions. The resolution was drafted by the Arab League, and from earlier examples we have seen – especially in the Libya crisis – that the direction of Chinese policy is heavily dependent on the position of regional organizations. Li claimed that China supports the efforts of the Arab League and that it viewed their initiative to start an inclusive political process positively. Nevertheless, Beijing decided to side with the Russian Federation and veto the draft. What has changed in the period between voting in favour and subsequently abstaining on resolutions regarding the crisis in Libya and the two vetoes on Syria? Disappointment with the developments of events in Libya could provide an answer. The decision to support the establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya was largely based on the backing of the Arab League for this measure. Only days after the no-fly zone was established Beijing called for an immediate ceasefire. While the Arab League itself was also fraught with disappointment over the far-reaching military intervention by

NATO forces, afterwards Beijing's trust in the judgment of the Arab League leadership was damaged. On the other hand, we should not forget the many dissimilarities between the situation in Libya and Syria. President al-Assad is a close ally of Moscow, so Russia's stake in Syria was much higher than in Libya. This has added to Beijing's vehement support of the Russian Federation in the Security Council. While Chinese economic interests in Syria are negligible, this is not the case for Moscow. For instance, the proposed Qatar-Turkey gas pipeline running through Syria and connecting to the Nabucco pipeline (supplying Europe) is of importance to Russia. The Russian economy is heavily dependent on export of energy resources to Europe through Eastern Europe, which makes a Syrian pipeline a direct competitor to Russian companies. Keeping an allied regime in power in Syria is therefore a priority to the Russian leadership. The Chinese delegation in the UN appears to have acted in service of their allies in Moscow.

Other resolutions on Syria

The first (unanimously) adopted resolution on Syria was put to the vote on 14 April 2012 during the 6751th meeting of the Security Council. Resolution 2042 expressed the support for a six-point plan proposed by the UN-Arab League Special Envoy Kofi Annan. The plan entailed the establishment of a ceasefire, after which peace talks were to be commenced. On April 12 both government troops and opposition forces started observing the ceasefire. Two days later the adopted resolution approved the deployment of a small observer team to monitor the ceasefire (Adams, 2015, p. 12). Ambassador Li explained that China welcomed the deployment of the observer team and stressed the need for a political solution. Once again, Li reiterated the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria (UN Security Council, 2012e, p. 4). Both China and Russia received a lot of

negative criticism after vetoing the October 2011 and February 2012 resolutions. This criticism may have a led to a more cooperative stance on resolution 2042. Of course, to China the deployment of an observer team was much more palpable than direct intervention by any (Western) country. It was a resolution with – as it turned out – relatively little consequences, aimed at seeking a political way out of the crisis in Syria. Beijing's (changed) stance could also be attributed to the good – a more importantly neutral – reputation of Annan. Connected to the approval of the Annan plan was the adoption of resolution 2043 on 21 April, which established the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). The Chinese delegation realized that the deployment of a UN force in Syria was an important condition to the success of the Annan plan, therefore decided not to cast their veto on this resolution either. Unfortunately, by the end of April many violations of the ceasefire were reported and both the Annan plan and UNSMIS were considered to be a failure. Many other briefings on Syria were held in the UNSC and several resolutions were passed. These resolutions almost always entailed humanitarian assistance to the Syrian population, and never involved accountability. Referring the Syrian government to the ICC failed owing to vetoes by both China and Russia. We can conclude that China's stance on Syria has been relatively straight-forward. Beijing never endorsed any plan that would lead to an infringement of Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Moreover, it has always aligned its stance with Moscow's, which has had a serious impact on the response of the international community to the ongoing crisis in Syria.

Conclusion

By looking at two theoretical debates and two case studies, we have attempted to decide whether China is putting its principles aside in favour of pragmatism. Firstly, we discussed the responsibility to protect (R2P). Beijing was initially critical towards the concept, but endorsed it later. When the principle was called upon for a humanitarian intervention in Myanmar, China resisted nonetheless. The Chinese leadership's main problem with R2P is that they believe it is unclear what can be seen as a valid R2P-case. The power over R2P is rested in the Security Council, giving China full control over policy. We can conclude that Beijing supports the concept of R2P, but not the whole theory. Moreover, the Chinese emphasis has always been on prevention rather than intervention. Some cornerstones of China's current foreign policy still contradict R2P. In the second chapter we examined China's critical attitude towards sovereignty and non-intervention even further. Adhering to non-intervention gives China a weapon of soft power to prevent other states interfering in Chinese affairs. Beijing believes interfering will often do more harm than good, and as such they blame Western-led democracy promoting actions for the unrest in large parts of the world. Many regional organizations attach a great deal of importance to non-interference, and we have seen that China often aligns its policy with these groups. The PRC's conservative stance is aimed at avoiding involvement in matters that are not of national interest. This becomes increasingly difficult due to increased international trade and growing interests in all areas of the globe. When we look at UN-led peacekeeping operations, we see that China's stance has shifted. At first China took no part in these operations, but today it is the largest personnel contributor of P5 members. From this we can conclude that humanitarian intervention is gaining ground over adhering to traditional principles. More military experience for the PLA is an added bonus.

In chapters 3 and 4 we applied the theoretical elements to the crises in Libya and Syria. Libya and China are competing for influence on the African continent. At the same time, Libyans are inviting Chinese companies to invest in their country, mainly in construction and petrochemical industries. China abstained on or even endorsed resolutions on Libya, seeking to adjust its foreign policy to regional organizations' recommendations. Beijing sought to find a middle ground between the interests of regional players and traditional non-interference policy. In retrospect, endorsing resolution 1973 was a mistake in Beijing's eyes. The military intervention went too far. Chinese nationals under threat in Libya forced the CCP to conduct a self-governed evacuation operation. Some economic damage was caused by this, and support for Gaddafi also did not help China's future position in Libya. Nevertheless, pragmatism prevailed and Sino-Libyan trade rebounded. China acted as a 'responsible power' by refraining from casting its veto on the UN resolutions. Beijing was cautious not to make the same mistakes in Syria. While China was economically important for Syria, this was not the case vice versa. Syria is no major source country for Chinese crude petroleum imports. After the start of the conflict bilateral trade has dwindled. Weapons trade gave China an inroads into the Middle East, consequently increasing its influence in the region. UNSC proceedings on Syria were off to a slow start. The first draft resolution on Syria, placing accountability with Assad for mass atrocity crimes, was vetoed by China and Russia. The second draft, put forward by the Arab League, was in the end also vetoed by the PRC and the Russian Federation. China opted to support Moscow in favour of a regional organization. It chose to strengthen diplomatic ties with Russia, which also reinforced their traditional non-interference views. In this case pragmatism went hand-in-hand with principle. The stakes for China in Syria were not especially high, therefore non-interference was a viable policy stance. We will have to see how Beijing will react to increased Russian

involvement in the area. Moreover, recently Chinese nationals have become victims of abductions and executions in the region. Will the *wuwei*-principle be able to stand against groups such as ISIL, or is the time to intervene near at hand? From the research above, we have established that China's traditional non-interventionist foreign policy is increasingly untenable in a globalizing world. Eventually, principle will fall to pragmatism.

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