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# Explaining emerging powers' reluctance to adopt intervention norms: normative contestation and hierarchies of responsibility

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## Abstract

We argue that emerging powers' reluctance to conform to new norms at the global level is grounded not in rejection of norms' content, but in contestation of norms' implementation, and of the hierarchical manner in which responsibility is defined and attributed. The assessment of Brazil and India's approach to the issue of intervention supports our argument.

**Keywords:** norm contestation; emerging powers; reluctance; responsibility; responsibility to protect.

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## Introduction

As emerging powers<sup>1</sup> seek to increase their influence in international affairs, established powers frequently respond with the “Spiderman ethic” (Elshtain 2003): the argument that “with great power comes great responsibility.” Emerging powers' response is often perceived as ambivalent: some elements of responsibility — as defined by Western powers — are accepted, others resisted. For example, emerging powers have not agreed to binding emission targets in climate change negotiations, but they do acknowledge the importance of tackling the issue and have adopted domestic measures according to this challenge. Similarly,

<sup>1</sup> Emerging powers are usually defined as countries that display “expanding economic prowess, a high degree of political power and military potential and the capability to play an influential role in global politics” (Cooper and Flesmes 2013, 946). The “emerging” or “rising” moniker denotes positive change in these states' positions in the global hierarchy and a positive dynamism, which have combined to alter their status — as perceived by others — sufficiently to influence responses from other actors. They also self-define and behave as powers on a positive status course. These states challenge current hierarchies both in form and in content, right down to the very rules that govern their own rise in the international system (Carvalho and de Coning 2013).

most emerging powers place emphasis on the concepts of sovereignty and non-intervention, initially voicing criticism of principles such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P); in the case of Libya in 2011, however, they did not question the validity of the principle itself, but rather the manner of its implementation.

This contribution analyzes emerging powers' often reluctant approach to global governance. Our core argument is that the notion of "responsible" conduct has become a gatekeeper concept that serves to maintain existing hierarchies of global influence (Kenkel and Martins 2016; Jones et al. 2009). Responsibility takes on this role, we contend, because its definition is still the purview of established powers (Narlikar 2013; Yong 2015). Intentionally or not, some established powers conflate the common global goal associated with international responsibility with their own goals. Thus, while emerging powers often have accepted the content of given norms associated with responsibility (and coupled with the promise to gain greater international influence), they often contest the proposed form of their implementation, and the hierarchical way in which responsibility is defined and attributed.

Our understanding of norms is taken from recent theorizing on norm contestation, which allows for the distinction between the content of a norm and the manner of its implementation that will play a role in our argument. According to Wiener (2014, 35-36), the type of norm at stake here — such as R2P — is situated at the middle level between two kinds of concepts. At one end of the spectrum, we have fundamental concepts, such as universal moral claims, whose importance is almost never questioned, but about whose meaning-in-use or mode of application there is very little consensus. These concepts are accepted by all, but may mean different things to different actors. At the opposite end lie standard procedures, about whose moral validity there has been little if any discussion, but which are accurately followed in practice.

The middle level consists of what Wiener (2014; 2009) terms organizing principles, whose ultimate meaning is given by the political and policymaking processes to which they are subject and which reflect intersubjective understandings reached over time. Contestation theory focuses on the legitimacy of these constructs, and thus on the space in which they are created: legitimacy derives not from fixedness of definition, but from access to the process of definition (Wiener 2014, 36-37; 2009). This is the level at which our analysis is pitched, focussing on how organizing principles such as R2P can highlight the simultaneous acceptance of a norm's content and rejection of its implementation in practice. Contestation, in this sense, is not an unwanted side effect but a constitutive factor in the power of norms themselves.

Thus, contestation of forms of implementation — based on historical experience and existing normative commitments — is often misunderstood or intentionally portrayed by established powers as a refusal to commit to the content of the norm (not only the form of implementation), and thus as a lack of the responsibility necessary to be granted greater global influence (Schweller 2011). In other words, emerging powers' principled contestation of implementation is labelled as "reluctance" to provide a global common good, or to invest resources in a manner commensurate with heightened international influence (Bunde and Oroz 2015). One need only think of commentators' assessment

that “China [...] is working to lower standards in the global system” (Godement 2015) or of President Obama’s reference to China as a free rider unwilling to engage in crisis management in places like Iraq (Feng 2014). At the same time, as Leveringhaus and Sullivan de Estrada (2018, 489) put it, in fields like non-proliferation, “stakeholder states might be [unwilling] to recognise innovative behaviours that cast rising powers in a ‘more responsible’ light.”

In this contribution, we will demonstrate how the conflation of Western and global goals functions in practice, focussing on the implementation of a specific norm: humanitarian intervention, as represented by R2P. We argue that responsibility and reluctance are useful analytical tools to capture the complexities of rising powers’ approaches to global governance. Reluctance, - while often used in a pejorative sense as a euphemism for free-riding, is often a result of a more nuanced approach to specific issues, - highlights key tensions encountered by emerging powers’ pressures to facing a choice between conformity to major powers’ expectations; scepticism vis-à-vis responsibility and its attribution; and commitment to existing norms and principles such as sovereignty and non-intervention, which often contrast with the West’s attributions of responsibility.

By looking at reluctance and at the concept of responsibility itself more closely, we develop the central claim that in the case of humanitarian intervention and R2P, emerging powers’ reluctance to engage in responsible conduct as defined by major powers results not from a rejection of the content of norms, but from divergences over their implementation, and a rejection of the hierarchical manner in which responsibility is defined and attributed.<sup>2</sup> Our analysis proceeds in three steps. We begin by providing clear definitions of responsibility and reluctance. We then describe Western established powers’ conflation of their own goals with those of the global commons, which takes place through the assertion that content and implementation of norms such as R2P are inseparable. We analytically distinguish the two, based on contributions from theories of norm contestation; and we outline how the hierarchical nature of responsibility attribution takes form as an explanatory factor. We develop our core hypothesis – that emerging powers’ reluctance derives from differences over norm implementation and responsibility attribution, particularly by and to whom responsibility is attributed and how such process of responsibility attribution takes place. This is followed by the application of the argument to the empirical analysis of two emerging powers – Brazil and India – and their reluctance vis-à-vis responsibility attributions concerning intervention and R2P.

## Responsibility

The notion of responsibility has long been a core principle of state conduct, and a gatekeeper concept controlling mobility within the international system. Here, we analyze “responsibility” as typified by approaches from constructivism and ethics (Pattison 2011, 2012); this distinguishes the concept from homonymous notions such as state legal responsibility or corporate social

2 For a more specific analysis of rising powers’ discourses on responsibility in the United Nations, see Gaskarth (2017).

responsibility (Crawford 2017; Tully 2012). In the context of international state conduct, the relevant precept here is *political* and ultimately *moral* responsibility (Miller 2007; Boxer 2013); this notion has a positive connotation and is associated with the idea of legitimacy for states of all levels of capacity—though especially great powers and those aspiring to that status (Bukovansky et al. 2012, 5).

The sources of the attribution and definition of political responsibility range from the juridical to the moral and ethical. Toni Erskine’s work on ethics has been seminal in establishing the link between responsibility and moral agency (often within a consequentialist framework) (Erskine 2003; Pattison 2012, chs. 3, 4); most scholarship is based on the transferral of precepts of individual moral responsibility to the realm of state conduct (Kenkel and Martins 2016, 9-10). The most cogent classification to date of the potential ethical and moral origins of responsibility, as they can be transferred to states, is that established by David Miller (2007).

The characteristic domestic/international divide in world politics leads to the first important conceptual separation: responsibility for one’s own conduct and safety is conceptually distinct from that for the well-being of others. Miller (2007, 81-85) dubs these two differing forms “outcome responsibility” — that for the result of proactive personal actions — and “remedial responsibility” — calling for remedying a situation in which others require help, regardless of its cause (Erskine 2003, 6-9). Outcome responsibility is linked to past action, while remedial responsibility posits the need for future action — and, crucially, its need to be externally assigned to a specific actor.

Within this nomenclature, current debates on intervention in international politics involve remedial responsibility, and it is this category – and particularly, its *attribution* – that is the focus here. Remedial responsibility can be assigned via different ethical avenues, e.g., by highlighting moral responsibility, but also by referring to ties of community among actors (Kenkel and Martins 2016, 11; Miller 2007, 99-104).

Mainstream International Relations (IR) treatments privilege *material capacity* as a factor for the attribution of responsibility. Remedial responsibility thus falls to those who possess the capacity to remedy a commonly accepted crisis, regardless of their potential involvement in having originally brought it about. In current practice, this implies that material capacity is considered the key component of the exercise of international political responsibility, as defined by instances such as the United Nations Security Council. Correspondingly, responsibility also underpins the privileges that accrue to those who exercise it (Bukovansky et al. 2012, 1-5) — a connection fundamental to traditionalist security thinking in IR.

Defining responsibility in this way raises several associations relevant both to the concept’s relationship to the notion of reluctance, and to responsibility’s role in emerging powers’ quest to move up the global hierarchy. “Responsible” action is associated not only with the possession of strong material capacity to act remedially; it is also often related to the normative predisposition to do so using military means multilaterally. In this sense, responsibility — and its attendant increased international influence — would accrue in particular to established great powers (Jones et al. 2009, 21-44) — as reflected, *par excellence*, in the composition of the UN Security Council.

But what of today's emerging powers who must demonstrate "responsibility"? Crucially, defining and attributing responsibility is *de facto* the premise of great powers, through institutions which clearly reflect extant constellations of power. On intervention in particular, emerging powers such as India (Destradi 2017b) and Brazil (Kenkel 2012, 2010) have historical normative commitments that are at odds with the proactive use of military force, especially in a remedial form applied to others and divorced from their own causal responsibility. Yet these states are strong supporters of multilateral institutions – first and foremost the United Nations – which increasingly link responsible conduct to the use of military force (Kenkel and Stefan 2016; Schweller 2011; Patrick 2010). This is particularly evident in UN peace operations, where most missions are now mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and by the UN's endorsement of R2P. The increased use of force in UN peacekeeping has created a dilemma for Global South powers who favour multilateralism but not military force.

These dynamics place emerging powers before the dilemma of choosing between their own established principles and norms (such as pacifism or non-intervention) and the expectations associated with the status to which they aspire. Policy alignment with (often self-serving) great power expectations is expected of emerging powers and confronts them with substantial challenges.

## Reluctance

How does the concept of reluctance relate to that of responsibility? In academic and political discourse, the two are sometimes implicitly presented as polar opposites; however, reluctance is not simply the straightforward rejection of attributions of responsibility. In fact, emerging powers generally do not deny the need to address global-governance problems, nor do they flatly reject a world order shaped by the West (Kahler 2013). Their policies are more nuanced, and the concept of reluctance captures apparent contradictions and ambiguities in them.

Reluctance, as conceptualized by Destradi (2017a, 324-330), involves a particular style of policymaking that entails two constitutive dimensions: "hesitation" and "recalcitrance." Hesitation captures the ambivalence and contradictions we can frequently observe in foreign policy. Possible indicators of hesitation are a lack of initiative, a passive policy, letting others take the initiative and not coming up with own ideas and solutions; delaying, buying time or postponing decisions; or if we can observe contradictions or sudden and rapid changes in policies.

The second dimension, recalcitrance, refers to a lack of responsiveness to the wishes and expectations of actors. It can be operationalized as: ignoring requests by others for the adoption of a certain policy; explicitly refusing to comply with their wishes; or obstructing and actively undermining the initiatives promoted by others.

Indicators of both hesitation and recalcitrance are necessary to identify reluctance (Destradi 2017a, 328-330), and both dimensions are relevant to understanding the relationship between responsibility and reluctance.

Recalcitrance is particularly important, as it reflects an uneasiness to conform with the expectations of others. The attribution of remedial responsibility is a very particular kind of expectation: it implies charging an actor with the wellbeing of others, often based on the argument that the actor has the requisite capabilities and therefore a duty to be responsible, based on ethical principles. While the actor might accept this and indeed feel responsible for a certain issue, recalcitrance might emerge as a consequence of other, not necessarily issue-related disagreements. These might involve resisting the hierarchical way in which responsibility is attributed by great powers, or a more general opposition vis-à-vis those actors attributing responsibility.

Remedial responsibility is attributed based on normative factors, which distinguishes it from calls for action based on narrow interests – and makes it more difficult to reject. As a result, recalcitrance can be based either on disagreement over the normative basis at stake, or as a reaction to the hierarchical character of responsibility attribution as a prerogative of the great powers.

Hesitation, the other constitutive dimension of reluctance, relates to responsibility in a more subtle way. Its indicators imply that the rejection of responsibility is not complete: a straightforward abdication of responsibility and a total refusal to comply with great powers' expectations would in fact amount to a consistent, non-reluctant, policy. However, we rarely observe such full-fledged rejections of responsibility on the part of emerging powers. One such case is India's long tradition of coherent obstructionism in WTO negotiations, but even this attitude seems to be undergoing a process of change (Narlikar 2017, 105-108). Otherwise, what we observe are ambivalent policies characterized by half-hearted or conditional participation in Western-initiated governance initiatives. In the following section, we argue that this apparent ambiguity of emerging powers' approaches to global governance can be explained by examining the relationship between responsibility and reluctance.

## Reluctance as contestation of norm implementation

Though responsibility is considered a key prerequisite for greater international influence, in the political discourse its actual definition characteristically remains vague and unspecified. It is given specificity in practice, however, when expressed through individual norms (or clusters) such as humanitarian intervention or climate change mitigation. The literature on norm contestation therefore proves particularly helpful when it comes to disentangling the link between responsibility and reluctance.

Most notably, Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013) distinguish between what they call justificatory and applicatory motivations for norm contestation. Applicatory motivations are concerned with the appropriateness of how a norm is implemented in a specific situation:

In applicatory discourses, the context of the concrete situation always reigns supreme. In such discourses, the appropriateness principle is decisive. It measures the degree of coherence between the norm and all relevant characteristics of the respective situation at hand (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2013, 6).

## By contrast, justificatory contestation

[...] tackle[s] the question of which norms a group of actors wants to uphold. Here, the issue at stake is what actors can expect of each other independent of a given situation. This means that only those normative claims to which all can agree in principle can be valid. Hence *justificatory contestation* questions the validity of a norm as such (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2013, 6).

We contend that until the retrenchment of intervention practices that followed NATO's Libyan intervention, later reinforced by US retraction under Donald Trump, Western established powers, when confronted with emerging powers' quests for increased influence, have made this conditional upon the exercise of international responsibility, as expressed *inter alia* through participation in humanitarian intervention.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, these powers continue even now to interpret emerging powers' reluctance as justificatory norm contestation, that is, as opposition to the validity of the norm as such. Thereby, this assumption implicitly negates that emerging powers' reluctance might simply be based on a principled applicatory stand focused on the modalities of implementation, rather than a justificatory rejection of the notion of responsibility.

According to Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013), the scope of norms influences the type of contestation to be expected:

The more precise a norm is, i.e., the more unequivocal its obligatory claims are, the less it provokes applicatory discourses [...]. Similarly, the more norms formulate positive duties (which demand a proactive behavior of actors), the more applicatory discourses are to be expected, while negative duties (which demand that actors refrain from a certain behavior) should correspond to fewer applicatory discourses. In sum, applicatory discourses should be much more intensive and tedious when abstract norms are under consideration, which formulate positive duties (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann 2013, 6).

In this sense, it is expected that there should be greater contestation over the implementation of a broadly understood "international responsibility" than over its specific normative content. But for a norm like intervention, which demands proactive behaviour, we can expect contestation to focus on applicatory discourses. In particular, in the case of emerging powers, the use of military force meets strong alternative interpretations based on the historical experiences of these countries, most notably colonialism. These may motivate emerging powers to suggest other means or to question the ultimate utility of force in bringing about remedy (Black 2005; Finnemore 2005, 192-194). We illustrate below that this was the case for the BRICS states' reactions to the Libyan intervention, including the Brazilian "responsibility while protecting"

3 On the role of military power in rising powers' perception as "responsible," see Patrick (2010) and Schweller (2011). On how it is not the only possible route to responsibility, see Kenkel (2012) and Culp (2015).

proposal. Emerging powers did not contest the basic notion that moral responsibility for others — as embodied, in this case, in humanitarian intervention — is a valid determinant of state action. Over the course of the past two decades, states' engagement with the debates around intervention have shown that this proposition is nearly universally accepted even among the strongest critics, leading to the presumption that the bulk of emerging-power resistance to intervention is indeed applicatory rather than justificatory.

In sum, reluctance, with all the ambivalences inherent in hesitation and recalcitrance, can therefore be expected when states do not entirely reject certain norms, but disagree with the kind of application of such norms that is expected from them. Reluctance is not outright rejection and resistance. It is more ambivalent, and the hesitation dimension reveals that reluctance can be the result of the tension between a principled belief in the justificatory dimension of norms and a rejection of some of their applicatory aspects — as well as of the very process of responsibility attribution.

### Reluctance as a reaction to hierarchies of responsibility

The manner in which responsibility is attributed can also serve as a source of contestation and reluctance. (Remedial) responsibility — the need for remedying a situation in which others require help, regardless of its cause — is *attributed* by certain powerful actors to others (in this case, emerging powers) on the grounds of normative arguments or ethical propositions. We argue that such hierarchical responsibility attribution entails three dimensions, which can lead to reluctance on different grounds.

The first dimension refers to *capacity* (Miller 2007); that is, to the preconditions for the assumption of responsibility. In fact, responsibility is usually attributed to actors who are assumed to possess sufficient resources and capabilities to take it on. From the perspective of the West, emerging powers have acquired sufficient capabilities to shoulder some of the costs of public good provision.

Recent examples of such a kind of responsibility attribution based on capacities include calls made by US President Barack Obama and French President Nicholas Sarkozy for India to assume greater international responsibilities:

I believe that if we're going to be true global partners, then our two nations must do more around the world together. So to ensure international security and peace, multilateral institutions created in the 20th century have to be updated for the 21st. And that's why I support a reformed United Nations Security Council that includes India as a permanent member. [...] Of course, as I've said before, with power comes responsibility. In this region, India can play a positive role in helping countries forge a better future [...]. And being global partners means confronting the urgent global challenge of climate change ("Remarks by President Obama in Address to the People of India. Siri Fort Auditorium New Delhi, India." 2015).



India is not the giant of tomorrow; India is already a giant today: a demographic giant, an economic giant, a political giant. It must be recognised as such, just as it must be prepared to take on all the responsibilities that go with this new status. The world needs India to share some of the responsibility for solving the major problems of the 21st century (Full text of interview with French President Nicolas Sarkozy." 2010).

According to Hachigian and Shorr, under the Obama Administration the United States developed a veritable "responsibility doctrine," which involved "prodding other influential nations (especially the pivotal BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to help shoulder the burden of fostering a stable, peaceful world order that delivers security and prosperity" (2013, 73). Emerging powers have often reacted to the attribution of responsibility based on capacity by arguing that their means are limited, and that as developing countries internal development issues must first be resolved. As a result, their claims to greater influence or representation are relegated to appeals to inclusiveness and the democratic nature of global decision-making processes, or to non-security aspects of conflict management.

The second dimension concerns the *hierarchical* nature of how responsibility is attributed by some actors to others. Emerging powers are loath to accept the legitimacy of Western powers' claim to the power to assign responsibilities to others. They may accept that they occupy a relatively subordinate position in the international system, but reject the idea that normative leadership is exclusive to the West. This constitutes one of the bases for calls for a redistribution of power within global decision-making, away from material capacity and towards greater representativeness for the Global South.

The contributions in Stuenkel and Taylor (2015) demonstrate that this applies to the global liberal order as a whole. They illustrate that emerging powers such as Brazil, while not opposed to the basic normative content of the global liberal order, take issue with the hierarchical form and the static power relations which govern the implementation of that normative content. Similarly, as Narlikar (2017, 98) puts it, "[Indian negotiators'] nay-saying stems from their questioning of the particular shape of the global governance agenda. Were India to have a greater voice in identifying the particular public goods that global institutions choose to provide, it might be more enthusiastic in taking on new international responsibilities" (see Wiener 2008; 2014). Therefore, countries such as India and Brazil can be shown to accept the fundamental correlation between international responsibility and increased international influence; however, they contest their lack of participation in its definition, and indeed who is given the right to direct the process.

The third, related dimension in the process of responsibility attribution concerns the *conflation of Western and collective goals* in the definition of responsibility, making the process of responsibility attribution by established powers to emerging powers essentially flawed from the perspective of the latter. Bukovansky et al. (2012, 27-32) have eloquently described the inversion of cause and effect that lies at the basis of such conflation. Concerned with the special responsibilities of great

powers, they relate this phenomenon to the tension between states' sovereign equality and the evident inequalities in their material capacities. Historically, they claim, special responsibilities accrue to the militarily strongest powers, who - in order to carry out these responsibilities effectively - receive special rights and privileges, including, notably, greater participation and influence over collective decision-making. Over time, an inversion of cause and effect occurs, and rather than the rights being the consequence of greater capacity, thus leading to greater influence, the already accrued rights come to serve as the basis for continued influence and status. This has as a result the conflation of great powers' goals with those of the system.

U.S. policy academic Stewart Patrick (2010) provides a clear example of the perceived identity between great power goals and common goals. Patrick begins by establishing adherence to the Western-led global liberal order as a fundamental criterion for responsibility:

[e]merging powers may be clamouring for greater global influence, but they often oppose the political and economic ground rules of the inherited Western liberal order, seek to transform existing multilateral arrangements, and shy away from assuming significant global responsibilities (Patrick 2010, 44).

Indeed, responsibility is often defined as adherence to the norms underpinning multilateral institutions and other forms of global governance. Approaches that seek to take effective remedial action, but not in a manner entirely consistent with these norms, are deemed irresponsible (Kenkel and Cunliffe 2016).

Responsible action is then defined as contributing to confronting global challenges as defined through Western interests (Patrick 2010, 45) and is then fenced off as the exclusive domain of established powers, upon whose efforts emerging powers are "free-rid[ing]" if they possess a divergent viewpoint (Patrick 2010, 47-48). Using the example of the Turkish/Brazilian attempt to take on a larger role in mediating tensions over Iran's nuclear programme, Patrick paints divergence from Western goals (tougher sanctions) *per definitionem* as irresponsibility toward the broader goal of preventing a threatening nuclear presence in Iran (Patrick 2010, 45).

Thereby, responsibility takes on a key role in the process of conflating great power goals with those of the system, as it serves as a discursive marker for whether great powers' interpretations of common goals are followed (Kenkel and Martins 2016, 14-16). Abiding by calls for responsibility as defined by the great powers in the name of the common good becomes the key precondition for emerging powers to attain international influence. Emerging powers may have legitimate divergences, based on their own historical experiences, regarding not only what ultimately constitutes responsible conduct, but also on how to assign such responsibilities (Sabaratnam 2011; Jabri 2014). Moreover, to accept existing definitions of responsibility is, for emerging powers, to accept the constellations of power in which these notions were born. The conflation of the greater good – or systemic interests – with established powers' parochial interests can be hypothesized to be one of the factors at the heart of emerging powers' reluctance to take on roles defined externally as responsible.

To sum up, our core contention is that emerging powers' reluctance to endorse and implement certain norms does not necessarily correspond to an outright rejection of such norms. Rather, reluctance, conceived of as hesitation and recalcitrance, emerges as a consequence of a principled support of a norm in justificatory terms, which is however linked to applicatory challenges and to a resistance to the hierarchical nature of how responsibility is assigned. In particular, we hypothesize that contestation of the very process of responsibility attribution is one of the key drivers of emerging powers' reluctance.

In the following sections, we will apply our hypotheses to the cases of Brazil's and India's approaches to intervention, with a particular focus on the Responsibility to Protect and the intervention in Libya in 2011. At that time, both countries were non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, and both abstained on Resolution 1973, paving the way for an intervention that constituted the first application of R2P. But both countries, as we will see, did not take this decision lightly, and their reluctant approach can be related to several of the elements of responsibility attribution outlined above.

## Explaining Brazil's reluctance

Brazil's approach to the 2011 Libyan intervention was reluctant to different degrees. On the one hand, Brazil abstained on UNSC Resolution 1973, thereby contributing to its approval, but the Brazilian Permanent Representative highlighted her government's concerns about the potential unintended effects of the use of force. By crafting the "responsibility while protecting" (RwP) concept note (Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations 2011), however, the Brazilian government showed a high degree of initiative as compared to other emerging powers (and thereby, a non-reluctant approach), but the initiative ended prematurely (Kenkel and Stefan 2016).

To what extent can Brazil's reluctance be traced back to normative contestation and to a dissatisfaction with the process of responsibility attribution? Brazil's course of action centred around several aspects outlined above in the characterization of the responsibility attribution process – both in regard to its own action and in the shape of the more broadly crafted RwP concept note. While accepting the notion that the Libyan situation required a remedial response and that its own influence was tied to its shouldering of that load, Brazil rejected the means offered, and laid out clear objections to the legitimacy of exclusive Western ownership of the right to assign responsibility.

In the case of Libya, Brazil did not agree with the implementation of R2P in the manner proposed by major powers - which it saw as putting their goals over those of the broader international community and above all, Libyans. Its attempt to demonstrate that it had systemic interests at heart, and indeed a willingness to take on responsibilities, resulted in the RwP concept note in November 2011. The note ultimately attempted to show that Brazil was not reluctant to accept the notion of its international responsibility – and that it indeed very much embraced the normative

underpinnings of R2P – but that it was reluctant to agree to what it ultimately considered a counterproductive form of carrying out that responsibility.

Responsible action, it argued, ultimately must produce a result that is in fact remedial - and there can be legitimate divergence over the most effective form of attaining that end. Brazil's proactive role in international intervention debates coincides with its rise to emerging power status following the advent of Lula da Silva to its presidency in 2003. Its positions until 2016 reflected the tricky mission of reconciling its historical pacifism, adherence to systemic norms and non-interventionism with the attributes - above all the use of force in peace operations - ascribed to the global player status it has sought (Kenkel 2012). In essence, the outcome has been that Brazil has supported extant international norms and a general notion of remedial responsibility in principle, while exhibiting reluctance to endorse forms of implementation of that responsibility it feels are unrepresentative or intransparent. Then-Foreign Minister Celso Amorim in 2005 already had explicitly upheld both the representativeness of key decision-making bodies and material capacity for remedial action as key prerequisites for responsibility in decision-making:

This is the context for Brazil's aspiration for an enlarged Security Council, which counts new members, both permanent and non-permanent, with representation of developed and developing countries in both categories. Brazil has already indicated its willingness to assume immediately its responsibilities as a permanent member, alongside other countries that are equally capable of acting at the global level and contributing to international peace and security (Amorim 2005, 12).

By 2011, NATO's military intervention in Libya had crystallized Brazilian doubts about the gap between principle and practice into three elements regarding intervention that serve to explain why its reluctance is not an abnegation of responsibility, especially if that concept is taken as analysed by Miller (2007). First, while accepting the general notion of residual international responsibility for the prevention of grave human rights violations (as embedded, for example, in the underlying principles of R2P), Brazil comes down on a different side from Western powers regarding the consequentialist (Pattison 2011; 2012) analysis of the effectiveness of military force. In other words, for Brazil, remedial responsibility implies that an intervention must improve the situation regarding its initial objectives; military force, it argues, may not be the most effective tool to that end, indeed it may be counterproductive. This warrants a more cautious approach to military force, especially as it relates to the treatment of the root causes of the situation triggering an intervention. Second, Brazil believes that responsible intervention can only take place if its *raison d'être* is truly collectively decided and not beholden to great power interests. It is wary of the conflation of great power goals and collective goals. This is closely connected to the final element: the necessary independence of collective decision-making from established powers' interests can only occur if sufficient participation for developing nations in relevant decision-making bodies is guaranteed.

Lula's Foreign Minister Amorim repeatedly expressed doubts about the utility of military force without accompanying measures to address the root causes of conflicts, to which he felt Western countries did not accord sufficient attention: "[...] it is an illusion to believe that we can combat the dysfunctional politics at the root of grave human rights violations through military means alone, or even economic sanctions, to the detriment of diplomacy and persuasion" (2007, 63-66). This point is taken up again in the RwP concept note, which is clear on its doubts over the utility of military force:

Yet attention must also be paid to the fact that the world today suffers the painful consequences of interventions that have aggravated existing conflicts, allowed terrorism to penetrate into places where it previously did not exist, given rise to new cycles of violence and increased the vulnerability of civilian populations (Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations 2011, item 9).

With regard to R2P, former diplomat Gelson Fonseca Júnior has clearly linked perceptions of Brazil as reluctant to its unwillingness to accept a "black-and-white" characterization instituting Western-bred and -focussed solutions as identical to the collective good:

In various ways, Brazil's attitude is close to what I previously termed "cautious." The idea of R2P is accepted, and interpreted not as a norm, but as a "political appeal" for the respect of human rights. Another preoccupation is to situate R2P, which is not a qualification of sovereignty and, at the same time, should not oppose in Manichean form those who are sympathetic to human rights and those who are not (Fonseca Júnior 2010, 191).

Scepticism regarding the adequate separation between Western motives and the common, collectively decided good - is at the heart of the RwP note:

There is a growing perception that the concept of the responsibility to protect might be misused for purposes other than protecting civilians, such as regime change. This perception may make it even more difficult to attain the protection objects pursued by the international community (Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations 2011, item 10).

As a result, the document calls for strict and participative control over when and how force can be used: "[t]he use of force must produce as little violence and instability as possible and under no circumstance can it generate more harm than it was authorized to prevent" (item e). It is important to note, however, Brazil's acknowledgement of a notion of remedial responsibility and its own share therein:

Violence against civilian populations must be repudiated wherever it takes place. The 1990s left us with a bitter reminder of the tragic human and political cost of the international community's failure to act in a timely manner to prevent violence

on the scale of that observed in Rwanda. There may be situations in which the international community might contemplate military action to prevent humanitarian catastrophes (item 8).

Key to Brazil's understanding of that responsibility, however, is its attribution by collective institutions empowered to decide through the legitimacy derived from full participation, as well as remedial capacity. The 'responsibility while protecting' note suggests several mechanisms of oversight and monitoring of the Security Council which are intended to increase the transparency of the process and to guard against what Brazil, India and other emerging powers saw as exclusionary tactics during the Libya campaign designed to ensure that Western goals were enshrined as those of the international community, to their detriment.

These three factors - viewing the utility of military force as a function of remedial action, rather than as an end unto itself; safeguarding against the conflation of Western goals with those of the international community as whole and the ensuing lack of legitimacy; and arguing for more representative and thus legitimate decision-making - highlight the manner in which reluctance and responsibility are intertwined in Brazil's approach to humanitarian intervention. In this sense, the Brazilian case illustrates that the country's reluctance arose not from its rejection of the notion of responsibility, but from objections to a Western monopoly over its definition and implementation. This relates especially to recalcitrance over specific aspects of the process and less to an overall opposition to the notion of responsibility as a whole.

### Explaining India's reluctance

India's approach to the issue of intervention has similarly been reluctant, albeit in an analytically distinct manner. While India has a record of interventions in its regional neighbourhood in the 1980s (Destradi 2012, 65-66), this analysis focuses on more recent developments. India's abstention on UNSC Resolution 1973 can be interpreted as moderate reluctance: on the one hand, India was hesitant like other UNSC members such as the United States (Dunne and Gleber 2014, 341), Germany, or South Africa (Puri 2016, 82-88; Brockmeier 2013, 80-81). On the other hand, India was moderately recalcitrant: it did not explicitly support the resolution by voting in its favour, but it also did not try to block or openly oppose it through a negative vote (Destradi 2017b, 231). This moderate reluctance was a major departure from New Delhi's previous approach to the nascent principle of R2P, which had been one of consistent (non-hesitant) and unambiguous rejection – one that therefore went well beyond reluctance (Krause 2016, 19-24). It rather conformed to some expectations articulated by Western powers (Ganguly 2016, 368), while still highlighting its concerns about insufficient clarity in the formulation of the resolution (Puri 2016, 89).

India's reluctance on the issue of intervention became much stronger in the aftermath of NATO military operations in Libya. India's hesitation mainly manifested itself through flip-flopping

in a series of votes on UNSC resolutions on Syria, as long as India was a member of the UNSC (Krause 2016, 30-31). A recent book by Hardeep Singh Puri, India's Permanent Representative to the UN from 2009 to 2013, provides interesting insights into the Indian government's position on intervention. While Puri strongly rejects Western attributions of remedial responsibility and mercilessly attacks the perceived double standards of the West, this rejection of responsibility is not complete and mostly refers to the process of responsibility attribution.

By contrast, when it comes to the normative dimension and to the value of responsibility, Puri highlights that India very much supports the core ethical underpinnings of the norm, and has been in favour of the first two pillars of R2P (2016, 198). India definitely agrees on topics such as the protection of civilians from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Therefore, India did not contest the justificatory dimension of the norm, but certainly its applicatory dimension, that is, the way the norm was implemented. In fact, the implementation of Resolution 1973 by Western powers confirmed India's worst fears about the West's motives. In Puri's (2016, 92) view, "[t]he only aspect of the resolution which was of interest to them [the Western powers] was the 'use of all necessary means' – to bomb the hell out of Libya." Western calls for responsibility lost any kind of credibility in India's eyes, as the Western powers were perceived as only interested in regime change in Libya, and thereby the whole norm of R2P was misused, in India's view, as a tool of interventionism to topple unfriendly governments.

In the aftermath of the intervention in Libya, therefore, India's reluctance towards the notion of international responsibility on security matters grew. Besides recalcitrance, hesitation was in place as well, as India did not take any initiative to develop alternative conceptualizations of responsibility. This is one major difference as compared to Brazil, which made an attempt to develop an own definition of responsibility. While India endorsed the principles of RWP, it did not attempt to further develop the norm after the Brazilian government had *de facto* abandoned it (Kenkel and Stefan 2016). Nor has India been willing or able to provide alternative ideas or initiatives on how to deal with genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (Destradi 2017b, 232).

Remedial capacity was not a central issue in responsibility attribution as major powers did not expect India to participate in the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1973. At the same time, India has been one of the largest contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping missions, thereby displaying a readiness to participate in the costs of multilaterally legitimated missions.

The issue of intervention *per se*, however, is highly suspect to Indian policy makers, given India's long tradition of (at least rhetorical) adherence to the norm of non-intervention. As highlighted by Ganguly (2016), India has a strong interest in avoiding interventions or external meddling of any kind in its own internal matters, most notably in the human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, Puri's assessment of the perception of diplomats from the Global South is telling: "We viewed the R2P doctrine as providing an opening for the reordering of societies from outside using military force. Most of my colleagues and I, representing developing countries in the multilateral system, have our world views firmly anchored in the framework of

Westphalian state sovereignty” (2016, 201). One key element to understand India’s reluctance is therefore a disagreement on the means to be employed to implement remedial responsibility, specifically the third pillar of the R2P – in other words, a contestation of the applicatory dimension of the norm of intervention.

The most contested aspect, however, concerned the very process of responsibility attribution, and specifically the perception of a conflation of Western and collective goals. From India’s point of view, the military operations in Libya and the elimination of Gaddafi were a confirmation of its suspicion that R2P was merely a Western instrument for regime change, and that attributions of responsibility were indeed being used by the West in a manipulative manner. After Libya, a debate on R2P emerged in India, in which “[t]he bulk of the Indian ‘establishment,’ left-leaning, media and many academic and other commentators – mainly former diplomats and soldiers – backed the stance by their government and weighed in with critical appraisals of R2P” (Hall 2013).

In Puri’s eyes, the perceived manipulative approach by the “West” even called into question the legitimacy of the UN as a whole: “It is equally essential to seriously revisit and agree on how the UN and its supreme organ, the UNSC, entrusted with ensuring peace and security and ‘saving mankind from the scourge of war’ are not used to give legitimacy to parochial interests and unilateral military actions” (Puri 2016, 20). The conflation of great power interests and collective goals, as well as the process of responsibility attribution as a prerogative of Western powers, have therefore been at the core of India’s reluctance on R2P.

## Conclusions

The assessment of Brazil and India’s approach to responsibility attribution in the area of intervention has shown that reluctance should not be taken to imply a straightforward rejection of the notion of responsibility or its applicability to a specific situation. Indeed, reluctance is often the result of a combination of acceptance of the basic tenets of a norm, coupled with the rejection of the specific form of its application or of the way responsibility for the implementation of the norm is attributed by certain actors to others. Reluctance therefore denotes a more nuanced response composed of the partial acceptance of certain aspects of a complex proposition (such as intervention) and the rejection of other aspects. As the cases here have shown, for intervention this split divides the moral notion of remedial responsibility and the justificatory dimension of the norm from questions related to its implementation and attribution.

This finding is in line with the overarching tenor of the contributions in Stuenkel and Taylor’s *Brazil on the Global Stage*, which conclude that while Brazil aligns itself with the content of the liberal international order, it is hesitant to cooperate fully when the way in which that order is brought to bear too strongly reflects Western interests or extant inequalities in the distribution of power and influence. In established powers’ responses to this stance, this nuanced dissent is often mistaken for outright opposition; however emerging powers’ perceived inconsistencies are often the



result of the fact that definitions of key norms in global politics are laid out in conformity with established powers' goals. Paradoxically, when the latter act to pursue or defend their interests, their conduct is perceived as rational, while similar policies on the part of emerging powers are sometimes seen as ambivalent. Reluctance is a key component in mapping how emerging powers navigate this tension.

The present analysis of responsibility and reluctance as core components of emerging power conduct has allowed us to provide some insights as to how rising powers react to the emergence of new norms or changes in key precepts in a context of global inequality. In practical terms, this implies that there is indeed room for negotiation with emerging powers about global governance. However, the West will need to understand that their reluctance is not just about a lack of capabilities to assume responsibility, and in many cases not about the actual normative contents of responsibility attribution. Rather, it is first and foremost based on the dissatisfaction with the form and the process of responsibility attribution, which are seen as conflating Western with universal values and goals and as “patronizing” due to outdated institutional privileges for the West.

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