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# Understanding the Policies of the BRICS Countries in R2P Cases: An English School Perspective

*Nilay Tüzgen* | ORCID: 0000-0003-0754-4644
PhD, Department of International Relations, Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey
*nilaytuncarslan@gmail.com*

*Gonca Oğuz Gök*
Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey
*goncaoguzgok@gmail.com*

## Abstract

This article's main aim is to evaluate the position of BRICS 'as a group' towards the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) norm by locating it in the framework of the English School's pluralist versus solidarist debate. It traces the pluralist and solidarist elements in BRICS discourses and decisions towards R2P by scrutinising the content of the ten BRICS summit declarations between 2011 and 2020 and the voting of BRICS members on UN Security Council resolutions regarding seven cases involving atrocity crimes (Syria, Yemen, Mali, Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Libya) discussed at the UN Security Council. The article argues that although there is an obvious quantitative increase in BRICS common pluralist agenda, they do not demonstrate group solidarity in practice and have not yet socialised to act as a group on the R2P as a key norm of global governance. Therefore, their position as a group towards R2P could best be framed as 'Charter solidarism' in principle per se, not in practice.

## Keywords

English School – pluralist vs. solidarist debate – BRICS – R2P

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Since 2008, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) has been a controversial actor when it declared itself to represent the Global South and be more active in global governance. Although the group contains heterogeneities or problems such as regime differences and border disputes, its members have long been categorised as rising powers with the potential to become a regional or global power. However, the viability of BRICS as an informal group has been criticized regarding its lack of a permanent secretariat, lack of institutional bodies, the economic and political instability its members have experienced, and growing fragmentation among the member states over the years.

These criticisms have led to the questioning of the rising actorness of BRICS as a group in recent years. In addition to its interest in other areas of economic growth and development, threats to international peace and security have concerned the group since its inception. In an era when the very stability of the world order and its rules and norms are in question, it is worth asking whether the BRICS as a group can maintain a solidarist normative position amongst themselves towards the resolution of an increasing number of humanitarian crises.

This article's main aim is to evaluate the position of BRICS 'as a group' towards the R2P norm by locating it in the framework of the English School's pluralist versus solidarist debate. While the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention advocated by the opponents of intervention coincide with the English School's pluralism, the idea that the international society has a moral duty to protect human rights overlaps with the view of the English School's solidarism. In this respect, when R2P is conceptualized as a solidarist norm, this debate of the English School provides a useful analytical framework for seeking solidarist and pluralist concepts in the discourse and behaviours of BRICS. In other words, English School's pluralist versus solidarist debate helps to better frame the research question of whether and how BRICS countries address R2P, as one of being a solidarist norm, through a solidarist frame.

In order to answer the research question, the article traces the pluralist and solidarist elements in BRICS discourses and decisions related to R2P by analysing the BRICS summit declarations and UNSC votes on selected R2P cases at the UN Security Council. The English School's pluralist/solidarist framework also contributes to a better understanding of the normative evolution of the 'BRICS actorness' as a group towards humanitarian crises. To do that, the paper scrutinises the content of the ten BRICS summit declarations between 2011and 2020 and the voting justifications of the representatives of the five BRICS countries in resolutions regarding seven cases on R2P (Syria, Yemen, Mali, Ivory Coast, CAR, South Sudan, Libya) discussed at the Security Council.

The selected cases were humanitarian crises discussed by the Security Council between 2009 and 2020. Therefore, cases such as the Congo, which started before 2009, and Venezuela and the Uighur, which have been on the agenda recently, were excluded from the analysis.

Previous studies often focus on the position of individual BRICS states towards R2P and thereby provide crucial findings on their particular position towards the norm from various analytical frameworks and empirical evidence.[1] Some focus on China and Russia as the main sources of Security Council deadlock in response to R2P's third pillar, as they have consistently utilised their veto power to oppose such cases.[2] Others address BRICS states' reinterpretation of the concept such as China's Responsible Protection (RP) and Brazil's Responsibility while Protecting (RwP) as initiatives that illustrate the growing willingness of rising powers to assert their own normative preferences on sovereignty, intervention, and global governance.[3] It is argued that BRICS states have supported R2P in the vast majority of cases and demonstrate a fundamental agreement about the principle that upholds R2P.[4] Some of the most recent studies also found several common approaches among BRICS members towards R2P, including 'strengthening the role of the state, their support for the UN role on conflict settlement, and preventive diplomacy'.[5]

This article argues that the attitudes and behaviours of BRICS countries, when investigated together *as a group* and over the long-term, do not lean towards solidarist values, let alone playing constructive roles in supporting the R2P norm, especially its third pillar. Hence neither China and Russia, *per se*, nor

1 See for instance P. Rotmann, G. Kurtz and S. Brockmeier, 'Major Powers and the Contested Evolution of a Responsibility to Protect', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 14, 355–377 (2014); C.G. Stefan, 'On Non-Western norm shapers: Brazil and the Responsibility while Protecting'. *European Journal of International Security,* 2, 88–110 (2017); S. Destradi, 'India's Reluctant Approach to R2P: Lessons from Perilous Interventions', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 9, 229–236 (2017); M. M. L. A. Ribeiro, M. de Almeida Medeiros and Leite, A. C. C., 'China's Engagement with R2P: Pluralist Shaper?', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 12 (3), 271–298 (2020); M. Brosig and N. Zähringer, 'Norm Evolution a Matter of Conformity and Contentedness: South Africa and the Responsibility to Protect', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, *7,* 350–375 (2015).

2 See for instance C. Gegout and S. Suzuki, 'China, Responsibility to Protect, and the Case of Syria from Sovereignty Protection to Pragmatism', *Global Governance,* 26, 379–402 (2020).

3 Ribeiro et al., 'China's Engagement with R2P: Pluralist Shaper?', *Global Responsibility to Protect* 12 (3), 271–298 (2020); McDougall, D. 'Responsibility While Protecting', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 6(1), 64–87 (2014).

4 O. Stuenkel, 'The BRICS and the Future of R2P', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 6(1), 3–28 (2014).

5 S. Bokeriya, S., 'Key Aspects of Combined Thinking of the BRICS Countries on the Responsibility to Protect', *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 12, 336–354 (2020).

BRICS together do not demonstrate an evolving solidarist frame envisaged for the R2P norm by the international society since its inception. Although BRICS members may vote in favour of some R2P third pillar interventions based on economic or military concerns, or in the case of non-strategic places in terms of country policy, there is not enough evidence of an evolving common solidarist framework in their discourses and decisions, as a group. On the other hand, the pluralist stance, which accentuates the UN Charter rules such as sovereignty, non-intervention, and territorial integrity of the states, is found to be a more frequent theme in BRICS discourses in the text of summit declarations as well as justifications of voting behaviours towards R2P cases in the Security Council. More importantly, however, it is observed that the group *has not yet adopted a unified solidarist stance* among themselves even *regarding the pluralist ideas and norms* as exemplified by R2P cases since the 2010s. Therefore, the article concludes that although there is an obvious *quantitative increase* in BRICS members' *common pluralist agenda* as observed in their summit declarations towards issues related to global peace and security including humanitarian and regional crises, they do not demonstrate group solidarity in practice and have not yet socialised to act as a group on rules and norms of global governance. Therefore, their position as a group towards R2P could best be framed as 'Charter solidarism' in principle per se, not in practice.

The article is structured around three main parts. The first part contextualises the R2P norm in the English School's pluralist/solidarist debate. In the second part, the article scrutinises the content of the ten BRICS summit declarations - from Sanya, China, in 2011 to Moscow, Russia, in 2020 - in order to decipher the evolution of any common pluralist/solidarist elements in BRICS's position as a group towards humanitarian crises. Finally, in the last part, it looks at the extent to which solidarist and/or pluralist stances are reflected in the actual voting behaviour of BRICS member states through the analysis of their Security Council representatives' statements and justifications on resolutions towards selected seven selected R2P cases. By tracing the evolution of pluralist and solidarist elements in BRICS's position as a group towards R2P cases, the article also reveals some provisional answers regarding the normative character of BRICS group solidarity in global governance in a world of rising fragmentation, declining altruism, and greater disorder.

## 1 Contextualising the R2P Norm within the Framework of the Pluralist–Solidarist Debate

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is an international norm that aims to ensure that the international society never again fails to halt the mass atrocity crimes of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.[6] As a result of the devastations caused by the humanitarian crises of the 1990s, the R2P concept was introduced in the 2000s, which defining sovereignty as a responsibility rather than a right and aiming for a solidarist international society.[7] In other words, R2P is an international norm that imposes a responsibility on the international community to prevent atrocity crimes.[8] Thus, the framework of the English School provides an insightful perspective for the analysis of R2P, as its main debate is shaped around the arguments of international society and pluralism-solidarism.

In framing R2P as a solidarist concept, the 2001 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) report identified six criteria for its implementation, namely 'right authority, just cause, right intention, last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospects'.[9] When all these conditions are present, it exhorts countries to take responsibility not only within their borders but also in humanitarian crises outside their borders. The areas in which R2P is to be implemented were more narrowly defined at the UN World Summit (2005), which classified them under four headings: genocide, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.[10] Moreover, a three-pillar structure was established in the UN Secretary-General's 2009 Report, 'Implementing the Responsibility to Protect'; namely internal responsibility, a duty of aid and support of the international society using peaceful methods, and intervention by the international society.[11] In this respect, R2P is

6 Global Centre for the R2P, 'What is R2P?'https://www.globalr2p.org/what-is-r2p/, accessed 16 August 2022.

7 Tim Dunne, 'The English School and Humanitarian Intervention', E-International Relations, 2016, https://www.e-ir.info/2016/02/17/the-english-school-and-humanitarian-intervention/; C.S.R Murthy and G. Kurtz, 'International Responsibility as Solidarity: The Impact of the World Summit Negotiations on the R2P Trajectory', *Global Society,* 30(1), 38–53 (2016).

8 UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, 'Responsibility to Protect', https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml, accessed 16 August 2022.

9 The Responsibility to Protect Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottowa: IDRC, 2001), p.32.

10 '2005 World Summit Outcome', UNGA Res. 60/1, 16 September 2005.

11 UN Secretary-General, *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect Report of the Secretary-General,* A/63/677', 12 January 2009; J.M Welsh, 'Norm Contestation and the Responsibility to Protect', *Global Responsibility to Protect* 5 (2013), p. 384.

positioned as a solidarist norm, as it includes prevention, aid, and intervention mechanisms and imposes responsibility on the international society to reduce or eliminate humanitarian suffering in crises.

Hedley Bull, one of the leading scholars of the pluralist versus solidarist debate, argued that international order cannot be understood without norms and rules, especially regarding the limitation of violence between states and respect for each other's jurisdictions. Bull contended that a minimum level of reconciliation should be achieved.[12] This minimum reconciliation is considered as an order since, due to economic, social, and political factors, states are unlikely to unite within the framework of common moral values[13] and may be more likely to unite around norms such as sovereignty and non-intervention.[14]

According to Jackson, the pluralist international society is based on the values of equal sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention of member states.[15] Further, according to the pluralist view, since any attempt to reach a consensus on human rights may endanger the fragile order of the international society, supporting the norm of non-intervention and preserving the order based on tolerance brings about the best international condition.[16] For Muhammed Ayoob, the preservation of order is of greater importance, especially today, when the international society is gaining new members and becoming more heterogeneous.[17]

On the other hand, solidarism, based on Grotian Rationalism, assigns a duty to the international society regarding interventions and argues that the principle of sovereignty cannot be unlimited for those in power who commit acts of violence against their own citizens, and may even be invalid for the purpose of protection of individuals.[18] The increase in the practice of

12 Hedley Bull, 'Order vs. Justice in International Society', *Political Studies* 19 (3) (1971), p.270.

13 A. Hurrell, 'Order and Justice', in Cornalia Navari and D.M. Green (eds.) *Guide to the English School in International Studies* (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p.145.

14 A. Bellamy, 'Humanitarian Responsibilities and Interventionist Claims in International Society', *Review of International Studies,* 29 (2003), p. 323.

15 R. Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States.* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).

16 J.M Welsh, *Humanitarian Intervention and International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 63; B. Holden, *The Ethical Dimension of Global Change* (UK: Macmillan, n.d.), p.102.

17 M. Ayoob, 'Humanitarian Intervention and State Sovereignty', *The International Journal of Human Rights* 6 (1) (2002), p. 81.

18 M. Wight, *International Theory The Three Traditions* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992), p. 206–7; Andrew Linklater, 'The English School Conception of International Society: Reflections on Western and Non-Western Perspectives', *Ritsumeikan Annual Review of International Studies,* 9 (2010), p.2.

humanitarian intervention, especially in the post-Cold War period, and the revival of the debate about the limits of sovereignty have brought about the view that the solidarist character of the international society has strengthened.[19] Furthermore, solidarism claims that different societies can agree on certain moral standard and that the international society has a moral agenda to support these standards.[20]

According to Welsh,[21] approval of the ICISS report refutes the idea envisaged by pluralists that a consensus cannot be reached on the limits of human rights and sovereignty. In a similar vein, the increase in interventions and operations in humanitarian crises led to this period being interpreted as Neo-Grotianism.[22] Considering the increasing demands for action in such situations – which Wheeler defines as 'supreme humanitarian urgencies'[23] – it may be said that willingness to implement R2P has increased over time.

Yet it seems difficult to say that a consensus has been reached among states in the international society regarding interventions in humanitarian crises, particularly within the framework of the third pillar of R2P due to differences of opinion on sovereignty and international law as well as concerns regarding its abuse. Given that, the next part of the article aims to understand the evolution of the posture of BRICS towards the R2P norm by locating the group within the pluralist vs. solidarist debate. To this aim, it tracks the traces of English School's common pluralist (*non-interference, sovereignty, territorial integrity, order*) and/or solidarist (*humanitarian concerns, justice, responsibility to protect*), concepts in the BRICS summit declarations between 2011–2020.

19 C. Lestrad, 'Moral Responsibility in International Relations: The US Response to Rwanda', in *System, Society and the World: Exploring the English School of International Relations*, ed. R.W. Murray (UK, 2013), p. 18.

20 N.J. Wheeler, 'Pluralist or Solidarist Conceptions of International Society: Bull and Vincent on Humanitarian Intervention', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 21 (3), (1992), p.479; R.J. Vincent, 'Grotius, Human Rights and Intervention', in Hedley Bull, B. Kingsbury, and A. Roberts (eds.) *Hugo Grotius and International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 248; A. Hurrell, 'One World? Many Worlds? The Place of Regions in the Study of International Society', *International Affairs* 83 (1) (2007), p. 9.

21 Welsh, *Humanitarian Intervention and International Relations*, p. 65.

22 Hurrell, 'One World? Many Worlds?', p.171–72.

23 N. J. Wheeler, *Saving Strangers Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.13.

## 2 Locating BRICS in the Pluralist–Solidarist Debate towards the R2P Norm

The history of BRICS is in fact one of two different beginnings.[24] First, in 2001, Jim O'Neill, Head of Global Economics Research at Goldman Sachs, conceptualised the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) as emerging economies given their increasing importance in the global economy. The second beginning was in 2009 when the countries' foreign ministers started to hold annual meetings on the side-lines of the UN General Assembly. Following negotiations, they agreed to organise a high-level event between the BRIC leaders, hosted by Russia in the city of Yekaterinburg in 2009. Following their first summit in Russia which marked the launch of BRICS as a cooperative framework, South Africa joined them in 2010. According to Hurrell, the significance of BRICS may be understood not only by its economic development but also by the group's capacity to make structural changes that can profoundly alter the global balance of power.[25] Similarly, Thakur claims that the group differs from other emerging powers in terms of its potential to be a global representative in areas such as climate, development, finance and trade, development, and humanitarian aid.[26] Indeed, the group's South-South Cooperation, development partnership initiatives, establishment of the New Development Bank, and its desire to reform the Bretton Woods institutions are examples of its emerging 'actorness' in global governance.

Recently, however, the rising power actorness of BRICS countries is being increasingly questioned. The economic and political instabilities in Russia, Brazil, and South Africa and border disputes between China and India, as well as their inability to realise a unified stance towards the COVID-19 pandemic, and most recently, the BRICS countries' diverging response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine demonstrated the limitations of BRICS group solidarity in global governance. In addition, although Russia and China are permanent members of the Security Council, since BRICS is an informal group, its impact on the international system still represents a contested area.

One main area of interest for BRICS has been the use of force in international relations and situations where the principle of sovereignty may be suspended. Since its first summit, BRICS has stated that they reject the militarisation of

24 Filippo Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?', BPC Policy Brief - V.9 N. 2, January (2020).

25 A. Hurrell, 'Beyond the BRICS: Power, Pluralism and the Future of Global Order', *Ethics and International Affairs,* 32 (1) (2018), p. 90.

26 R. Thakur, 'How Representative Are BRICS?', *Third World Quarterly,* 35 (10) (2014), p. 1791.

conflicts, that international issues should be resolved by diplomacy and other peaceful means, and that territorial integrity should be protected.[27]

However, this claim can be disproved considering the attitudes of BRICS members towards conflict and humanitarian crises in the following years. Although BRICS members contend that they do not prioritise military solutions in international platforms, Russia's attitude towards, for example, the Crimean crisis, military interventions in Syria, and most recently in Ukraine clearly diverged from this view.

Another point underlined by the BRICS in its decision to intervene is the Security Council authorisation. This reflects the BRICS's criticism of unilateral interventions. BRICS frequently refers to the norms of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states set out in the UN Charter (Art. 2/4 and Art. 2/7), and advocates the continuation of mediation and assistance activities in conflicts. Russia and China, the two permanent Council members of BRICS, mention the significance of the UNSC's authorization in any intervention decision and both generally make use of their veto in intervention and sanction negotiations. All these discourses on sovereignty, non-intervention and behavioural patterns to veto R2P suggest that BRICS is located as a group on the pluralist wing. In this respect, BRICS was considered a group that supports the UN's peaceful resolution and preventive diplomacy, and it was claimed that it could demonstrate several common approaches to R2P.[28] In their study on China's attitude to R2P, Mikelli Ribeiro et al. used qualitative content analysis to evaluate declarations and concluded that China is a pluralist norm-shaper.[29] Brazil's RwP initiative was similarly addressed in the shaper-maker debate, and it was discussed that the country would play an active role in non-military elements.[30]

However, following R2P's inception, BRICS countries *did* allow intervention, something which contradicts with the group's pluralist leaning. Russian direct military involvement in recent Ukrainian crises further complicates the situation. It was claimed that BRICS, with its different attitudes in the Syrian and Libyan crises, did not adopt a common attitude for all pillars of R2P.[31] These

27 *ibid.,* p.1797.

28 S. Bokeriya, 'Key Aspects of Combined Thinking of the BRICS Countries on the Responsibility to Protect', *Global Responsibility to Protect* 12, no.3 (2020): 336–354.

29 Ribeiro et al., 'China's Engagement with R2P'.

30 P. W. Almeida, 'Brazilian View Of Responsibility To Protect', *Global Responsibility to Protect,* 6, 29–63 (2014); K.M. Kenkel, 'Brazil and R2P: Does Taking Responsibility Mean Using Force?' *Global Responsibility to Protect,* 4, 5–32 (2012).

31 B.L. Job, 'Evolution, retreat or rejection: Brazil's, India's and China's normative stances on R2P', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 29 (3), 891–910 (2016).

inconsistencies in the position of the group have been variously conceptualized as 'nuanced', 'subtle' 'anti-entrepreneurship', and 'disruptive'.[32]

In order to assess whether and how BRICS countries address R2P, through a solidarist frame and whether they have leaned towards the pluralist or solidarist axis, the next section will analyse the content of the BRICS summit declarations from 2011 Sanya to 2020 Moscow Summit. In this regard, the content of the ten declarations will be scrutinised to decipher the evolution of any common pluralist/solidarist elements in the BRICS position as a group.

### 2.1 *BRICS Position as a Group: Tracing Pluralist/Solidarist Elements from the Sanya to Moscow Summits*

The 2011 Sanya Summit in China was the first occasion to include the acronym 'BRICS' after the admission of South Africa to the group. It was a crucial moment, for the first time all five BRICS countries were members of the UN Security Council as China and Russia were already being permanent members. The BRICS agenda expressed an increased concern for cooperation in international security for the first time at this Summit. Up until 2011, BRICS summit declarations (Yekaterinburg 2009 and Brasilia 2010) were mainly focused on reforming the global economy with only passing reference to the issue of terrorism in global security.[33] Accordingly, the first explicit references to concepts such as intervention, non-intervention, state sovereignty, political independence and human suffering were made at the Sanya Summit. In the 2011 Sanya Declaration, the Meeting of BRICS Special Envoys on Middle East and North Africa was organised, and an armed conflict was put on the agenda of discussion, namely the Libya crisis. On the Libya crisis, BRICS members expressed their desire to continue cooperation with the Security Council and stressed the need for the crisis to be resolved through peaceful mechanisms and dialogue in partnership with the UN and regional organisations, emphasising that the use of force should be avoided.[34] The intervention in the Ivory Coast, was discussed at the Council in the same period as the Libya crisis and all BRICS members voted in favour of the intervention, but this was not included in the

32 O. Stuenkel, 'The BRICS and the Future of R2P', *Global Responsibility to Protect,* 6, 3–28 (2014); A. Kotyashko, C. Ferreira-Pereira, and A.V.G. Vieira, 'Normative Resistance to Responsibility to Protect in Times of Emerging Multipolarity: The Cases of Brazil and Russia', *Revista Brasileira de Relações Internacionais,* 61 (1), 1–22 (2018); Z. Chen and H. Yin, 'China and Russia in R2P Debates at the UN Security Council', *International Affairs* 96 (3), 787–805 (2020).

33 Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?'.

34 BRICS, 'Sanya Declaration', 2011, https://www.brics2017.org/english/AboutBRICS/DOPS/201701/t20170114_1116.html, accessed 16 August 2022.

Sanya Declaration. Therefore, the Sanya Summit was the first attempt by BRICS to widen their agenda on global and regional crises by emphasising the UN Charter principles.

The New Delhi Summit in India included the first meeting of the BRICS High Representatives Responsible for National Security and National Security Advisers (NSAs).[35] With a similar call for dialogue and a peaceful solution, the BRICS emphasis on independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty was made clear for the Syrian crisis at the New Delhi Summit in 2012.[36] As reflected in the title of the Summit Declaration, 'BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity', the summit was also the continuation of the previous one in terms of BRICS demonstrating willingness to cooperate on peace and security field.

At the 2013 Durban Summit in South Africa, importantly, BRICS countries declared that they would pursue a common foreign policy on other international crises, emphasising diplomatic initiatives. BRICS countries also underlined their opposition to any further militarisation of the conflict with regards to Syria emphasising again 'Syrian independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty.'[37] They also reaffirmed their commitment to cooperation, by formulating joint positions on armed conflicts and regional crises. Crucially, they greatly expanded their agenda in quantitative terms to a large extent by discussing a series of new conflict-affected and fragile countries including the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Mali.[38] Regarding humanitarian crises like Mali, BRICS expressed its concern and underlined the measures like humanitarian assistance to the civilian population and peaceful resolution of the conflicts, without any references to solidarist concepts such as responsibility, protection, justice and humanity among others.[39] Therefore, one can again trace the recurring pluralist emphasis in dealing with regional and humanitarian crises.

At the group's 2014 Fortaleza Summit in Brazil, this time military interventions and economic sanctions were interpreted explicitly as 'violations of international law', and the group made it clear that the role of the UN was as a 'mediator'. The difference between peacekeeping operations and interventions

35 Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?'.

36 BRICS, 'Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration', 2012, http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/120329-delhi-declaration.html accessed 16 August 2022.

37 *ibid;* BRICS, 'eThekwini Declaration', 2013, http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html accessed 15 August 2022.

38 Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?'.

39 BRICS, 'BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development', 2013, http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/130327-statement.html, accessed 15 August 2022.

also was also highlighted.[40] It is observed that BRICS countries refer to Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, and South Sudan cases in a much more detailed manner in the BRICS 2014 Summit Declaration. BRICS members again reaffirmed their commitment to UN peacekeeping efforts as well as regional organizations' contribution to peaceful resolution of the disputes. It should be noted that more than a third of the issues discussed in the Declarations (of 72 articles in total) were related to global security which demonstrates the quantitative increase in the group's security agenda. A Foreign Policy Planning Dialogue mechanism was also established demonstrating BRICS countries' growing willingness to coordinate their foreign policies.[41]

In the 2015 Ufa Declaration from the BRICS Summit in Russia new issues such as Burundi, Kenya, and Ukraine were also put on the agenda with again reference again to concepts such as state authority, sovereignty, statehood, mediation efforts of regional actors and political solutions.

For the first time, the BRICS Dialogue on Peacekeeping was also established as an area for cooperation to be explored.[42] Crucially, in the Ufa Summit, the first sub-ministerial meetings were held on exclusively security-related issues. BRICS once again underlined that there was no alternative, but a peaceful solution in Syria, without any reference to Russia's military measures. Member states condemned chemical attacks, violence against women and children, and increased terrorism, however, they did not mention any possibility of sanctions regarding Syria. BRICS also stated its deep concern regarding Ukraine emphasizing that there is no military solution to the conflict. In a similar manner, they mentioned the significance of a political solution and the preservation of state territorial integrity regarding the crises in Mali, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic.[43] BRICS countries emphasis on *strengthening cooperation among sovereign states* with respect to promoting and protecting human rights in the following is noteworthy in terms of demonstrating their pluralist leaning 'We reaffirm the intention to strengthen the principle of equitable and mutually respectful cooperation of sovereign states as the cornerstone of international activities to promote and protect human rights.'[44]

40 BRICS, 'VI BRICS Summit Fortaleza Declaration', 2014, https://www.brics2017.org/english/AboutBRICS/DOPS/201701/t20170114_1121.html, accessed 15 August 2022.

41 Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?'.

42 BRICS, 'VII BRICS Summit Ufa Declaration', 2015, https://www.brics2017.org/english/AboutBRICS/DOPS/201701/t20170114_1123.html accessed 15 August 2022.

43 BRICS, 'VII BRICS Summit Ufa Declaration', 2015, https://www.brics2017.org/english/AboutBRICS/DOPS/201701/t20170114_1123.html accessed 15 August 2022.

44 *ibid.*

Crucially, when BRICS refer to 'responsibility', they immediately refer to sovereign governments: '… sovereign governments that bear the primary responsibility for preventing and countering violent extremism-related threats.'[45]

Therefore, although new cases were added to the agenda of the Ufa Summit, BRICS' reference to strengthening member state cooperation and the centrality of the UN Charter continued to be a recurrent theme in 2015 as there was no condemnation of Russian acts in Ukraine and Syria. However, the BRICS 2015 Ufa Declaration in Russia demonstrated BRICS's willingness to expand their agenda on regional and humanitarian crises not only on quantitative terms but also through solidifying joint positions.[46]

The 2016 Goa Declaration of the BRICS Summit in India gave much more visibility to peacekeeping, listed as one of the very first issues on the security agenda. It recalled the significant contribution of BRICS countries to UN peacekeeping operations and their interest in extending their cooperation to this field. Again, with regards to the regional crises, the declaration made an in-depth reference to Afghanistan, Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the Africa region with reference to pluralist principles of the UN Charter such as non-interference, international law, sovereignty, territorial integrity, multipolar, equal international order.[47] Furthermore, in the 2016 Goa Declaration, it becomes much more apparent that BRICS prioritise cooperating on strengthening 'UN peacekeeping'.

In the 2017 BRICS Xiamen Summit in China, the meeting of the BRICS NSAs, the Meeting of the BRICS Special Envoys on MENA, and the Foreign Policy Dialogue further demonstrated the group's willingness to deepen their coordination on security and peace issues. The Summit Declaration restated joint positions on regional crises and armed conflicts. Emphasis on the 'Syrian-led and Syrian-owned' political process as well as the rights to sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity illustrate this recurrent pattern. BRICS stressed once again the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty should be evaluated together. It is also remarkable that the Declaration stressed diplomatic summits involving Russia in 2017.[48]

45 *ibid.*

46 Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?'.

47 BRICS, '8th BRICS Summit Goa Declaration, http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/161016-goa.html, accessed 16 August 2022.

48 BRICS, '8th BRICS Summit Goa Declaration', 2016, https://www.brics2017.org/english/AboutBRICS/DOPS/201701/t20170114_1127.html; BRICS, 'BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration', 2017, https://www.brics2017.org/english/documents/summit/201709/t20170908_2021.html, accessed 16 August 2022.

In the 2018 Johannesburg Declaration, regarding humanitarian crises, previous themes of 'Syrian-led and Syrian-owned' as well as 'Afghan-led and Afghan-owned', 'Yemeni-led' also persisted in the declaration. Similar to previous declarations the international community's role is defined as 'assistance' in humanitarian crises. As a strengthened focus, in Johannesburg, BRICS, for the first time, explicitly stated the group's intention to extend their cooperation to UN peacekeeping by calling for a BRICS Dialogue on Peacekeeping.[49] BRICS also made clear once again, as in line with former declarations, that it was opposed to any further attempt to violate the UN Charter and undermine the authority of the Security Council.[50] Importantly, one can also observe a strong emphasis on the international 'system' and universal collective security 'system' in the declaration. Therefore, the group made their common pluralist stance more clear by expressing commitment to the UN, its Charter, multilateralism, rules, and norms of international law, with an emphasis on the prohibition of the use of force in international affairs.

In the 2019 BRICS Brasilia Summit Declaration, the group reaffirmed their commitment to collective efforts for the peaceful settlement of disputes through political and diplomatic means. In this regard, the Summit declaration underlines the crucial role of the African Union in the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The BRICS role is also defined as 'strengthening and reforming the multilateral system'. There is also a continuation observed with regards to BRICS reference to pluralist terms and Charter solidarism in the 2020 Moscow Summit. BRICS recognise 'the victory in the Second World War as our BRICS common legacy' and while discussing crises, member states pointed out that the processes should be independent of external interventions and inclusive of all parties.[51]

The humanitarian crises and the frequency of the main issues addressed in BRICS Summits to date are summarised in Table 1.

In-depth and long-term analyses of the content of the BRICS summit declarations illustrate that the group has adopted a discourse that advocates non-intervention, sovereignty, and territorial integrity in humanitarian crises. International law and the articles in the UN Charter are generally referred to when dealing with crises. Although the situations violating human rights and acts of violence are condemned, a call for political solutions was made to all

49 Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?'.

50 BRICS, 'BRICS Summit Johannesburg Declaration', 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1580853.shtml, accessed 16 August 2022.

51 BRICS, 'XII BRICS Summit Moscow Declaration', 17 November 2020, http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/201117-moscow-declaration.html, accessed 16 August 2022.

TABLE 1 Recurrence of key discourses on humanitarian crises at BRICS summits

| Summit | Frequency of key themes in the text | Summit evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| **2011 Sanya** | Non-use of force (1) territorial integrity (1), sovereignty (1), independence (1), multilateral diplomacy (1), United Nations (1), stability (1), human suffering (1), democracy (2), international law (2), peace and peaceful (8), system (7) | Willingness to cooperate in the field of international peace and security for the first time. |
| **2012 New Delhi** | Territorial integrity (1), sovereignty (1), independence (1), diplomacy (2), United Nations (4), human rights (1), stability/stable (13), peace (12), system (7), democratic state (1), international law (2) | Increasing reference to 'stability' when discussing peace and security with regards to regional and humanitarian crises. |
| **2013 Durban** | Territorial integrity (3), sovereignty (3), independence (2), United Nations (5), international law (3) condemnation of human rights violations (1), peace (17), peaceful resolution, humanitarian law, assistance (2), peaceful, stable, and democratic state (Afghanistan) (1), sustainable peace and stability (Mali) (1), Humanitarian assistance or access (Mali and CAR) (2) | Quantitative increase in the issues discussed with regards to humanitarian crises.<br>Clarifying opposition to further militarisation of conflicts (Syria) with an emphasis on humanitarian assistance as a measure. |
| **2014 Fortaleza** | Territorial integrity (2), sovereignty (2), independence (2), United Nations (6), system (6), peace and stability (8), used always together with reference to regional and humanitarian crises, international law (6), emphasis on UN Mission in Africa regarding crises (Mali, CAR, South Sudan) Condemnation of human rights violations and military measures (6), inclusive and political dialogue (8), mediation (2) and regional initiatives (10) | Emphasis on the centrality of the UN in terms of helping the international community maintain international peace and security, protect, and foster human rights.<br>Reference to UN 2005 World Summit without any mention of R2P.<br>Reference to human rights with equal emphasis on right to development. |

TABLE 1 Recurrence of key discourses on humanitarian crises at BRICS summits (*cont.*)

| Summit | Frequency of key themes in the text | Summit evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| **2015 Ufa** | Territorial integrity (8), sovereignty (8), independence (8), stability (14), system (12), peace (20), order (17), international law (15) UN charter (8), justice (3) with immediate reference to sovereign equality principle, democracy (6) with immediate reference to rejecting foreign interference, stability, unity | The widening agenda of BRICS in quantitative terms referring to regional and humanitarian crises. Emphasis on strengthening cooperation among sovereign states with respect to promoting and protecting human rights. |
| **2016 Goa** | Territorial integrity (8), sovereignty (8), independence (8), order (13), international law (9), significance of peacekeeping operations (5), human rights (4), non-intervention (1) and non-interfering (1) | It becomes much more apparent that BRICS prioritize cooperating on strengthening 'UN peacekeeping'. |
| **2017 Xiamen** | Sovereign equality (6) and non-interference (6), territorial integrity (4), independence (3), international law (7), justice (1) to safeguard stability (7) UN Charter (5), democracy (1) system (9), order (11) | Further cooperation on 'UN peacekeeping' Foreign Policy Dialogue Mechanism. |
| **2018 Johannesburg** | Sovereignty (3), territorial integrity (3), independence (4) UN Charter (5) international law (5), international order (6), humanitarian assistance (3), stability (5), in a multipolar order (1), system (22) | Intention to extend their cooperation to UN Peacekeeping BRICS Dialogue on Peacekeeping |
| **2019 Brasilia** | Territorial integrity (1), sovereignty (3), stability (3), order (3) UN Charter (1), international law (4), peace (20), human rights (2), non-intervention (1), mediation (1), humanitarian aid (2) | BRICS role defined as 'strengthening and reforming the multilateral system'. |
| **2020 Moscow** | Territorial integrity (5) sovereignty (9) independence (3), stability (13), UN Charter (2), international law (7), humanitarian aid (1), multilateral (13) | Victory in the Second World War defined as BRICS common legacy. Charter solidarism emphasised. |

SOURCE: THE AUTHORS' OWN WORK COMPILED FROM THE CONTENT ANALYSES OF THE TEXT OF TEN BRICS SUMMIT DECLARATIONS.

involved parties in line with UN norms and principles. In this context, BRICS defines the role of the UN as a mediator, negotiator, and humanitarian aid provider, or to establish a peaceful environment through missions. The declarations never mentioned a potential intervention if these attempts do not work. Furthermore, BRICS does not see the UN as the only responsible actor in humanitarian crises but supports the efforts of local and regional organisations. BRICS attaches particular importance to the initiatives of the African Union and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in cases in Africa and has adopted an approach that highlights the Astana, Sochi, and Geneva processes in the Syrian crisis. While dealing with crises, the group generally emphasises stability and lasting peace, which refers to the social and economic reconstruction needed by countries. In this respect, it may be said that BRICS has a comprehensive perspective on peacebuilding activities and evaluates development and security together in post-conflict societies.

Considering the solidarist nature of the R2P norm, BRICS' handling of the norm as a group and their raising the issue of crises at their summits does not seem to coincide with either the basic principles of solidarism or the idea that the international society can intervene on behalf of human rights. While the proposed methods such as diplomacy and peace mediation can be associated more with the first two pillars of R2P, there is nothing expressed on what to do if these methods do not work. BRICS called for a political solution in the declarations it published in the first years, but in the subsequent declarations, it did not propose a different solution in cases where the same violence and human rights violations continued (for instance, in Syria). The discourses on international law, non-interference, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity continued to dominate in the texts. Notably, the BRICS have often expressed their willingness to contribute to the 'preservation and stability of the *international system*' which also exemplifies their leaning more towards a common pluralist discourse. Moreover, BRICS's strong emphasis on a '*UN-centred established world order*' has been the main theme in all declarations. One should also underline here that, in BRICS declarations, there is an explicit reference to a '*UN of member s*tates' when referring to peace and security issues. This is crucial in the sense that BRICS emphasized strengthening the traditional 'state-based character of the order' by reform, putting distance to interpretations of sovereignty. Therefore, the BRICS position could best be conceptualised as 'Charter solidarism', one of the most recurring themes observed in their summit declarations.

Indeed, the concept of R2P or the idea of intervention as an external responsibility has never been included in the group's declarations. The 2005 World Summit was referred to in the declarations mostly within the framework of

UN reforms; no emphasis was placed on R2P itself or on Articles 138 and 139. Moreover, interventions have been described as interfering in internal affairs and disrupting order and assessed as erosions of the UN Charter. The repetition of similar linguistic references in BRICS declarations demonstrates a significant degree of continuity between the summits on issues relating to humanitarian crises. UN peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance are found to be common instruments when they refer to regional and humanitarian crises with a strong emphasis on sovereignty as a right. Therefore, based on the declarations, it can be argued that the BRICS stance has leaned towards a pluralist discourse with respect to humanitarian crises.[52] However, setting aside their above-mentioned recurring discourse and the quantitative increase of their peace and security agenda, it is difficult to find an evolving solidarist socialisation towards a unified 'normative stance' on how to approach, implement, contest and reform specifically R2P in the summit declarations from Sanya in 2011 to Moscow in 2020. The BRICS countries seem to agree on the general matter of 'rethinking' R2P, as one can trace in their summit statements.[53] Having said that the next part will analyse BRICS voting in the Security Council in order to decipher evolving socialisation towards common pluralist or solidarist elements in their voting behaviours towards R2P cases.

## 3 From Discourse to Practice: Tracing Pluralist/Solidarist Elements in BRICS's Voting on R2P Cases at the Security Council

In this section, the voting of the BRICS countries towards R2P cases at the Security Council is scrutinised to identify whether BRICS demonstrate a pluralist or solidarist behaviour pattern. Analysis of the BRICS voting's and justifications of their votes on resolutions makes it also possible to better understand whether BRICS in fact socialised to 'act' as a group towards R2P since the Sanya Summit. Since Russia and China are permanent members of the Council, it is possible to obtain data on every crisis for both. Brazil, India, and South Africa also served as non-permanent members of the Council during the periods 2010–2011; 2011–2012, and 2019–2020 periods respectively, which makes it possible to investigate their voting and justifications on interventions regarding

52 Cutrera, 'Do the BRICS care about International Security?'.

53 Augusto Leal Rinaldi and Cristina Soreanu Pecequilo. 'The Contemporary World Order, BRICS and the R2P Principle: The Cases of Brazil and China (2005/2017)', *Colombia International*, 105, 3–28, (2021).

R2P. The humanitarian crises in the Ivory Coast, Libya, Yemen, Mali, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Syria all emerged in this period.

### 3.1 *Syria, Libya, Yemen, South Sudan: Expected Pluralist Pattern among BRICS*

When the Syrian crisis emerged, Brazil was serving as a non-permanent member and abstained from voting in the draft Security Council resolution of 4 October 2011 on condemnation of the Syrian authorities.[54] Brazil, India and South Africa also abstained from the vote on 4 October 2011 regarding Syria.[55] At the Council meeting on 4 October 2011, the Permanent Representative to India, Singh Puri justified its decision arguing that 'the international community should give time and space for the Syrian Government' and 'not complicate to situation by threats of sanctions, regime change'.[56] At the same meeting, South Africa expressed its concern about being part of 'a hidden agenda aimed at once again instituting regime change'.[57] China vetoed the draft resolution arguing that the threat of sanctions 'would not resolve the situation.'[58] Russia frequently used its veto power in the Syrian crisis referring to justifications like principles of international law, non-interference in internal affairs and peaceful resolution of crises as in the case of its veto towards the draft resolution of 4 October 2011.[59]

In the following period, unlike China and Russia, India and South Africa supported the Syrian draft resolutions of 4 February 2012. Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India to the UN, condemned the violence in Syria, but stated that the way out of the crisis should be decided by Syrians, and attributed to the international society only the role of facilitator.[60] India saw voting in favour of the text as supporting the process led by the Arab League. South Africa's Permanent Representative to the UN, Baso Sangqu, similarly supported the text by mentioning the role of the international society in resolving the crisis

54 UN News, 'Russia and China Veto Draft Security Council Resolution on Syria, 4 October 2011, https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/10/390412-russia-and-china-veto-draft-security-council-resolution-syria accessed 16 August 2022.

55 'S/PV.6627 ', 4 October 2011, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Golan Heights S PV 6627.pdf, 'Russia and China Veto Draft Security Council Resolution on Syria', 4 October 2011, https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/10/390412-russia-and-china-veto-draft-security-council-resolution-syria.

56 S/PV.6627, 4 October 2011.

57 S/PV.6627, 4 October 2011.

58 UN News, 'Russia and China Veto Draft Security Council Resolution on Syria.

59 *ibid.*

60 UN, 'SC/10536', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 4 February 2012, https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sc10536.doc.htm, accessed 15 August 2022.

emphasising the significance of ongoing efforts to 'preserve Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity'.[61] At the meeting on 4 February 2012, China used its veto while emphasising its respect for Syria's 'sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity'.[62]

Voting again in favour of a 19 July 2012 Security Council resolution, India emphasised 'the importance of a stable Syria' and considered the decision as support for United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS).[63] This also points to India's discourse of distinguishing peacekeeping operations from interventions. South Africa, on the other hand, abstained on the grounds that unilateral sanctions would further complicate the crisis. In talks on 19 September 2019, 20 December 2019, and 7 July 2020, at which the issue of humanitarian aid to Syria was discussed, South Africa as non-permanent member, expressed its willingness to deliver humanitarian aid and voted in favour.[64] Vetoing the drafts on access to humanitarian aid on 20 December 2019 and 7 July 2020, Russia, on the other hand, stated that the aid should only be provided in coordination with the Syrian government.[65] Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Vladimir Safronkov targeted Western states voting on a draft based on 'odious and erroneous' concepts.[66] This constitutes another example of Russia's rejection of R2P as a norm, and its view that implementation of the norm is in the interests of Western states. China also vetoed or abstained from the meetings at which humanitarian aid issues were discussed, suggesting that coordination with the government should be ensured.[67]

Regarding the Libya crisis, Brazil abstained from Resolution 1973 justifying its decision on the grounds that measures envisaged in the Resolution 1970 'had not yet been heeded'; and argued that it was necessary to develop an environment of 'meaningful dialogue'.[68] India abstained from Resolution 1973 on

61 *ibid.*

62 *ibid.*

63 UN, 'SC/10714', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 19 July 2012, https://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sc10714.doc.htm, 15 August 2022.

64 'SC/13956', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, September 19, 2019, https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13956.doc.htm; UN, 'SC/14066', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 20 December 2019, https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc14066.doc.htm, 15 August 2022; UN, 'SC/14244', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 8 July 2020, https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14244.doc.htm, 15 August 2022.

65 UN 'SC/14066'; UN 'SC/14244'.

66 UN 'SC/12737', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 28 February 2017, https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12737.doc.htm, 15 August 2022.

67 UN, 'SC/14066'; UN, 'SC/14244'; UN, 'SC/13620', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 13 December 2018, https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13620.doc.htm, 15 August 2022.

68 UN, 'SC/10200', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 17 March 2011, https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10200.doc.htm, accessed 15 August 2022.

Libya on the grounds that with the UN Special Envoy's report not yet received, the text was, therefore, prepared on the basis of information whose accuracy had not yet been verified.[69] Conversely, South Africa took a different stance from other BRICS countries by voting in favour. South Africa justified its decision as acting 'responsibly' in responding to the call of the Libyan people, also emphasising also the role of the African Union.[70] In abstaining from voting on Resolution 1973 on Libya, Moscow voiced its opposition to violence against civilians, but also warned the UN that the resolution would further destabilize the region.[71] Expressing its humanitarian concerns in Resolution 1973 on Libya, China claimed that the use of force should be a last resort and that other conflict resolution methods had not yet been exhausted. China also justified its decision of not using its veto as the outcome of intense demands by the Arab League and the African Union.[72]

Regarding Yemen, on 26 February 2018, Moscow used its veto again, claiming that the text contained the intention to impose unilateral sanctions and intervene in the State.[73] China, on the other hand, abstained on the grounds that there was no threat of intervention.[74] In Resolution 2216, China voted this time in favour and emphasised that all parties in Yemen should be called to a ceasefire while reiterating its support for the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty.[75]

On 9 October 2015, in the vote to extend the term of the UN mission in South Sudan Russia abstained stating its concerns about harming the country's sovereignty.[76] Similarly, Russia also abstained from Resolutions 2418 and 2459 regarding the renewal of sanctions and extension of the UN missions, citing the principle of sovereignty. China abstained from the text of the sanctions and arms embargo on the South Sudanese authorities in Resolution 2418, stating that this draft would not contribute to the peace process.[77] While China also abstained from Resolution 2471 of 30 August 2019, which extended sanctions against South Sudan, it argued that as maintaining the political process

69 *ibid.*
70 *ibid.*
71 *ibid.*
72 *ibid*
73 UN, 'SC/13225', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 26 February 2018, https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13225.doc.htm, accessed 15 August 2022.
74 *ibid.*
75 UN, 'SC/11859'.
76 UN, 'SC/12073', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 9 October 2015, https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12073.doc.htm, accessed 15 August 2022.
77 UN, 'SC/13361'.

was indicative of the goodwill of the parties involved, extending sanctions was unnecessary.[78]

It is observed that the votes of BRICS members do not always constitute homogeneous response and their discourses are shaped predominantly around pluralist concepts. This represents a pattern expected of them, with countries frequently emphasizing sovereignty and territorial integrity and prioritising political solutions. Also, the fact that the statements made by the BRICS countries for these cases are in a pluralist perspective coincides with the attitude of the group towards the cases in their declarations. Therefore, regarding the third pillar of R2P, BRICS generally shared pluralist discourses emphasizing territorial integrity and sovereignty. However, it has been observed that the attitudes and voting of BRICS countries towards these crises in the Security Council (apart from South Africa's sensitive view of humanitarian issues) do neither lean towards a solidarist perspective nor do they demonstrate group solidarity towards R2P cases.

### 3.2 *Ivory Coast, Mali, Central African Republic: A Contradiction?*

BRICS members' voting behaviour and justifications on cases in Ivory Coast, Mali, and the Central African Republic (CAR) cases represent a deviation from the general pattern. In contrast to the view that BRICS deadlocks the Security Council when an intervention is in question, all members of the group voted in favour of Resolution 1975, which called for intervention in the Ivory Coast. Similarly, China and Russia voted in favour of Resolution 2149 for the CAR and Resolutions 2071 and 2100 for Mali and authorised the French-led UN operations. Thus, it has been observed that BRICS members do not in fact not always vote against interventions and occasionally allow them. Although these cases occurred in the same period as the other cases, BRICS showed a different behavioural pattern. However, it should be underlined that they did not include, for instance, the Ivory Coast crisis on their agenda as a group, and that they only discussed the peacekeeping dimension in Mali and CAR.

When the justification on the votes by BRICS UN representatives are evaluated, BRICS countries either did not make any statement on these votes or explained their reasons for voting in favour of or abstaining as, variously, a contribution to the UN peacekeeping force, pressure from regional organizations, or support for the peace process (see Table 2). In the statements, there are no references to concepts associated with solidarism, such as the state's inability to protect its citizens or the responsibility of the international society. Moreover, BRICS underlined that those peacekeeping operations should not

78 UN, 'SC/13827'.

be a part of the war and frequently called for the removal of sanctions on state authorities.

Resolution 1975, adopted on 30 March 2011, imposed sanctions on those responsible for the conflicts in the Ivory Coast, and French forces were employed alongside the UN. All BRICS countries voted in favour of this resolution. Brazil stated that the Security Council conveyed a clear message to stop the conflicts, but stressed that the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) should not be a part of the conflicts.[79] South Africa argued that the African Union and ECOWAS should be more involved in the process in order to achieve a political solution, but agreed that the Resolution strengthened UNOCI.[80] Although India voted in favour, the country stressed that peacekeepers should not be actors of regime change.[81] The Chinese representative, Li Baodong, who voted in favour of the resolution on Ivory Coast, voiced his concerns about the worsening situation in the country.[82]

Russia abstained from Resolution 2507 on 31 January 2020 on the extension of sanctions against the CAR claiming the arms embargo reduced the power of the CAR's security forces to maintain peace and security.[83] On the other hand, Russia voted in favour of Resolutions 2127 and 2149, which deployed a UN mission to the CAR within the scope of Chapter VII. Similar to Russia, China voted in favour of both Resolution 2127 on 5 December 2013, which accepted the deployment of a UN mission to the CAR, and Resolution 2149, in which this mission was extended. China, which abstained from the extension of the sanctions against the CAR approved by Resolution 2507 of 31 January 2020, stated that the Security Council should respond to the changing situation on the ground and that the sanctions should be lifted as soon as possible.[84]

Resolutions 2071 and 2100 also established peacekeeping forces within the scope of the UN and French troops for Mali, and Russia stated that while it voted in favour of overcoming the complex crisis in Mali, the ultimate responsibility for solving the current problems rested with Malians.[85] South Africa, voting in favour of Resolution 2507, which extended the sanctions and embargoes

79 UN, 'SC/10215', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 30 March 2011, https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10215.doc.htm, accessed 15 August 2022..

80 *ibid.*

81 *ibid.*

82 *ibid.*

83 UN, 'SC/14096', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 31 January 2020, https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14096.doc.htm, accessed 15 August 2022.

84 *ibid.*

85 UN, 'SC/10987', UN Meeting Coverage and Press Releases, 25 April 2013, https://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc10987.doc.htm accessed 16 August 2022.

on the CAR, nevertheless underlined the positive impact of lifting the arms embargo against the regime as soon as possible.[86] In the case of Resolution 2071, in which the UN operation to be undertaken in Mali was decided, China voted in favour but did not base this vote on R2P. Although China's discourses on humanitarian crises are pluralistic, its statements reveal that it is not quite so antagonistic to the R2P norm as is Russia, but it prefers to act cautiously towards the decisions to be made by the international society.

Examining their voting behaviour, it is observed that BRICS countries act differently in these cases compared to other crises. However, when we look at their discourse, we do not see policy change from the countries. Although countries make decisions that will lead to intervention, principles such as order, sovereignty, and non-interference in internal affairs have always been included in their discourse, and intervention or humanitarian concerns have never been included as the responsibility that forms the basis of R2P. It is also seen that while many drafts were passed by the Security Council, China and Russia have either made use of their veto, especially in texts containing sanction decisions, or mostly abstained from the final resolutions. While the remaining three BRICS members also abstained from some resolutions, in some cases, they voted in favour of drafts in which China and Russia had reservations or used their veto power.

Table 2 summarises the key concepts addressed by BRICS in discussions on R2P cases at the Security Council.

TABLE 2 Key concepts addressed by BRICS in UNSC statements

| Country | Discourse on keywords |
|---|---|
| Brazil | Transparency; accountability; elimination of ambiguities |
| Russia | Immature concept; sovereignty; non-interference in internal affairs; international law |
| India | Security Council reform; access to accurate information; the difference between peacekeeping and intervention |
| China | Sovereignty; respect for international law; non-participation in conflict |
| South Africa | Regional organisations; not to be indifferent |

SOURCE: THE AUTHORS' OWN WORK COMPILED FROM THE SOURCES IN THE ARTICLE

86 UN, 'SC/14096'.

## 4 In the Guise of a Conclusion: Evolution without Progress?

This article analysed BRICS countries' attitudes to R2P cases in the post-2008 period and attempted to position the group within the English School's pluralism-solidarism debate. Through an examination of the evolution of the group's position in its summit declarations, and its members' voting and justifications in the Security Council, the study attempted to understand whether and how BRICS countries have addressed R2P, as being a solidarist norm, through a solidarist frame. The findings revealed that there is an obvious quantitative increase in the group's interest towards issues related to peace and security in general and global/regional crises more specifically. It is also observed that BRICS leaned towards a common pluralist discourse emphasising the UN system and its principles such as territorial integrity, sovereignty, and non-interference while referring to humanitarian crises. Therefore, their position as a group towards R2P could best be framed as 'Charter solidarism'.

On the other hand, the analyses of Security Council votes towards R2P cases, as well as their justifications, revealed that the decisions of each member may vary depending on the case involved. This differs from the prevailing view in the literature that BRICS member states objected to most cases. More importantly, the study also found that even when BRICS members voted in favour of decisions to intervene, they did not do so under the framework of the solidarist rationale of R2P. In other words, the group has not yet demonstrated willingness to be solidarist in their relations with the international society.

All BRICS members adopted the 2005 World Summit Outcome and supported the Secretary-General's three-pillar structure of R2P in 2009. However, BRICS representatives have frequently expressed their doubts about Security Council draft texts and have drawn attention to ambiguities in the implementation of the R2P. BRICS countries have adopted a more pluralist attitude in their discourse, particularly with respect to the intervention pillar of R2P. By highlighting principles such as sovereignty and territorial integrity, they have described interventions as disruptive and interfering in internal affairs. However, when this study analysed BRICS's behaviour in all cases holistically, it found that BRICS did not, in fact, always vote against the decision to intervene. The stances of Russia and China, permanent members of the Council, have been more rigid than other BRICS members, however, neither stood in the way of interventions in Mali and CAR. Similarly, South Africa, Brazil, and India also voted in favour of the Ivory Coast intervention, along with Russia and China, despite their criticisms of the norm during and after the R2P process. However, this situation should not be interpreted as a contradiction, because when the discourses of BRICS representatives during Council voting and the summit

declarations of the group were examined, it was observed that they did not adopt a solidarist tone as presumed by R2P. Crucially, they almost never used the concept of responsibility and continued to consider crises within the framework of states' internal affairs and sovereignty. Despite accepting the duty of the international society to support and assist in cases such as Syria, Yemen, and South Sudan, these crises, according to BRICS, did not give the international society the right to intervene as a responsibility. On the contrary, they highlighted the main arguments of pluralism in their discourses, emphasising that external intervention would further complicate the situation. When they voted in favour, it was not on the basis of solidarism, but other concerns and reasons. In this sense, China and Russia have been influential actors in shaping the BRICS agenda. Russia's direct involvement in the Syrian crisis apparently effects the extent to which BRICS members support the third pillar of R2P. Thus, it can be said that as long as political risks and transaction costs are low, BRICS countries may support even the third pillar of R2P.

Nevertheless, BRICS recognises the international society's duty regarding the first two pillars of R2P in general and has adopted a supportive stance. The BRICS members who opposed the third pillar were mainly Russia and China. One should also underline the nuanced difference between Russia and China in how they approach the norm. South Africa has been more receptive towards possible military interventions on its continent with the provision that regional organisations are involved. Brazil and India, on the other hand, also view also military interventions as a possibility, but only as a last resort and if transparency mechanisms and decision-making processes are improved. In this respect, although BRICS acts within the framework of pluralist principles as a group, Brazil, India, and South Africa display a more open stance to the contestation of the norm, while Russia and China seem much more firmly attached to pluralist discourse.

This presents a projection of the future behaviour of BRICS as a group in R2P cases. For even if the countries make decisions that may lead to a decision to intervene, and they did intervene, these might most probably be for 'instrumental' and 'power-interest' purposes since realpolitik interests may be influential. Russian excessive use of military means as exemplified by the Syrian, and most recently Ukrainian cases, once again demonstrated that. Apart from minor collective measures such as the BRICS development bank putting on hold all new transactions in Russia, there has not been a unified-solidarist position among BRICS. There has been weak opposition from China and India as they abstained in the General Assembly Uniting for Peace Resolution while Brazil and South Africa voted in favour.

Therefore, from a broader perspective, the BRICS case once again underlines the problematic working mechanisms of the third pillar of R2P and the risk of its abuse. Hence compared to the consensus on the first and second pillars, the third pillar and its mechanisms should be opened once again to contestation for a genuine and working implementation. In sum, although there seems to be an enormous quantitative evolution in terms of BRICS interest as a group on issues related to humanitarian crises as exemplified by their widening agenda, it is very difficult to say that there is 'progress' in their socialisation towards group solidarity or addressing R2P issues from a solidarist frame.

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