

Rising powers and the future of peacekeeping and peacebuilding

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■ Executive summary

This report considers the influence of the rising powers on the governance of international peace and security, and especially United Nations (UN) peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It argues that the rising powers are committed to the reform of the global order, and that they are pursuing a multilateral rule-based global architecture that can provide the legal and political framework necessary to ensure a more equitable, enforceable and stable global order, in which it would be impossible for any one country, or bloc of countries, to dominate the system. However, this reform agenda needs to be understood in long-term evolutionary terms. The rising powers have a strong incentive to be cautious in their approach, because disruptions to the global order would harm their own economic growth and thus their own internal developmental agendas. In the context of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the report argues that the reform of the international peace and security system is not a high priority for the rising powers in the short to medium term, bar exceptional cases like Libya and Syria. However, the influence of these powers may gradually result in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding becoming more sensitive to respect for sovereignty and national ownership.

Introduction

The term “emerging powers” has become part of the taken-for-granted vocabulary of international affairs. Yet the term is relatively recent and there is little consensus as to its meaning. When searching for commonalities among the emerging powers, one is tempted to conclude that above-average economic growth is the only factor that most have in common. In fact, as is widely known, the term “BRIC” (Brazil, Russia, India and China), which was coined by the investment firm Goldman Sachs in 2003, was meant to capture these countries at the core of the so-called emerging markets. However, there is clearly more to emerging powers than the degree to which they attract capital. If anything, they have become a symbol of the potential for alternatives to the current U.S. hegemonic order (Alden & Viera, 2005).

The overall aim of this report is to consider how the rise of these powers may influence the governance of international peace and security, and especially United Nations (UN)

peacekeeping and peacebuilding, in the future. Our assessment is based on the past actions and stated ambitions of several emerging powers, including Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Russia, South Africa and Turkey.¹

The report is structured as follows. Firstly, we position the emerging-powers concept within a conceptual framework, and argue, echoing Hurrell (2006), that all these countries can be understood to be “on the outside looking in” on a global system dominated largely, to date, by the U.S. and its Western allies. Next we consider how these countries view themselves, and we make a case for understanding them as “rising powers” that, while committed to the reform of the global order, are primarily concerned with their own national development. Finally, we focus on their influence on the future direction of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, where we argue that the influence of the rising powers may lead to a greater emphasis on respect for sovereignty and national ownership.

¹ For this study NUPI has sourced inputs from its partners in the Civilian Capacities Network (<http://bit.ly/1ck6Gwb>), and the authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Igarapé Institute (Brazil), the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa (Egypt), the United Services Institution (India), the Centre for Strategic and International Studies – Jakarta (Indonesia), the Diplomatic Academy (Russia), ACCORD (South Africa) and the Istanbul Policy Centre (Turkey).

Taking responsibility for the co-management of international order has always been one of the hallmarks of great-power status, and in the first section we consider how the term “emerging power” can fit into the way power is understood in international relations theory (de Carvalho, 2009).

Emerging powers in theoretical context

The original BRIC states – Brazil, Russia, India and China – were the four states commonly associated with the label “emerging power”. Yet Russia, which inherited the seat of the Soviet Union on the UN Security Council, and China, the potential rising superpower, are regarded by many commentators as already belonging to the category of great powers rather than emerging ones.

In fact, coming to grips with the category of great powers is central if one is to make sense of what these countries are supposed to be emerging to (Narlikar, 2010; Schweller, 2011). There seem to be two markedly different views on the essence of great power. The first, which could be termed a “Realist” view, regards the stratification of actors as a matter of mainly military and economic capabilities. What distinguishes superpowers from great powers and regional powers is their ability to assert themselves against other competing powers, and thus ultimately their ability to engage in and win wars (Mearsheimer, 2001: 5). This approach will lead us to a more conservative view of emerging powers, limited perhaps only to those potentially able to mobilise more hard power in the future, such as China, India and Russia.

The second view is that associated with the English School, which emphasises the ability, right and willingness of a state to co-manage international order. This notion derives largely from Bull (1977: 205-6), who argues that great powerhood is more than capability. Great powers are granted the legitimate “right” to manage international order by other members of the international community, and it is understood by all that “great powers manage their relations with one another in the interest of international order”.

Buzan and Wæver (2004: 31) show how contested the “great power” concept has been since the end of the cold war. They argue that the problem has been “a confusingly large range of significant powers, many of which did not easily slot into the categories of the theory”. The U.S. ranked as a superpower, and still does by most accounts, but:

In between [the superpower and regional powers] sat a set of second-rank powers that did not come close to measuring up to the USA, but which were significant global players in one way or another, and which clearly transcended regional or middle power status (Buzan & Wæver, 2004: 31).

In order to include the emerging powers into such a typology, we paraphrase Buzan and Wæver in that what

distinguishes emerging powers from merely regional ones is that they are often responded to by others on the basis of system-level calculations about the present and near-future distribution of power. Consequently, emerging powers can be said to be emerging from their regions onto the global scene, and they possess a certain set of attributes, or serious potential, to bid for great-power status – i.e. taking on even greater responsibility for co-managing the global order – in the short to medium term.

Hart and Jones (2011) compare emerging powers, great powers and (the) superpower and find considerable variety among the emerging powers, with some closer to great-power status than others. What they find especially important is that these countries have in common “some ability to contribute to the generation of a revised international order” and the fact that “the rising powers were never fully integrated into the post-1945 order” (Hart & Jones, 2001: 65). Thus, being on the outside looking in, as Hurrell (2006) has argued, “has heavily conditioned their strategic interests and conceptions of ‘national purpose’” (Hart & Jones 2010: 67).

Rising powers as they see themselves

The countries studied for this report share certain similarities. These are less a matter of similar economic-, military- or political-power attributes, and more a question of a shared analysis of the current state of global order and a shared vision of how it could be governed differently in the future. They share a common experience, as states who are “on the outside looking in”, and as such they articulate an alternative vision of a multilateral system that is strongly rule based, so as to constrain the ability of stronger states to dominate the system. Because most of these states take issue with the term “emerging powers” – they claim to eschew great- or superpower ambitions – but nevertheless perceive themselves as having an important role in global affairs that goes beyond their immediate region, we now shift to using the term “rising powers”, which is perhaps a better reflection of how these countries see themselves.

For instance, Brazil’s foreign policy establishment has sought to make the country indispensable in major international negotiations and to gain credibility as a useful mediator between North and South, and between industrialised and developing countries (Burgess, 2013). At the same time it has been careful to distance itself from more traditional forms of hard power. Brazil dismisses claims that it has ambitions to acquire substantial military capacity, and rejects intrusive partnerships with established players in North America and Western Europe (Bodnam et al., 2011; Domingos & de Carvalho, 2012). Furthermore, the Brazilian government routinely emphasises multilateral institutions and diplomacy as the fundamental basis for legitimate global order (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2010). Brazil thus prefers to frame its rise not in terms of projecting power, but rather in terms of its contribution to solving global problems. In the last decade the country has either joined or enhanced its

profile in several international organisations, and has become a significant player in issues ranging from trade to development co-operation, and from climate change to international peace and security. Brazil is also campaigning for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (de Carvalho, 2011).

Categorising China as an emerging power is problematic. While there is no doubt that China is already a great power and that it is still rising in power and influence, the country itself argues that it is not seeking superpower status. China's rise, contrary to the Realist power theories discussed earlier, has been due to the significant role played by its economy in the global system. It has nevertheless been engaged in an ambitious programme to strengthen its military capacity, and has more recently shown its willingness to flex its hard power to protect its interests in the South China Sea. However, it is also possible to understand China from the perspective of a country that has been on the "outside looking in". For while China's rising capabilities are undisputed, it has chosen to not yet assert itself politically in institutions such as the UN Security Council, where it has a permanent seat with veto power. Instead, China has chosen to focus its efforts internally, where it has had remarkable success in lifting millions of its own citizens out of poverty. Internationally, it has chosen to focus its efforts on creating its own alternative networks, at one level with a few fellow rising powers in the form of the BRICS grouping (BRIC plus South Africa), and on another level with the suppliers of the key resources it needs as inputs for its economy. As a result, China has become a major investor in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Europe. Its focus on the BRICS and on its trading partners can be understood in terms of how central its economy is to both China's internal development agenda and its place in the global system. China has, at the same time, used the BRICS to clearly articulate an alternative vision of a global order that is rule based, pluralist and equitable, and that would make it impossible for any one state, or grouping of states, to develop hegemonic power over the global system (Odgaard, 2012).

Egypt, on the other hand, is recognised more as a regional power in Africa and the Middle East than as an emerging great power. However, looking at Egyptian foreign policy, it is clear that the country perceives the rising-power label as rightly fitting its ambitions and place. Egypt has considered itself to be influential in international relations since the mid-1990s and as a recognised regional power in the Middle East and Africa. Egypt was among one of several countries referred to by Goldman Sachs as the "Next 11" in late-2005. In his first year in office, newly elected (and now deposed) Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi undertook official visits to all five members of the BRICS, and during his participation in the BRICS summit in Durban, South Africa in March 2013 he expressed his hope that the BRICS would one day become E-BRICS, where E stands for Egypt.

India is clear-cut candidate for the rising-power category. However, there is also a debate in India as to whether it is in fact a "re-emerging power". Some seek recognition for the fact that India was a major power in the 15th century, before colonisation, and that it represents an old civilisation that is the birthplace of some of the traditional great cultures and religions of the world. Others are more pragmatic and argue that working together with other countries labelled as emerging or rising will add further momentum to India's growth, influence and prestige.

Like Egypt, Indonesia still sits uneasily between regional-power and rising-power status. Domestically there is a debate about whether it is an emerging, regional or middle power. On the one hand, Indonesia sees itself as a big country because of its size (in terms of both population and territory), its economic performance (within the top 20 in terms of gross domestic product), and its political clout due to its status as the third-largest democracy and the country with the largest Muslim community in the world. On the other hand, there is recognition that its economic, military and diplomatic capabilities are not yet of such a scale as to give it the same status as the other rising powers that make up the BRICS.

Russia does not see itself as an emerging power, but rather as a great power. Russia is the only member of the BRICS that is also a member of the G8, and together with China it is the only other BRICS country that is a permanent member of the Security Council. Yet Russia has traditionally occupied an ambiguous position between East and West, and between North and South. In the First to Third World categorisation, it uniquely occupied the Second World slot, and its relations with Europe and the West can thus also largely be described as "on the outside looking in". So, from the Russian perspective, co-operation with strong, rapidly growing rising powers is needed not because of a shared development path, but for geopolitical strategic reasons. The main reason why Russia chooses to self-identify with the BRICS is that it believes that through its membership of the organisation it will be in a better position to check the hegemonic role of the U.S. and its allies and bring about a more multipolar world, where it sees itself as occupying one of the great-power seats.

South Africa positions itself as a regional power in Africa and as a rising power that acts in the best interest of the Global South. It has clearly articulated a revisionist international agenda and has shown a willingness to use its two terms as a non-permanent member of the Security Council to aggressively pursue this pro-Global South agenda. South Africa campaigns for two African seats on the UN Security Council and believes that it should occupy one of these seats. Apart from its prominent role in Africa, South Africa is also an active member of the G20, IBSA² and BRICS groupings. Because South Africa is clearly the

2 IBSA is a trilateral, developmental initiative among India, Brazil and South Africa to promote South-South co-operation and exchange; see, for instance, <<http://ibsa.nic.in>>.

smallest of the BRICS countries in economic terms, the question is often raised as to whether it should be a member of the BRICS. When the South African government answers this question it argues that Africa should be represented in the BRICS, and that South Africa should represent Africa because it is the leading power in Africa, both economically and politically. Illustrating our conceptual framework offered initially, the country's role as a rising power is strongly anchored in its role as a regional power, a position from which it engages in the BRICS grouping and other international forums, as well as its ambitions to become a permanent member of the Security Council.

While Turkey is often labelled an emerging power, there is strong resistance to this in the national discourse, where the term "rising power" is favoured as a way of avoiding associations with Turkey's imperial history. In the context of its historic role in the Ottoman Empire, Turkey can also be seen as a re-emerging power, but in its contemporary form Turkey is cautious to balance itself between East and West. In fact, it wishes to be seen as a global and regional political leader rather than an economic power. It wishes to build on its membership of NATO to become a European Union (EU) member, but at the same time it wants to be recognised as a regional leader in the Middle East and Muslim world. In this context Turkey sees itself as rising in power and influence in the region and the world, but does not have ambitions to join the BRICS or to identify itself with this grouping's revisionist agenda. Instead, for Turkey its rise is linked to protecting its special relationship with the West while at the same time capitalising on its historic and contemporary geopolitical role in its immediate region.

In this section we reflected on how some of the rising powers perceive and position themselves. As we indicated towards the end of the first section, however, we have a special interest in seeing how the rising powers may wish to influence the governance of international peace and security, and especially the future of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In the next section we thus turn specifically to this question and ask how the rising powers themselves anticipate shaping the future direction of international – and especially UN – peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The influence of the rising powers on peacekeeping and peacebuilding

One of the interests shared by the rising powers is a strong focus on their own internal development. As a result, the rising powers in general, and the BRICS in particular, have been less prominent when it comes to stated claims to influence international peace and security issues. However, they do share some common perspectives on the conduct of peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding activities. For instance, in broad terms most countries in the West have over the last decade increased their willingness to intervene in crisis zones, with force if necessary, to protect civilians and to promote democracy, while the rising

powers take a more nuanced view, favouring instead the principles of sovereignty and self-determination (Richmond & Tellidis, 2013).

As discussed in the previous section, the rising powers share a commitment to countering hegemony and pursuing a more equitable and rule-based global order, and in this context most of them are outspoken about the need to reform international institutions, including primarily the UN Security Council. However, China and Russia – both of whom are members of the BRICS, but are also veto-holding permanent members of the Security Council – are more cautious about Security Council reform. This is partly because, like the other permanent members of the Security Council, they are not keen to give up their privileged positions. However, there is also another more nuanced reason. While the rising powers are committed to checking the power of the U.S. and its allies, they are also cautious not to pursue this agenda at a pace that would destabilise the current global order. This is because their continued rise is closely interlinked with the position their economies enjoy in the global economy and the degree to which they are able to make domestic progress with their national development agendas. Reforming the global system at too rapid a pace may destabilise the global economy. This means that the BRICS and other rising powers will be careful when pushing for the reform of institutions like the UN Security Council, to ensure that such reforms are evolutionary rather than revolutionary in scope and pace.

In this context, the reform of international peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations is not a high priority for the rising powers. Those studied for this report have all shown commitment to international – and especially UN – peacekeeping, and they recognise it as a crucial international tool in a rule-based international system. However, they are less enthusiastic about peacebuilding, because they perceive it to have been abused by the West as a tool to impose neoliberal values on weak states, and thus as a way of using the UN and other international and regional organisations to increase its (i.e. the West's) influence in the international system. In principle the rising powers prefer peacemaking and peacebuilding, as long as they are not prescriptive, to peacekeeping, but in practice most of their efforts have been directed to participating in peacekeeping operations.

At the beginning of this section we argued that international peace and security issues were not high on the agenda of the rising powers. While this is true in terms of the relative attention these powers devote to the economy and development rather than peace and security issues, the exception has been high-profile interventions such as the UN-authorized NATO intervention in Libya in 2011. While some countries in the West, most vocally France, Britain and the U.S., openly argued for regime change as an integral aspect of resolving the Libyan conflict, most of the rising powers and all the BRICS countries opposed

military intervention in Libya that was aimed at regime change, arguing that only the Libyan people had the agency to choose their leaders and political system. The outcome of the intervention in Libya and the perception that the West abused the UN mandate are now seen as constituting a turning point in the international debate about when interventions are justified and how intrusive they should be (Takur, 2013). In the subsequent months the shadow of the intervention in Libya prevented the Security Council from reaching consensus on how to deal with the crisis in Syria. The representatives of the BRICS in the Security Council argued that they will not make the mistake again of trusting the West with the authority to undertake “limited action”, which can then be used as a justification to launch an intervention that amounts to regime change. In his statement to the UN Security Council on February 4th 2012, when South Africa voted in favour of a resolution on Syria, South Africa’s permanent representative stated that:

It is important that the Syrian people be allowed to decide their own fate including their future leadership. Fundamentally, no foreign or external parties should interfere in Syria as they engage in the critical decision making processes on the future of their country. Any solution must preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We were also satisfied that the final draft resolution was not aimed at imposing regime change in Syria, which would be against the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (Permanent Mission of South Africa to the UN, 2012).

The position of the BRICS is thus that only the Syrians have the agency to determine their own future. Russian president Vladimir Putin provided a similar clarification at the close of the G20’s 2012 summit in Mexico, when he was asked about the Russian position on Syria. He explained: “we believe that nobody has the right to decide for other nations who should be brought to power, who should be removed from power” (President of Russia, 2012).

In sharp contrast to these controversial interventions, most of the rising powers – and all of the BRICS – are positive about UN peacekeeping operations and many have increased their engagement with UN peacekeeping in recent years. China is now the largest troop- and police-contributing country to UN peacekeeping missions among the permanent members of the Security Council.³ India has been a major player in UN peacekeeping since the very early missions, and it is usually among the top three troop-, police- and civilian-contributing countries. It has also contributed many force commanders and other senior civilian and police leaders. Russia has been an active participant in UN operations and is also a major contractor to UN peacekeeping, especially in the aviation sector. Brazil has taken a leading role in the UN mission in Haiti, includ-

ing also contributing several force commanders, and is particularly active in other post-conflict and crisis zones where there is a Lusophone dimension (Kenkel, 2010). South Africa is among the top African contributors and usually in the top ten overall contributors to UN peacekeeping operations, but in line with its regional focus all its deployments have been in Africa (Bellamy & Williams, 2013). Russia and South Africa are also major contributors to their respective regional peacekeeping mechanisms.

However, there are significant differences among the rising powers when it comes to how they view UN peacekeeping, especially in terms of the use of force. China has been the most cautious, contributing mostly engineering and medical units, because of the emphasis the country places on the defensive nature of its armed forces. India has deployed attack helicopters and has otherwise participated in Chapter VII missions mandated to use force, but in practice is has also been cautious in how it has employed force. Brazil has opposed the trend towards more robust UN mandates, but in Haiti its troops were effective in using limited force to ensure security in urban areas. Among the BRICS, South Africa seems to be most willing to embrace a more robust approach to UN peacekeeping. It campaigned strongly for a robust intervention brigade in the eastern DRC, and contributed troops to the brigade once it was authorised (Gowan, 2013).

Among the rising powers studied for this report, Turkey is again the exception in that its focus has been on its membership of NATO, and it has deployed troops, police and civilians to Afghanistan as part of the NATO operation there. Turkey is also positioning itself as a regional peacemaker and is carving an identity for itself as having a distinctive Islamic ethical approach to international mediation. It has also quite boldly taken on a major post-conflict reconstruction role in Somalia, where it chooses to engage directly with the new Federal Government of Somalia, in contrast to most of the traditional donors, which prefer to engage with Somalia via multilateral institutions like the UN and EU.

In general, one could perhaps say that the rising powers support and encourage the shift towards localising peacekeeping and peacebuilding capacities (de Coning et al., 2013). This trend fits well with the stated emphasis BRICS members place on the need to respect national sovereignty and national ownership, something they see as crucial to increasing the chances for successful conflict resolution (Tardy, 2012). The rising powers are thus likely to be inclined to support peacekeeping and peacebuilding policies that empower local ownership and a contextualised approach to peacebuilding efforts, because such an approach will check the transplanting of values and models from one region to another (de Coning, 2013). China, for instance, has stated that it rejects the notion of

³ France may temporarily retake that position, depending on how many of its soldiers will become part of the new UN mission in Mali, but the long-term trend clearly favours China.

unified standards for peacebuilding endeavours (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2009).

This may become an issue in the post-2015 development debate, especially if the rising powers feel that the goals and targets proposed reflect a specific solution bias towards a Western neoliberal approach to peacebuilding and development (Saferworld, 2012). They may prefer an alternative approach where post-2015 goals and targets are formulated in such a way that countries are empowered to find their own context-specific solutions.

Conclusion

Many see the emergence of the BRICS as potentially having the effect of counterbalancing U.S. hegemony. However, it would be an over-simplification if the rising-power concept is understood only in the context of great-power rivalry. Firstly, from a BRICS perspective, it is important to recognise that the rising-power concept is used in a positive sense that suggests growth, potential and South-South co-operation. It is thus first and foremost about the (self-)development of the South, not about countering the West. Secondly, the rising-power concept needs to be understood in the context of an integrated global economic system where the potential for power rivalry is significantly constrained by the degree to which all these economies are highly interdependent.

Within this context, the rising powers in general, and the BRICS in particular, can be understood as a bloc of countries that seek to counter what they perceive as the unfair advantage that the Western bloc has gained from the current global architecture. In their view, a truly multilateral rule-based global architecture can provide the legal and political framework necessary to ensure a more equitable, enforceable and stable global order in which it would be impossible for any one country, or bloc of countries, to dominate the system. However, this reform agenda needs to be understood in long-term evolutionary terms. The rising powers have a strong incentive to be cautious in their approach, because disruptions to the global order would harm their own economic growth and thus their own internal developmental agendas.

At the time of writing, Egypt and Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Brazil were experiencing major popular demonstrations against their respective governments. These are symptomatic of the serious internal developmental challenges that all the rising powers face. It is thus not surprising that their attention is primarily focused on their own national developmental agendas. As a consequence, the reform of the international peace and security system, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding, is not a high priority for the rising powers in the short to medium term, bar exceptional cases like Libya and Syria. This does not mean that the rising powers are not committed to serious reform of the global system, including its peace and

security dimensions, but rather that such reforms will be pursued in a way and at a pace that is evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

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