

Chapter 5

Rising powers and the emerging global order

ANDREW HURRELL

• Introduction	81
• The post-cold war order	81
• The US order under challenge	83
• Three questions about emerging powers	86
• Conclusion: rising states and the globalization of world politics	90

Reader's Guide

After a period of US dominance of the international political and economic systems, the world order began to undergo what many came to see as a fundamental structural change from the mid-2000s. This was initially associated with the rise of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), but was then strengthened by the crisis of finance capitalism that hit the core Western countries after 2007. This chapter begins by examining the US-led global order that emerged at the end of the cold war and at the arguments for this being likely to remain stable and to endure. The second section considers the challenges to the idea of a US-dominated global order, paying particular attention to the role of large,

emerging developing countries, to the idea of the BRICs, to the regional role of these countries, and to the new Southern coalitions that were coming to play an increasingly influential role in negotiations and institutions affecting trade, climate change, and foreign aid. The third section distinguishes between different views of the diffusion of power, discusses what is involved when we talk of 'rising powers', and looks at some of the major theoretical arguments about how rising powers affect global politics. The concluding section considers the argument that today's emerging powers matter not simply because of their current and likely future power, but rather because of the challenge that they pose to the euro-centrism and Western dominance of the international order.

Introduction

At the end of the **cold war** the structure of global order appeared clear and straightforward. The West had won. The United States was the sole superpower and the world was living through a period of **unipolarity** that, many believed, would continue well into the twenty-first century. The US-led order had three pillars: first, the unrivalled extent and many dimensions of US power; second, the Western-dominated institutions and multilateral organizations originally created in the wake of the Second World War—the United Nations, the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** (the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** from 1995), and the **World Bank** and **International Monetary Fund**; and third, the dense network of alliances and close bilateral relationships across the Atlantic and Pacific. For many commentators, this liberal Greater West had triumphed and was bound to increase its global reach—partly through the intensification of economic and social globalization, partly through the power and attractiveness of Western ideas of democracy, human rights, and liberal capitalism, and partly through deliberate US policies and the effective deployment of American power.

The central question, however, was whether this period of US predominance would last. For many, the most important lesson of history is that challengers to unequal power will always emerge, either because of the competitive nature of international politics or because of the restless and dynamic quality of global capitalism. On one side, analysts considered the stability of US power. How far would the US fall prey to ‘imperial

overstretch’—whether in the form of costly and frustrating military campaigns, due to economic unsustainability and fiscal imbalances, or due to the loss of domestic support for playing a global hegemonic role. In the case of Europe, the 1990s also seemed to point to a rosy future. The enlargement of the **European Union (EU)** had been a stunning success, institutions were becoming deeper, and many saw the ‘normative power’ of the European model as meshing perfectly with the way in which twenty-first-century international society was moving (Manners 2006). But by the middle of the 2000s doubts were becoming more evident, dramatically reinforced by the euro crisis. On the other side, attention quickly came to focus on the large, fast-growing countries in what had previously been called the **Third World** or the **global South**. Following the introduction in the late 1970s of market-led reforms, China was establishing itself as the major manufacturing power of the global economy and as one of the obvious major powers in the system. And, in the next tier down, a range of other states were becoming both more active and influential globally and acquiring a significant degree of regional influence (as with Brazil in Latin America; India in South Asia; Indonesia in Asia; Nigeria and South Africa in Africa). These developments came to be seen as representing a power challenge to the US and Europe. But they also constituted a challenge to the **eurocentrism** and Western dominance of an international order that had been created historically through the process of European imperialism.

The post-cold war order

Many academics, especially in Europe and the United States, told three kinds of liberal stories about the post-cold war world. Some stressed institutions and the cooperative logic of institutions. Institutions are needed to deal with the ever more complex dilemmas of collective action that emerge in a globalized world. The complexity of the governance challenges meant that international law and international regimes would necessarily increase in number, scope, and variety. It also meant that as large states, including large developing states, expanded their range of interests and integrated more fully into the global economy and world

society—as they ‘joined the world’ in the popular language of the 1990s—they would be naturally drawn by the functional benefits provided by institutions, and pressed towards more cooperative and ‘responsible’ patterns of behaviour. They would gradually become socialized into a Western-led global order. The process would not necessarily be easy. It would be uneven and often unsettling. But, on this view, the broad direction of travel was clear.

Others stressed the **Kantian** idea of the gradual but progressive diffusion of liberal values, partly as a result of liberal economics and increased economic

interdependence, partly as a global civil society liberal legal order comes to sustain the autonomy of a global civil society, and partly as a result of the successful example set by the multifaceted liberal capitalist system of states. There was little option but to accept the intrinsic superiority of the ideas that had, on this view, quite literally conquered the world (Mandelbaum 2003).

A third group told a more US-centred story. The US was indeed the centre of a unipolar world. But, true both to its own values but also to its rational self-interest, Washington would have a continued incentive to bind itself within the institutions that it had created in the cold war era in order to reassure smaller states and to prevent balancing against US power (Ikenberry 2001). A rational hegemon in an age of globalization would understand the importance and utility of soft power and self-restraint. In return for this self-binding and the procedural **legitimacy** it would create, and in return for US-supplied global **public goods** and the output legitimacy that they would create, other states would acquiesce and accept the role of the United States as the owner and operator of the system.

For liberals, the challenge posed by the Soviet Union and its allies (the so-called Second World) had been seen off with the victorious end to the cold war. Through a mix of these three processes those developing states of the old Third World that had previously challenged the Western order (especially in the demands of the 1970s for a **New International Economic Order**) would now become increasingly enmeshed, socialized, and integrated. The nature and dynamics of power were changing. Joseph Nye was influential in arguing that **soft power** would outstrip hard coercive power in importance and concentrations of liberal power would attract rather than repel or threaten (Nye 2005). Just as the example of a liberal and successful European Union had created powerful incentives on the part of weaker and neighbouring states towards emulation and a desire for membership, so, on a larger scale and over a longer period, a similar pattern would be observed in the case of the developing and emerging world as a whole.

The 1990s, then, were marked by a clear sense of the liberal ascendancy, a clear assumption that the US had the right and power to decide what the 'liberal global order' was all about, and a clear belief that the Western order worked and that it had the answers. Yes, of course there would be isolated rogues and radical rejectionists. But they were on the 'wrong side of history' as President Clinton confidently proclaimed.

The idea that this US-led order was stable was not confined to liberals. One group of neo-realist thinkers argued that the extent of US power was simply so great that the normal logic of the balance of power had been overcome, and that no power was likely to emerge in the foreseeable future with the capacity to disturb US power and primacy (Wohlforth 1999). This is especially the case since, for neo-realists, military power is the most important form of power. In terms of military power the United States is, quite literally, in a class of its own: it accounts for 45 per cent of the world's total military spending; it has an enormous lead in new military technologies; it has a vast global network of over 750 overseas bases in over 100 countries, and it has a unique capacity to project power to any corner of the world. Since active opposition was ruled out, the expectation was that weaker states would have no option but to seek accommodation with the US and with the US-led global order.

Many critical political economists also saw stability. Across the developing world neo-liberalism was spreading, partly imposed by the US and its associated institutions and partly reflecting the choices of elites in what had previously been called the Third World and was now increasingly referred to as the global South. The neo-Marxist account has been neglected by mainstream Western debate on rising powers, but raises important questions. On this view, an excessive focus on the emerging nation-states of the South clouds and confuses the issue. What we are seeing is, in reality, the transformation of global **capitalism** from an old core centred on the advanced industrialized states into a far more global and far more thoroughly transnationalized capitalist order (see Robinson 2007). The systemic change has to do with the unfolding of a deterritorialized global capitalism made up of flows, fluxes, networked connections, and transnational production networks, but marked by inequality, instability, and new patterns of stratification. Rather than count up and categorize the 'power' of emerging powers, the intellectual challenge is to understand the 'transnational whole' in which such countries are embedded and the social forces and state-society relations that underpin the national developmental projects pursued by emerging country elites.

After the end of the cold war, the global South came to be redefined in transnational social terms rather than as a grouping or category of nation-states. Attention was focused more and more on the social movements that were emerging within and across the

global South in response to neo-liberalism: the **World Social Forum**, anti-globalization groups, and the protest movements that had come to prominence at the WTO ministerial meeting in Seattle in 1999. Many argued that the challenge then to the US-led order would not come from large developing countries (such

as India, China, or Brazil): it would come rather from radical rejectionist states (such as Venezuela or Iran); from grassroots anti-globalization movements; and from transnational anti-Western Islamic groupings and terrorist organizations. (For an influential account see Hardt and Negri 2001.)

Key Points

- During the 1990s there was near universal agreement that the global system was dominated by the power of the United States and its allies and by the institutions that the US dominated.
- From the perspective of the dominant norms of the system, the United States has rarely been a status quo power but has often sought to mould the system in its own image. Since the end of the cold war it has been a strongly revisionist power: in the 1990s, in terms of pressing for new norms on intervention, the opening of markets, and the embedding of particular sets of what it saw as liberal values in international institutions; in the early years of this century, in terms of its attempt to recast norms on regime change and on the use of force.
- The states of the global South did not face the United States within a stable notion of a 'Westphalian order'. From their perspective, the dominant Western states were insisting that many of the most important norms of the system ought to change, above all in ways that threatened greater interventionism. But there was a widespread sense that there was little alternative but to accommodate Western power.
- There was widespread consensus that challenges to the US-led order would result from 'blowback' or 'backlashes' against US and Western power, and would be focused around anti-hegemonic social movements or radical states.

The US order under challenge

But by the late 1990s this picture of a stable, US-dominated global order was coming under increasing challenge. The terrorist attacks of **11 September 2001** underscored the darker side of globalization. The experience of trying to fight a 'war' on global terrorism and of using hard coercive power to dominate weaker societies (as in Iraq or Afghanistan) brought to the fore the limits of military power for achieving political goals. The mismatch between Washington's rhetoric of human rights and democracy and its systematic willingness to violate human rights in defence of its national security (as with Guantanamo, Abu Graib, and the policy of so-called rendition of terrorist suspects) undercut Western claims to moral superiority. And, for many governments and for many groups within a broad range of societies, the unilateralism of the Bush administration was undercutting the legitimacy and acceptability of US leadership.

One of the most visible signs that something was changing concerned the increased diplomatic activism on the part of large developing countries. The intensive coalitional policies of Brazil and India in the World Trade Organization provide a good example, most notably in terms of the G20 trade coalition created at

Cancún in 2003. At the fifth Ministerial Conference of the WTO at Cancún in September 2003, developing countries came together in several overlapping coalitions and decided to block the negotiations of the Doha Development Agenda until their demands were met. The Conference ended in deadlock. But the unified resistance of developing countries in the endgame at Cancún appeared to represent an important landmark in the international politics of trade. More generally, Cancún seemed to represent a symbol of the dissatisfaction of the developing world with 'globalization', often understood as the imposition of neo-liberal economic policies (commonly referred to as the **Washington Consensus**).

It is often simply assumed that the dominant state or group of states in terms of power can be associated with the status quo, and that it will be emerging states or rising powers that seek to challenge the 'basic norms of the system' or to revise its 'foundational principles'. However, any status quo has at least two dimensions: the first focused more or less directly on the distribution of material power; the second on the character of the international order and its dominant norms. From the perspective of the developing world, the US-led order

of the 1990s had involved a powerful move to change many of the rules, norms, and practices of global politics—especially to do with economic and development policy and with new forms of intervention. They saw themselves as part of the status quo, and the West as the revisionists. But, as perceptions of their power grew, so there was a greater willingness to act in pursuit of their collective interests and against the developed world. In expressing this collective dissatisfaction, the emerging powers of the developing world—Brazil, China, India, and South Africa—took the lead, and were joined by many other developing countries.

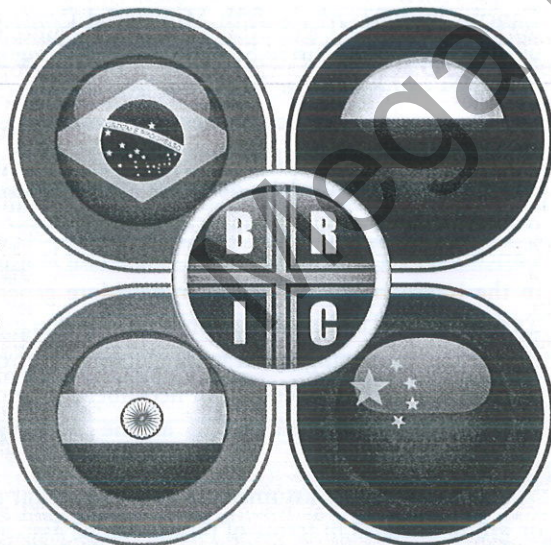
A further example was the creation of IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue Forum). This is a cooperation project between the three democratic countries India, Brazil, and South Africa. The organization was formalized with the Brasilia Declaration in June 2003, and since then several initiatives have emerged to fuel cooperation on a broad range of areas. The tripartite grouping works at all levels to deepen their ties. There are annual meetings between the Heads of State, and

another meeting once a year between the foreign ministers. These meetings at the highest level often lead to declarations that consolidate common positions about global issues between the three countries. There are also working groups in a variety of areas—such as agriculture, defence, health, and trade—with the aim of exploring shared interests on sectoral issues. A third example is provided by the BASICs (Brazil, India, South Africa, and China). This group sidelined Europe in climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009 and forced the United States to negotiate in a very different institutional context. And, outside of the economic area, Brazil and Turkey's offer of mediation in the US–Iranian nuclear dispute in the first half of 2010 seemed to suggest a potential future shuffling of the diplomatic deck.

On their own, these events might have attracted only passing attention. Yet, for many, they reflected a much deeper structural change that was taking place in the global economy and in the dynamics of global capitalism. And it is this phenomenon that is captured by the idea of the BRICs (see Case Study 1).

Case Study 1 The BRICs

© www.istockphoto.com/Augusto Araujo Soares Cabral



The 'BRICs' is an acronym that refers to the emerging countries Brazil, China, India, and Russia combined. The term was first coined in the research paper, *Building Better Global Economic BRICs*, by economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001, who regarded these four countries as the key emerging market economies. O'Neill projected that the relative size and share of the BRICs in the world economy would rise exponentially.

In his report, O'Neill also described the implications this has for the Group of Seven (G7) and calls for a rearrangement of representation.

In 2003, the Goldman Sachs report compiled by Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman called *Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050* expanded on the thesis of O'Neill. Their report predicted that, in all likelihood, by 2025 the BRICs could account for over half of the size of the G7 in terms of GDP. And in less than forty years the BRICs' economies together could be larger than the G7. Several reports have followed up on this, offering more detailed aspects and readjusted projections as the BRIC economies fared better than expected.

The key underlying argument behind these predictions is that China and India will arise as the world's principal suppliers of manufactured goods and services, while Brazil and Russia will become similarly dominant as suppliers of raw materials. What the countries also have in common is that they all have an enormous potential consumer market, complemented by access to regional markets and to a large labour force.

The original 2003 Goldman Sachs report entitled *Dreaming with BRICs* can be found at: <http://www.goldmansachs.com/ceconfidential/CEO-2003-12.pdf>

The 2009 updated Goldman Sachs study on the BRICs, *The Long-term Outlook for the BRICs and N-11 Post Crisis*, taking into account the impact of the financial crisis, can be found at: <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/archive/brics-at-8/brics-the-long-term-outlook.pdf>

The BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) comprise the four largest economies outside the OECD. Together they hold around 50 per cent of the total global foreign exchange reserves. They have reduced or eliminated any residual dependence on foreign aid and in the cases of China, India, and Brazil have themselves become major aid donors. In 2009 new donors provided around US\$11 billion of foreign aid. And they have expanded their relations with each other, with China eclipsing the US as Brazil's major trading partner and Sino-Indian trade approaching US\$60 billion a year. South-South trade rose from being marginal as late as the early 1990s and now accounts for 17.5 per cent of global merchandise exports.

The language of 'BRICs' and of 'rising' and 'emerging powers' took off from around 2003. Since then, both popular commentary and a great deal of political rhetoric has focused on the diffusion of power and the emergence of new powers. The central point of these debates was not where world order is now, but where it was going to go in the future. The BRICs were important not just because of their recent and current rapid development, but because of the predicted changes that were going to transform the global economy and change the balance of global economic power (see Table 5.1).

The financial crisis that hit the advanced capitalist core in 2007 fed into these changes. In part this was the result of the degree to which emerging economies were relatively less directly affected. The 2007-9 financial

crisis, regarded by many economists as the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, were relatively well withstood by the BRIC economies. Although Russia did see some dramatic fall in GDP from 2008 to 2009, India and China still saw GDP growth in spite of the global setback. In the years following the crisis, China, Brazil, and India have all increased their contribution to world economic activity. The crisis also had less direct, but perhaps more fundamental, impact. For many influential figures in emerging powers, it was historically extremely significant that the financial crisis broke out in the Western core countries. It not only seriously damaged these economies but also undermined the technical and moral authority of the institutions as the centre of the global capitalist system. The crisis shifted the balance of arguments back to those who stress the advantages of large, continent-size or regionally dominant states—states that are able to depend on large domestic markets, to politicize market relations globally and regionally, and to engage in effective economic mercantilism and resource competition.

Finally, the crisis also reinforced the view that international economic institutions had to be reformed to reflect shifting economic power. Brazil and India had long demanded reform of international economic institutions as well as a seat on the United Nations Security Council. Although there had been little progress with UN reform, considerable change occurred within the WTO, with Brazil and India becoming members of the

Table 5.1 So who will be the biggest and best in 2030? And 2050? GDP ranking by country

Rank	1990	2000	2009	2030	2050
1	US	US	US	US	China
2	Japan	Japan	Japan	China	US
3	Germany	Germany	China	Japan	India
4	France	UK	Germany	India	Japan
5	Italy	France	UK	UK	Brazil
6	UK	China	France	Germany	Mexico
7	Canada	Italy	Italy	France	UK
8	Spain	Canada	Canada	Russia	Germany
9	Brazil	Mexico	India	Brazil	France
10	China	Brazil	Brazil	Mexico	Russia
11	Australia	Spain	South Korea	Italy	Turkey
12	India	South Korea	Russia	South Korea	Canada
13	Netherlands	India	Mexico	Canada	Indonesia
14	Mexico	Australia	Australia	Australia	South Korea
15	South Korea	Netherlands	Turkey	Turkey	Italy

Source: IMF, World Bank, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Box 5.1 From G5 to G20

In response to the financial crisis, the first Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (G20) Summit took place in 2008, reflecting the growing importance of the key emerging powers in the world economy. The G20 countries represent about 90 per cent of the world's gross national product and 80 per cent of world trade. Since the initial meeting the G20 leaders have continued to meet periodically.

United States				
Japan				
Germany	G5	G7	G8+5	G20
France				
United Kingdom				
Canada				
Italy				
Russia				
Brazil				
China				
India				
Mexico				
South Africa				
Australia				
Indonesia				
Saudi Arabia				
Turkey				
South Korea				
Argentina				
European Union				

inner negotiating circle (the so-called 'new quad' along with the US and the EU). For many, a major symbolic step occurred with the creation of the G20 in 2008 (see Box 5.1). The G20 was a major symbol of how the structures of global governance were shifting in response to the new geometry of power, and a sign of what the future would bring.

Key Points

- Over the last decade, countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, the ASEAN states, and Mexico have experienced significant economic development. For many, the continuation of this trend is likely to result in an alteration in the economic balance in favour of the dynamic emerging markets.
- With this greater economic share of the world market, they feel that they deserve a greater political say in the international community as well. In fact, the 2008 financial crisis—underscoring the shift in relative economic weight—only made this call for a seat at the top negotiating tables stronger and more urgent.
- Building on the idea that 'a shared voice is stronger than a single voice', the emerging powers realize that they have to cooperate in order to push forward their own agendas. On this view, the new forms of Southern multilateralism led by today's emerging and regional powers have put the idea of the global South firmly back on the political and intellectual map.

Three questions about emerging powers

Debates about the diffusion of power and the emergence of new powers have become ubiquitous. But there are many more questions than clear answers.

First, if power is shifting, where exactly is it shifting to? One view is that power is simply shifting to major emerging states as part of the on-going dynamic of the rise and fall of great powers (see Wight 1978, especially the chapter on great powers). This is the whole point of stories about 'Superpower China', 'India Rising', or 'Brazil's Moment', and about the rise of the BRICs or the BASICs. We can debate exactly who these new actors are, how they have behaved in the past, and what they might want in the future. But the issues have fundamentally to do with what 'they' will do with 'their' power—a limited number of important new actors acquiring substantial amounts of new power.

An alternative view, however, is that we are witnessing a much more general diffusion of power, often linked to technological changes, to changes in the global economy, and to new forms of social and political mobilization. Thus, if rising China is one central part of contemporary global politics, the Arab Spring is another. Both illustrate how power may be diffusing, but in very different ways. The 'general power diffusion' view holds that the story is really about the 'rise of the rest' (Khanna 2009). This will include other fast-developing societies, such as the so-called MINTs—Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey. But it is also going to involve a multiplicity of new actors. On this account the international system is increasingly characterized by a diffusion of power, including to emerging and regional powers but also to many private actors

and transnational groups; by a diffusion of preferences, with many more voices demanding to be heard both globally and within states as a result of technology, globalization, and democratization; and by a diffusion of ideas and values, with a reopening of the big questions of social, economic, and political organization that were supposedly brought to an end with the end of the cold war and the liberal ascendancy.

If this view of a general diffusion of power is true, then effective power and influence will be harder for everyone to achieve, including both the currently strong and the new emerging powers. It will be harder for the emerging powers to control their own regions and to secure sustained support from weaker states. This suggests, for example, that we need to pay as much attention to the relations between emerging powers and weaker actors as we do to relations between emerging powers and the currently dominant states. Another likely consequence is that it will be harder for the governments of large, fast-developing states to maintain coherent and consistent foreign policies as more groups domestically are mobilized and empowered. The overall expectation would be of less effective power, both within states and internationally.

Second, what is power? Power is one of the most complex and contested ideas in the social sciences. It is an essentially contested concept in that it is subject to the kind of debate that is not rationally resolvable. There is no overarching theory of social power and no single analytical approach that can provide a magic key. Political scientists differentiate between different levels of power (Barnett and Duvall 2005): (1) relational power and the capacity of a political unit to impose its will on another and to resist the attempts of others to impose their will; (2) institutional power—power here becomes the ability to control the agenda, to decide what gets decided, and to exclude those issues which threaten the interests of the most powerful; and (3) different forms of structural power that have to do with the constitution of action and the material and discursive conditions for action. Others distinguish between hard, coercive power on the one hand and soft power on the other—the power of attraction, of getting others to emulate your own society and its values. Almost all the arguments (for example Cox 2012) that reject the decline of the US and of the West highlight the importance of combining these different levels: global military dominance, the economic resilience and attractiveness of US society, its continued pivotal role across global governance institutions, and its unrivalled structural

power, including the capacity to generate and to promote the most powerful conceptions of international and global order.

When we are told that a country is an emerging power, the first question that we need to ask is: influential over what actors, in what period, with respect to what matters? Thus we might want to trace the growing role of South Africa, India, or Brazil in terms of their influence in a particular region and the way in which being recognized as a regional power may be an important part of their growing global influence. Or we might want to understand Brazil's influence not in terms of its very limited military capabilities, but rather in terms of its diplomatic activism in international organizations and what one analyst called its 'diplomatic GNP'. This has been visible in its active diplomacy in the WTO or in climate change negotiations, and its policy of seeking to be a bridge-builder between the emerging and industrialized worlds (Hurrell 2007). A further lesson from the literature on social power is still more important. Discussion of power and influence cannot be separated from the analysis of motives and values. It may be true that all states, including emerging powers, seek power and security, but the real question is the one pressed by constructivists: what sorts of power do they seek, and for what purposes? Thus what makes a rising state want to revise or challenge the system is unlikely to come solely from calculations of hard power and material interest. Historically, revisionism has far more frequently been the result of particular sets of foreign policy ideas within rising states that explain why the existing status quo is unacceptable, even intolerable—for example, that the existing order embodies historical humiliations (as in the case of China); or that it does not grant the social recognition to which the rising state feels entitled as a result of its power, its values, its culture (as in the case of India or Brazil); or that the existing order works against legitimate claims to special status within 'its' region.

Third, power for what? This is the most important question. It is impossible to make any sense of the idea of a power shift unless we have in our heads some idea of why shifting power is important and what it might be affecting. The BRICs mattered to Goldman Sachs because they were emerging markets. They were therefore important for profits and long-run investment decisions. But this says absolutely nothing about why these same countries might matter politically or geopolitically. This is why the analysis of rising powers

cannot just involve lists of power resources and evaluations of how different kinds of power have shifted from one state or society to another. It has to connect with our theoretical understanding of world politics.

For some, the history and theory of emerging powers is simple and straightforward. International Relations has always been a story of the rise and fall of great powers. For realists, this forms the very heart of the subject and there is a well-established set of ideas for understanding what is going on and for guiding policy responses. The names of the countries may change but the logic does not. From this perspective we should most certainly care about power transitions.

Periods of shifting power are difficult and dangerous times. Rising states will naturally seek to challenge the status quo and to revise the dominant norms of the system to reflect their own interests and values. And established powers will be tempted to use their power to block the emergence of rising or revisionist states, including through the use of military force. Classical realists, neoclassical realists, neo-realists, and power transition theorists differ as to whether conflict derives more from the actions of revisionist power-seeking to remake the rules of international order or from the status quo powers anxious to preserve their power (Chan 2006). However, in the realist camp there is wide consensus that if new powers are to 'count' globally it will be exclusively through their impact on the global balance of power, and that power transitions are dangerous and unsettling. The clearest example is the view of

[T]here exists a dynamic for change, driven chiefly by economic and technological developments, which then impact upon social structures, political systems, military power, and the position of individual states and empires... [T]his uneven pace of economic growth has had crucial long-term impacts upon the relative military power and strategic position of the members of the state system... As the above narrative has shown, economic prosperity does not always and immediately translate into military effectiveness, for that depends upon many other factors, from geography and national morale to generalship and tactical competence. Nevertheless, the fact remains that all of the major shifts in the world's military-power balances have followed from alterations in the productive balances; and further, that the rising and falling of the various empires and states in the international system has been confirmed by the outcomes of the major Great Power wars, where victory has always gone to the side with the greatest material resources.

(Kennedy 1988: 566-7)

The most persuasive part of the realist tradition moves beyond material power and stresses instead the importance of the search for status and the acquisition of prestige. For Robert Gilpin, the existence of a 'hierarchy of prestige' is central to the ordering of international relations, and it is precisely the disjuncture between existing perceptions of prestige and changing material capabilities that underpins the logic of hegemonic

This perspective is stressed by classical realists, but especially by international society writers who see great powers and great power concerts as fundamental to the ordering of international society. The natural response to shifting power, from this perspective, is to return to a far more great power-centred order—both to avoid tensions and potential conflict amongst the existing and rising powers but also to achieve the consensus needed to tackle the new and complex challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and global economic governance. This can involve the reform of formal multi-lateral institutions—such as bringing new members onto the UN Security Council. But it can also involve increasing emphasis on different sorts of informal groupings, clubs, concerts, and coalitions. Indeed, the proliferation of discussion of new Groups such as the G2 (US–China), the G8+5, or the G20 has been viewed in terms of a revival of concert diplomacy.

In the 1990s many argued that traditional international relations were becoming less important than **globalization**, and that inter-state relations should be viewed within a more complex picture of global politics. For many analysts, however, the debate about emerging powers brings these traditional realist concerns firmly back into view. Economics does not exist in a vacuum, and economic globalization will inevitably affect the balance of global power—feeding back into the structures and dynamics of a Westphalian state system rather than pointing towards its transcendence—as liberals had expected. The state as an economic actor proved resilient in seeking to control economic flows and to police borders; and in seeking to exploit and develop state-based and mercantilist modes of managing economic problems, especially in relation to resource competition and energy geopolitics. Most significantly, the very dynamism and successes of liberal globalization was having a vital impact on the distribution of inter-state political power—above all towards the East and parts of the South. If the debate over power shifts in the 1990s concentrated on the shift of power from states to firms and non-state actors, the ‘power shift’ of the past decade has focused on rising and emerging powers, on state-directed economic activity, and on the mismatch between existing global economic governance arrangements and the distribution of power among those with the actual power of effective economic decision-making.

In addition, other factors appeared to be pushing global order back in a broadly Westphalian direction.

These have included: the renewed salience of security, the re-valorization of national security, and a renewed preoccupation with war-fighting and counter-insurgency; the continued or renewed power of nationalism, no longer potentially containable politically or analytically in a box marked ‘ethnic conflict’ but manifest in the identity politics and foreign policy actions of the major states in the system; the renewed importance of nuclear weapons as central to the structure of regional security complexes, and in the construction of great power hierarchies and the distribution of seats at top tables; and finally the quiet return of balance of power as both a motivation for state policy (as with US policies in Asia) and as an element in the foreign policy of all second-tier states—not hard balancing and the building up of hard power, but what is called soft balancing, either in the form of attempts explicitly to de-legitimize US hegemony or to argue for alternative conceptions of legitimacy.

It is of course possible to see these developments simply as international relations returning once more to its Westphalian norm—the return of history and the end of dreams, as the US commentator Robert Kagan (2009) has expressed it. But others would stress the complex, hybrid, and contested character of international society—a society that faces a range of classical Westphalian challenges (especially to do with power transition and the rise of new powers), but one that faces these challenges in a context marked by strong **post-Westphalian** characteristics (in terms of the material conditions of globalization, the changed character of legitimacy, and the changed balance between the international and the domestic, even in large, introspective societies) (Hurrell 2007).

One post-Westphalian element has to do with the structural changes in the nature of the foreign policy and governance challenges faced both by individual states and by international society collectively. Dealing with these challenges—climate change, stable trade rules, flu pandemics, a credible system of global finance—will continue to involve the sustaining of rules that shape how societies are organized domestically, that are structurally tied to transnational processes, that go beyond entrenched notions of territoriality and sovereignty, that depend on the active and effective participation of a wide range of actors, and that necessitate many varied forms of governance, international law and international political organization.

From this perspective, rising states matter not only, or even primarily, because of the material power

resources that they possess, but rather because of their unavoidable importance in solving these kinds of global problems. Their detachment from or opposition to current institutions is seen as one of the most important weaknesses of existing institutions—think of the move away from the World Bank and IMF on the part of major emerging economies, or the opposition to developed country preferences in the WTO led by Brazil and India, or the effective breakdown of the global aid regime in the face of the new aid donors such as China and India. Such countries are therefore sub-

authority. The Bush years (2000–8) demonstrated the limits of hegemonic or top-down modes of governance. The financial crisis has exacerbated the already evident decline in the idea that the legitimacy of international institutions could be grounded in claims to superior economic or technological knowledge. The inherited institutions of the Western-led international order have proved manifestly dysfunctional, and neither leading market actors nor technical specialists have ready ideas or answers. Legitimacy based on effective outputs and on technical knowledge has therefore been in

Mega Lecture

European international society onto a global scale—first, through the globalizing force of capitalism, the economic rise of the West, and the immense transformative impact that it has on the regions and societies which get drawn into a deepening system of exchange and production relations; second, through the emergence of an often highly conflictual international political system which, as the English geopolitical writer Halford Mackinder argued, came to see the entire earth as the single stage for promotion of the interests of the core powers of the system (Mackinder 1904: 422); and third, through the development of a global international society whose institutional forms (the nation-state, great powers, international law, spheres of influence) were globalized from their originally European context in the course of European expansion and the subsequent process of decolonization (Bull and Watson 1985).

A central part of the problem of global order in the twentieth century was the struggle of the Third World, or later the global South, against what was widely understood as the Western dominance of the international system. And a central question about the idea of ‘emergence’ has to do with the ways in which the rise of today’s emerging developing countries may be said to constitute a challenge to this historically constructed Western order.

On one side, it has become common to suggest that the rise of new powers, the developmental gap that has opened up between them and other developing countries, and their very different power-political, military, and geopolitical opportunities and options simply underscore the outdatedness and irrelevance of old-fashioned notions of the Third World or the global South. The very substantial expansion of the role of China in Africa, and the emergence of both India and China as significant aid donors, highlight the gap between them and African countries. Although South–South trade has expanded, just fourteen countries account for 75 per cent of that trade. Their success therefore places them in an objectively different analytical category from other developing countries.

Looking more broadly, the former president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick, has argued for the ‘end of the Third World’:

some developing countries are emerging as economic powers; others are moving towards becoming additional poles of growth; and some are struggling to attain their potential within this new system—where North and South, East and West, are now points on a compass, not economic destinies.

(Zoellick 2010)

If poverty, weakness, and political marginalization defined the Third World, something important seems to have changed. ‘The salient feature of the Third World was that it wanted economic and political clout. It is getting both’ (*The Economist* 2010: 165). On the back of such a view come calls for major emerging powers to jettison claims for special treatment or special status—in terms of the trading system they should ‘graduate’ from the developing country category; in terms of climate change they should not hide behind the Kyoto Protocol’s principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility’; and in terms of human rights they should no longer invoke outdated Third-Worldist conceptions of hard sovereignty as a reason for inaction. In other words, they should no longer use underdevelopment, poverty, and a prior history of colonialism or historical marginality as ‘excuses’ to evade assuming their ‘responsibilities’ as emerging major powers.

On the other hand, there is a powerful sense in much writing on rising powers that they represent a challenge that cannot be understood solely in terms of the distribution of relative power, shared characteristics and values, or effective diplomatic coordination. Joseph Nye asks how seriously analysts should take the term BRIC. And he goes on:

As an indicator of economic opportunity, they should welcome it, though it would make more sense if Indonesia replaced Russia. In political terms, China, India, and Russia are competitors for power in Asia, and Brazil and India have been hurt by China’s undervalued currency. Thus, BRIC is not likely to become a serious political organization of like-minded states.

(Nye 2010)

But does this miss out aspects of what, why, and how today’s rising powers may matter or how we might best understand the nature of the challenge that they may

perspective the crucial point is that we are witnessing a challenge to the 'West'. Sometimes the focus is on the West as a historical formation built around the history of European power and its colonial system that was then inherited, transformed, and globalized by the United States. Sometimes the focus is narrower, on the Euro-Atlantic world or even the Anglo-American world or Anglosphere. Sometimes arguments centre on the US-centred Greater West and the multilateral institutions created in the post-1945 period. The language is everywhere ill-defined and fuzzy. The widespread use of inverted commas—the 'West', the 'developing world', the 'rest'—suggests hesitancy or uncertainty. But the ubiquity of this kind of language implies that what fundamentally distinguishes today's emerging powers is their historic position outside, or on the margins of, some notion of the West.

Second, it is important to ask about the legacy of historical perceptions of second-class treatment, of subalterneity, of marginalization, and of subordinate status in an unequal and exploitative global political and economic system. A central element in the foreign policy of many emerging powers has been the demand for status, for recognition, and for respect. In the case of China, the need to acquire the power and wealth to overcome external vulnerability and to reverse 'a century of humiliation' is well known. For influential commentators, India's evolution into a modern nation-state has been marked by an powerful quest for international recognition of its status (Mehta 2009). And a similar idea is captured by a speech by the Brazilian president Lula da Silva in 2003: 'As we grow, and as we convert promises into reality, our participation in international relations will also widen and deepen. It falls to us to demand, with simplicity but without hesitation, the recognition and respect for the new dimensions of our interests' (quoted in Hurrell 2010).

A third factor has to do with the distinctiveness of today's emerging powers. Even if we place China in a category of its own, countries such as India, Brazil, and South Africa are large developing countries that will continue to be relatively poor in per capita terms. Poverty and inequality remain major problems, and high growth rates remain a major political imperative. For all their economic success, they remain developing economies and developing societies marked both by incomplete development and by incomplete integration into a global economy whose ground rules have been set historically by the industrialized North. Moreover, a great deal depends on our assessment of the nature

and extent of developmental gains and of the actual power shifts that are taking place. It is easy to exaggerate the power of emerging powers and the extent of the power shift that has taken place. Yes, China, India, and Brazil have indeed acquired veto power in the WTO; yes, changes are under way in the voting structures and governance arrangements of the international financial institutions; and yes, the creation of the G20 does represent an important change in the nature and membership of the top table. But these changes are, thus far, hardly revolutionary. Developmental policy space remains restricted by the current rules of the global game. As a result, there remain many areas of common interest and common concern amongst a broad range of developing countries which remain rule-takers far more than rule-makers.

A final factor concerns the continued relevance of North-South relations for the framing of global problems and the extent to which this framing helps to structure the interests of emerging powers. Climate change again provides an important example. Hence it may indeed be the case that BASICs have been tempted to stress their special responsibilities and to join clubs or groupings of major emitters, even if, as at Copenhagen, this opens up major divisions with other developing countries. It is also true that emerging Southern powers complicate the simple normative picture of a world divided between a rich and powerful North and an impoverished and marginalized South. This is in terms of the aggregate contribution of their societies to the problem, in terms of their capacity as states and societies to contribute in financial and technological terms to solutions, and in terms of the moral relevance of unequal patterns of wealth and resource use within them. But it remains very hard to think about climate change outside the context of inequality, poverty, and the developmental imperatives of large developing countries. It may be technically or technologically possible to imagine dealing with climate change without considering inequality and global poverty. But, from a wide range of moral viewpoints, it would be wholly unacceptable to deal with climate change in a way that would worsen the welfare and life chances of the currently poor; that would fail to provide sufficient developmental and ecological space for these poor to satisfy their rights to reasonable standards of subsistence and well-being; and that would undermine or close off the developmental prospects for the poor of future generations, including the very large numbers of poor in 'rising powers'—India most notably.

It may therefore be possible, and often useful, to analyse emerging powers in terms of how they are seeking to navigate and best position themselves within an existing state-centric, liberal, and capitalist order while accepting most of the underlying assumptions and values of that order. But the nature of that navigation has been shaped by their historical trajectory in that order and by the developmental, societal, and geopolitical context of their emergence.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about who's up and who's down in contemporary global politics. As in the 1970s, many believe that the EU has run into the sand. The optimists, on the other hand, believe that the very seriousness of the euro crisis will stimulate a further round of the deeper integration needed both to resolve Europe's internal problems and to re-establish its position internationally. The 1970s also saw a protracted

debate about US decline (and about the 'inevitable' global rise of Japan). But US 'declinism' gave way to a period in which US power was reasserted globally. The question today is whether the diffusion of power and the complexity of global politics undermine the prospect for a repetition of this kind of hegemonic reassertionism. In relation to the emerging world, newspaper commentary shifts from day to day, with pundits pointing to the slowdown in Chinese economic growth or the weight of corruption in India, or the seriousness of social violence in South Africa and of social protests in Brazil. Such issues are not unimportant. But answering the deeper questions about emerging powers depends partly on understanding their attributes, their behaviour, and their goals, and partly on an evaluation of the changing nature of the global order itself and of the kinds of power that matter now or will come to matter in the future.

Questions



- 1 Has the United States been a status quo or a revisionist power since the end of the cold war?
- 2 Should the United States, Japan, and Europe be 'afraid' of the BRICs?
- 3 What is left of the BRICs without China?
- 4 Does this BRIC grouping represent a cohesive economic unit and power bloc?
- 5 Does realism tell us all we really need to know about rising powers and power transitions?
- 6 Will the permanent members in the UN Security Council ever be willing to offer an additional seat to a country like India, Brazil, or South Africa?
- 7 In what ways does China challenge the existing international order?
- 8 Is India a great power?
- 9 Does Brazilian foreign policy indicate that you can be a major power without significant military capabilities?
- 10 Do today's emerging powers mean the end of the Third World?

Further Reading



- Alden, C., Morphet, S., and Vieira, M. A.** (2010), *The South in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). An analysis of the global South and of the new Southern coalitions.
- Barnett, M., and Duvall, R.** (2005), 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization*, 59: 39–75. One of the best discussions of type of power in international relations and the complexities involved in making sense of power.
- Brooks, S. G., and Wohlforth, W. C.** (2008), *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press). A strong argument in favour of the continued power of the United States.