

Emerging powers and peace operations: An agenda for research

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The emerging powers have become a major focus of research. Initial interest in their economic potential has developed into attentiveness to their engagement in global governance more generally. Studies on their economic trajectories and impact¹ have been supplemented with works on their role in climate governance,² development and foreign aid,³ innovation and technology,⁴ as well as more general studies on their geopolitical significance.⁵ Most attention has concerned how their rise might challenge the international institutions and liberal norms that have underpinned the post-Second World War, and especially the post-Cold War, order.

The emerging powers have also become important actors in third-party interventions in conflict and post-conflict areas. They are increasingly involved in peacekeeping, special political missions, regional operations and training missions: *multilateral* peace operations, both UN and non-UN. Traditionally seen as troop-contributing countries and norm takers, they are becoming more vocal and are asking to contribute substantively to the course and future of peace operations. Their positions on peace operations are growing more consequential, and merit in-depth research.

This report outlines some possible future directions for research on the emerging powers and peace operations. It identifies differences and commonalities among these powers as regards their stances on third-party interventions. It then briefly outlines the changing reality of peace operations. I conclude by indicating potential avenues for future research. Most of the discussion concentrates on UN peace operations; however, to elucidate the positions of the emerging powers, I explore their relations to non-UN operations as well.

Similar but different

While the term 'emerging powers' has become ubiquitous in international relations, it is not easy to define. The list of states included as emerging powers can differ, depending on the research topic. These same states are often referred to as 'rising powers' or 'emerging economies', showing that an important criterion is their higher-than-average economic growth. It is through their rising economic importance that emerging powers gain their influence in other fields. The term was originally associated with the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) – an acronym coined by the chief economist at Goldman Sachs.⁶ These states remain at the core of the emerging powers. However, the list is often supplemented with others, notably the MINT grouping (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey), and often Egypt and Argentina. Concerning peace and security matters, Pakistan and Bangladesh – as the biggest police- and troop-contributing countries – are sometimes added.

Emerging powers as a grouping are difficult to approach in analyses that look beyond their economic potential. What undoubtedly binds them together is that they are becoming more vocal and persuasive in international institutions, and that they all aspire to more influential roles in international affairs.⁷ However, in seeking to make themselves heard in issues of international peace and security, they start from

1 E.g., Uwe Becker, *The BRICs and emerging economies in comparative perspective: political economy, liberalisation and institutional change* (London: Routledge, 2013); Andrea Goldstein, 'Multinational companies from emerging economies: composition, conceptualization & direction in the global economy', *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* (2009); Jim O'Neill, *Building better global economic BRICs* (Goldman Sachs, 2001).

2 E.g., David Held, Charles Roger and Eva-Maria Nag, eds, *Climate governance in the developing world* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.)

3 E.g., Iain Watson, *Foreign aid and emerging powers: Asian perspectives on Official Development Assistance* (London: Routledge, 2014).

4 E.g., Jose Eduardo Cassiolato and Virginia Vitorino, eds, *BRICS and development alternatives: innovation systems and policies* (London: Anthem Press, 2009).

5 E.g., Cedric de Coning, Thomas Mandrup and Liselotte Odgaard, *The BRICS and coexistence: an alternative vision of world order* (London: Routledge, 2014); Amrita Narlikar, *New powers: how to become one and how to manage them* (London: Hurst, 2010).

6 O'Neill, *Building better global economic BRICs*.

7 Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony, liberalism and global order: what space for would be great powers?', *International Affairs* 82, no. 1 (2006).

radically different positions and thus often differ in their stances. It is therefore not surprising that most studies of the role of emerging powers in peace operations focus on individual countries or clusters of countries with similar characteristics, for example, troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs and PCCs).

Even institutionally these countries play differing roles when it comes to conflict response. China and Russia are permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), giving them a seat – with veto power – at the table where all peace and security affairs are discussed, and peace operations are either authorised or contested. It is primarily this privileged position that has been of interest to scholars. Their role in the UNSC has never been one of initiator: it is ‘the three Western permanent members of the Council (P3) [that] dominate the African [and broader – M.P.] peace and security agenda’.⁸ Instead, both China and Russia have been primarily understood as powers ‘blocking’ the global North’s agenda in peace operations. Some recent analyses have tried to grasp more deeply the philosophy behind Chinese positions on peacekeeping.⁹ However, Russian stances, as well as Chinese ones, often come under scrutiny primarily due to their threat or actual exercise of veto power. The extent of literature on Russian and Chinese impacts on developments around Kosovo 1999, Iraq 2003 and Syria 2012 is indeed telling.¹⁰

On the other side are the emerging powers without permanent seats in the UNSC. While most of them attend regular meetings between the TCCs/PCCs and the Security Council, they hold less direct influence over the inception and mandates of peace operations. Some – especially India, Brazil and South Africa – hope that, with a potential UN reform, they could gain one of the coveted seats on the Security Council and thus acquire a more prominent decision-making role. A strong argument in India’s bid for a seat has always been its peacekeeping contributions.¹¹ The majority of emerging powers are major troop- and police-contributing countries. As of this writing, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Egypt all rank among the top 10, with South Africa, China and Indonesia in the top 20 contributors to UN uniformed capacities.¹² Historically a reluctant participant, China has over the last decade become the biggest contributor of all permanent UNSC members.

While emerging powers’ participation as troop contributors has long been recognised, most current debates emphasise that their role in the field is not matched by their participation in decision- and policymaking on the topic within the UN bureaucracy, nor in their representation in the civilian component. The emergence of this discourse coincides with the rise of a broader debate on emerging powers, showing that their (perceived) ambitions began increasing with their economic rise.¹³ In recent scholarly and policy debates harsher tones are evident, criticising this inequality by even calling the division of work between traditional and emerging powers ‘a blue helmet caste system’,¹⁴ ‘apartheid’,¹⁵ and ‘imperial multilateralism’.¹⁶ Many policy-oriented works thus argue for not just a reform of current institutions but increased South–South cooperation as well.

One fruitful discussion where advances have been made focuses on why emerging powers, and nations from the global South in general, participate in peace operations. A long-running stereotype in these debates has been that the incentives are financial. Or as asserted in an article in *The Economist*, ‘[t]hey fund their armed forces by sending them abroad at the UN’s expense.’¹⁷ In his recent book Philip Cunliffe systematically takes apart this stereotype by providing figures showing that while some smaller countries (Rwanda, Ghana, Nepal) finance a quarter and more of their military budgets out of UN missions, the largest contributors earn comparatively little.¹⁸ We need to search for other possible reasons and motives. These are invariably mixed, not least as these states are in different regions and have different needs for contributing to peace operations. Motivations can vary from pressure from allies; questions of prestige, including claims to a permanent seat on the UNSC; repayment for being previous beneficiaries or potential future recipients of peace operations; as well as internal benefits, such as diversion of uniformed personnel from domestic politics, socialisation of armed forces, and broader learning from experience.¹⁹ However, the big question remains: to what extent is the participation of emerging powers – China in particular – motivated by their attempts to revise the liberal underpinnings of existing peace operations?

The emerging powers’ differing motivations influence their preferences for type of participation in peace operations. First, some emerging powers participate only in UN-led

8 Marco Wyss and Thierry Tardy, eds, *Peacekeeping in Africa: the evolving security architecture* (London: Routledge, 2014), 6.

9 E.g., Miwa Hirono and Marc Lanteigne, ‘Introduction: China and UN peacekeeping’, *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 3 (2011); Stefan Staehle, ‘China’s shifting attitude towards United Nations peacekeeping operations’, *The China Quarterly* 195 (2008); Pang Zhongying, ‘China’s changing attitude to UN peacekeeping’, *International Peacekeeping* 12, no. 1 (2005).

10 E.g., Oksana Antonenko, ‘Russia, NATO and European security after Kosovo’, *Survival* 41, no. 4 (1999); Sergei Borisov, ‘Russia: standing firm’, *Transitions Online* 3, no. 10 (2003); Samuel Charap, ‘Russia, Syria and the doctrine of intervention’, *Survival* 55, no. 1 (2013); Galia Golan, ‘Russia and the Iraq War: was Putin’s policy a failure?’, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 37, no. 4 (2004); Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Chandra Thakur, *Kosovo and the challenge of humanitarian intervention: selective indignation, collective action, and international citizenship* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2000).

11 Alan Bullion, ‘India and UN peacekeeping operations’, *International Peacekeeping* 4, no. 1 (1997).

12 United Nations Peacekeeping, Troop and police contributors, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml> (accessed 18 November 2014).

13 E.g., Kabilan Krishnasamy, ‘Recognition’ for Third World peacekeepers: India and Pakistan’, *International Peacekeeping* 8, no. 4 (2001); Prof Maxi Schoeman, ‘South Africa as an emerging middle power’, *African Security Review* 9, no. 3 (2000).

14 Colum Lynch, ‘The blue helmet caste system’, *Foreign Policy*, 11 April, http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/04/11/the_blue_helmet_caste_system (2013).

15 Simon Chesterman, ‘The use of force in UN peace operations’, Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit (External Study), smallwarsjournal.com/documents/useofforceunpko.pdf (undated), 11.

16 Philip Cunliffe, *Legions of peace: UN peacekeepers from the Global South* (London: Hurst, 2013), 20.

17 *The Economist*, ‘UN peacekeepers in Africa: helping to calm a continent’, 9 June, <http://www.economist.com/node/21556608> (2012).

18 Cunliffe, *Legions of peace*: 168–74.

19 For more on this see Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, eds, *Providing peacekeepers: the politics, challenges and future of United Nations peacekeeping contributions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Andrew Blum, ‘Blue Helmets from the South: accounting for the participation of weaker states in United Nations peacekeeping operations’, *Journal of Conflict Studies* 20, no. 1 (2000); Cunliffe, *Legions of peace*; Trevor Findlay, *Challenges for the new peacekeepers*, SIPRI Research Report No. 12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

operations, others also in regional ones – for reasons often connected to geography and alliances. Turkey is active in NATO operations and often contributes personnel to European Union missions.²⁰ South Africa and Nigeria are major players in the African Union and sub-regional organisations, and participate in their peace involvements.²¹ Asia, however, has no strong regional institutions focused on peace and security, so the Asian emerging powers engage through UN missions. However, the very fact that China, India, Indonesia and Pakistan have not attempted to promote regional organisations that could mount peace operations shows their strong preference for universal mandates through the UN Security Council. Second, some emerging powers prefer regional, and others global deployments.²² India, for example, has participated in missions in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. By contrast, African emerging powers tend to send their peacekeepers to operations in Africa. Here, Egypt is usually singled out as an emerging power with a regional reach. These differences can be explained partly by the fact that most peace operations take place in Africa. However, they may also signify that emerging powers hold differing ambitions – ranging from regional-power to global-power status.

So where are the commonalities?

Finding differences between emerging powers is easier than determining what binds them together. Much discussion in the general literature on emerging powers deals with this question.²³ Many of these broader findings apply also to their engagement with peace operations, most notably the argument that emerging powers – as individual states – aspire to a more influential role in international affairs. However, such rising ambitions can be as much of a dividing as a binding force between them. States of the global North are bound not only by geography, but also by similar ideological inclination, which has influenced their approaches to peace operations. Much has been written on the liberal and democratic peace thesis underpinning the global North's approaches to third-party interventions.²⁴ It is generally accepted that peace operations (and peacebuilding) today rest on agreement between states from the global North and international organisations as to the broad goals. Richmond calls this 'a peacebuilding consensus'.²⁵ Is there something similar that connects emerging powers? To what extent could such a shared understanding present a challenge to the dominant discourse?

20 Thierry Tardy, 'CSDP: getting third states on board', European Union Institute for Security Studies Brief 6, March (2014); Petros Vamvakas, 'NATO and Turkey in Afghanistan and Central Asia: possibilities and blind spots', *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009).

21 See Victor A.O. Adetula, 'Nigeria's rebased economy and its role in regional and global politics', 13 October, <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/13/nigerias-rebased-economy-and-its-role-in-regional-and-global-politics/> (2014); Chris Alden and Maxi Schoeman, 'South Africa in the company of giants: the search for leadership in a transforming global order', *International Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2013); Peter Kagwanja, 'Power and peace: South Africa and the refurbishing of Africa's multilateral capacity for peacemaking', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 24, no. 2 (2006).

22 See *supra* note 19.

23 See *supra* note 7.

24 E.g., David Chandler, *Empire in denial: the politics of state-building* (London: Pluto, 2006); Roger M. Mac Ginty and Oliver P. Richmond, 'Myth or reality: opposing views on the liberal peace and post-war reconstruction', *Global Society* 21, no. 4 (2007); Roland Paris, 'Saving liberal peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010).

25 Oliver P. Richmond, 'UN peace operations and the dilemmas of the peacebuilding consensus', *International Peacekeeping* 11, no. 1 (2004).

One major commonality between emerging powers stems from their historically disenfranchised positions. A great majority of them have a European colonial legacy. Many had to struggle to gain their independence, and they are wary of continued meddling in their internal affairs by states and institutions of the global North. As a result, they are deeply sceptical of third parties intervening in the internal affairs of other states. Not least, some may fear that this could set a precedent, and such practices could be applied to them in the future. Emerging powers put great emphasis on respect for sovereignty. Host-state consent matters deeply to them, and they have been known to draw clear lines between peace enforcement and peacekeeping – especially with UN-led operations. Emerging powers support adherence to the three peacekeeping principles – consent, impartiality and the non-use of force.²⁶ However, there are some indications that their stances on this could be relaxing in light of new security realities.

What further unites emerging powers is the fact that they are often experiencing their own governance issues. Their political systems are generally less consolidated than those of their counterparts in the global North. Some have recently undergone political transitions; some are still experiencing authoritarian tendencies. They are therefore sensitive to the inclusion of certain topics within the mandates of peace operations. The human rights agenda has always been a problematic issue for these states: partly because their own human rights records are often questionable and partly because they view the human rights concept as part of the 'liberal' agenda.²⁷ Institutional reform – in particular, security sector reform (SSR) – has been another such issue. While SSR has risen high on the agenda of Northern states, emerging powers see their militaries and police as the core of their independence and sovereignty, and are reluctant to sanction third-party interventions in these sensitive domains. As staunch proponents of national ownership of any reform process, emerging powers have traditionally advocated for peacekeeping mandates with limited governance agendas.

The shifting sands of peace operations

Peace operations have undergone substantial change. The early 2000s saw the rise of non-UN led stabilisation missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. With the notable exception of Turkey – at one point the third largest contributor to the NATO-led ISAF operation in Afghanistan – the emerging powers stayed away from these operations. Many, including Russia and China, opposed the operation in Iraq, with the African Union condemning the war. At the time, most emerging powers saw a stark difference between peace operations and stabilisation missions. However, these operations and the continued presence of non-state and unconventional threats sensitised the international community as a whole to more robust operations. Recently, even the UN Security Council has been willing to authorise missions that walk the fine line between peace enforcement and peacekeeping.

Recent UN peacekeeping missions have unprecedentedly robust mandates, further expanding and drawing attention to the range of activities the international community has come

26 United Nations, 'United Nations peacekeeping: principles and guidelines (Capstone Doctrine)', UN Department of Peacekeeping, 18 January, (2008).

27 See *supra* note 24.

to engage in and support. Authorisation of a force intervention brigade with an offensive mandate, references to unmanned aerial vehicles ('drones') in mission mandates, the invocation of explicit links between terrorism and organised crime, and statebuilding mandates in the midst of open conflict – are all changing the nature of UN peace operations. Moreover, in practice, peacekeeping operations have started relying on new capabilities, like the use of strategic communication and military intelligence. Such missions are challenging the existing peacekeeping doctrine, and giving rise to questions about future developments and repercussions. They are also opening a range of new dilemmas for emerging powers, traditionally supporters of more limited mandates.

What next?

These new developments open up new research trajectories for studying the positions of emerging powers on peace operations. The big underlying question is whether emerging powers have a uniform response to the doctrinal challenges arising out of recent UN peacekeeping practice. Turkey has had experience with stabilisation operations in the Middle East, and South Africa is one of the three countries to contribute forces to the intervention brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Russia and China did not cast negative UNSC votes in several recent more robust operations – behaviour unimaginable even a decade ago. There is an undeniable change in the attitude of many emerging powers; however, it remains to be shown whether they define the outer limits of peacekeeping operations in the same way. How are these states reconciling established peacekeeping principles with the new reality? Here it would be useful to determine whether they have a shared understanding of the concept of robust peacekeeping and whether they use the same lines of argumentation when supporting or opposing offensive peace operations.

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Many emerging powers are major troop- and police-contributing countries. With peace operations being deployed to more insecure environments, what is their readiness to take on heightened security risks and asymmetric threats?²⁸ Given recent spikes in the number of fatalities caused by malicious

acts in peace operations, there is a need to determine what is still acceptable, for these states to continue contributing. Further, do emerging powers have the necessary material and personnel capabilities to assume expanded tasks in these new missions? Considering the rise of new technologies in peace operations, we should inquire into not only whether emerging powers have such capabilities, but also whether they see them as a welcome development. Given their reluctance to support intervention in the internal affairs of other states, their stances are likely to be far from uniform.

Many recent interventions have had a pivotal state or a regional organisation prepare the terrain for the broader UN peace operation. How are emerging powers reacting to such delegation of the use of force to pivotal states? This issue becomes particularly pressing when the intervening states have a colonial connection to the territory. Weighing the risks to their own peacekeepers, is this the preferred *modus operandi* for emerging powers? Does this division of labour represent an acceptable compromise between enforcement mandates and support for UN peacekeeping principles to emerging powers? An important aspect to study here would be whether membership of individual emerging powers in regional organisations influences their role in UN peace operations and stances on peacekeeping principles.

On a substantive level, it would be useful to see how emerging powers are reacting to different types of operations, e.g., protection of civilians, stabilisation, state-building. There is an implicit assumption in the literature that responses to all multi-dimensional missions should be grouped together. However, at a time when missions are changing rapidly, it might be more fruitful to determine which elements enjoy wide support, and which not. Are some elements of on-going missions – for example, SSR and rule of law reforms – particularly problematic? Only by examining their positions on individual issues can we determine where the emerging powers share common ground. By answering this we can come closer to assessing the potential of emerging powers to become the leaders of an alternative vision for peace operations – or whether their primary role is and will remain as 'blockers' of the liberal agenda.

²⁸ Alex J. Bellamy, 'Are new robust mandates putting UN peacekeepers more at risk?' *Global Observatory* (2014).



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