

## BOOK REVIEW NOTES

### THE BRICS: A MAJOR PARTICIPANT IN THE MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER\*

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In recent decades the global community has been witnessing a dramatic change in world politics and the balance of power. New global challenges demand a multipolar world order, and new participants are attaining more political power. A vivid example of multilateralism is the BRICS group, established in 2009 and evolving since then as an effective structure for economic cooperation and collective decision-making. The BRICS were launched as a new platform to meet global challenges, and the group is gaining importance and attention both regionally and globally. On the other hand, as an international actor, it remains largely unexplored by scholars.

The book "*BRICS and Global Governance*" is presented by two celebrated editors – John J. Kirton (Munk School of Global Affairs, Trinity College, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto) and Marina Larionova (Center for International Institutions Research (CIIR), Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)). Its content is an excellent overview and deep critical analysis on BRICS development, strengths and weaknesses. The objective of the book is to describe the BRICS role in global governance, and this goal is approached by the multi-disciplinary study of the BRICS group's birth and evolution, mechanisms of cooperation, agenda priorities, tools for collective and individual compliance with

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\* Reviewed book: *BRICS and Global Governance* (J. Kirton & M. Larionova (eds.), London: Routledge, 2018).

the agreed commitments, and the patterns of the BRICS engagement with other international institutions. The five parts and fourteen chapters of the book combine to form a BRICS anthology of research papers contributed by eminent researchers from four continents that discusses the key features of the BRICS: mission, values, agenda, evolving institutional identity, compliance performance and models of engagement with international organizations and perspectives. The common thread running through the entire book is the idea that despite specific historical, political, economic and cultural backgrounds, the members of the BRICS group share common values and goals, and have the potential for future cooperation and success.

In the introductory Part I *Marina Larionova* discusses the challenges the world witnessed and the responses the global community suggested in recent decades. Geopolitical, economic, environmental, societal and technological challenges have intertwined and driven shifts in international cooperation. The mission of the BRICS group is to respond to the global challenges and to realize the ambition of supporting a multipolar, equitable and democratic world order. The principles of the new world order announced by the BRICS are international law, equality, mutual respect, cooperation, coordinated action and collective decision-making of all states. The group has committed itself to improving the global governance system, ensuring the representation of developing countries in international institutions and building up a new model of socio-economic development.

Targeting their goals, the BRICS have acquired both opponents and advocates, and they have undoubtedly achieved recognition in the global arena. In spite of any criticism, the BRICS are firmly established as an international actor and prominent player for at least three reasons: first, the sheer size of the members' combined population and their share of the global gross domestic product; second, the fact that all the members are regional powers; and, third, the BRICS operate across at least five regions. In chapter 1, "*The Rise of New Institution*," *Marina Larionova* examines the key features of the BRICS as an international actor.

The author believes that the BRICS have established a balanced agenda, where economic, social and political dimensions reinforce each other. An increasing share of social issues on the agenda indicates the commitment to deliver public goods for the members' own citizens and those of other countries.

The cornerstone of the BRICS mission is developing mutually enriching and beneficial cooperation and shaping the forum's agenda on a wide range of issues. This is accompanied by rapid institutionalization, which is likely to continue. Along with their basic themes – health, development, education, science and innovation, environmental protection, renewable energy, and clean and efficient energy technologies – in 2015 the BRICS launched a dialogue on new policy areas: industrial cooperation, migration and employment. New mechanisms for internal coordination were also set up, such as the working group on socially important economic sectors, the working group on energy saving and energy efficiency, the Basic Agricultural

Information Exchange System (BAIES) and the working group on cooperation on information and communications technologies.

The author concludes that as an actor in the system of global governance the BRICS have the autonomous capacity to define and pursue their mission, interests, values and agenda; the group has the capability to pool resources to implement collective commitments; and its collective actions are significant enough to affect the global agenda and activities.

Part II of the book tracks the evolution of the BRICS agenda and its contribution to global governance across various policy areas. The agenda of the group was formed in response to global challenges and has gradually changed to reflect the external and internal dynamics.

This part begins with a chapter by *John J. Kirton* on "*Explaining the Solid, Strengthening Success of the BRICS Summit.*" He reviews the ongoing debate among several competing schools of thought, sharing their views on this "plurilateral summit institution," its evolution and performance in the global arena.

The author appeals to ten schools having opposite views on the significance and weight the BRICS carry on the international stage. Adherents of the first school point to its weak political and economic ambitions, for example, the rejection of reforms in the United Nations Organization and "the long struggle to produce only a modestly resourced BRICS development bank by 2014." The reason for these failures, according to the first school, is the lack of common characteristics and interests among the BRICS members, differences in political and legal systems and territorial disputes, among others. The second school depicts the decline of the BRICS as a consequence of economic failures in Russia, Brazil and South Africa, which can be aggravated by political tensions.

Other schools express more optimistic views on the BRICS development. For example, the fifth school sees the BRICS becoming increasingly influential, though, to date, they have not become a unified geopolitical bloc or globally influential alliance. The seventh school describes the BRICS as a broader developing country coalition seeking to shift the balance of global political influence from the West towards the developing world as a whole. The BRICS have fulfilled their mission to establish a new international institutional balance to correspond to the emerging geopolitical forces of the developing countries. The ninth school sees the BRICS as a successful competitor to the G8 and the G20, whereas the tenth school emphasizes the ability of the BRICS to become a successful cooperater with the G8 and the G20.

All these schools acknowledge the growing international economic and political power and role of the BRICS members, their desire for an enhanced place in global governance and their leadership in regional institutions. This analysis shows that the BRICS summit is a solid, increasingly comprehensive, cooperative success.

In his chapter "*BRICS Engagement with International Institutions for Better Governance,*" *Andrey Shelepov* of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public

Administration (RANEPa) explores the models, intensity and distribution of the BRICS cooperation with international organizations in order to assess the role of the BRICS in the system of global governance. The chapter contains the results of a qualitative and quantitative analysis which identifies references to international organizations and assesses those references. *Andrey Shelepov* describes two models of the BRICS interaction with international institutions: catalytic influence and parallel treatment. The BRICS countries have established efficient mechanisms for working with the UN, G20 and WTO in the form of discussions on the sidelines of their relevant meetings or on a whole range of economic and financial issues in the case of the IMF and the World Bank. The researcher concludes that the dynamics of the BRICS engagement with other international institutions is positive. By strengthening intra-institutional cooperation and interacting with international organizations, the BRICS address their priorities, enhance their role in global governance and improve the sustainability, legitimacy and efficiency of the global governance architecture as a whole. However, the goal of the BRICS should be to enhance their connections with other international organizations which will promote the BRICS priorities and decisions and, on the whole, intensify the effectiveness of global governance mechanisms.

In the chapter "*Political Dynamics within the BRICS in the Context of Multilayered Global Governance*" *Maria Raquel Freire* explores how the BRICS political dynamics influence existing and future governance mechanisms. This chapter argues that the BRICS have been advancing an alternative model for international governance. The BRICS members possess very diverse characteristics; however, the group agenda is built on common principles and suggests an "equal and just new global order." The author believes that the group members have become relevant actors in the international system and that their approach to a joint agenda is structured on consensus-based decision-making and coherent policies, and that is the reason for their influencing global governance. On the other hand, the BRICS countries' diversities and contradictions on some political, economic, cultural and social issues make it difficult to harmonize a joint decision-making process. Nevertheless, *Freire* concludes that the BRICS have proved their authority and relevance as a group and have certainly become an active participant in the global governance process. In the chapter, in general, the author clarifies the ways in which the BRICS, despite the members' asymmetrical characters and *sui generis* nature, have been promoting a new international agenda.

Part III of the book is devoted to the BRICS contribution to global governance. Here, authors review the BRICS contributions to the global finance and economic architecture, traditional and non-traditional security issues, to science, technology and innovation.

This part opens with the chapter on "*The New Development Bank in the Global Financial and Economic Architecture*" by *Alexandra Morozkina* of the National Research University Higher School of Economics. She addresses the question of whether the

New Development Bank (NDB) will promote the role of the BRICS countries in the global financial architecture and foster their development. *Morozkina* compares the key multilateral development banks (the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the BRICS countries' national development banks with the newly established institution. She concludes that, given the NDB's purpose to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in the member countries, it could add to the functions of the existing institutions and become a significant development bank for those countries.

*Natalia Khmelevskaya* of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, in the chapter "*BRICS Financial and Payment Arrangements: A Locus of Intragroup Trade Development*," studies monetary cooperation among the BRICS countries. Drawing on in-depth statistics and analysis of trade flows, export structure similarities and exchange rate indicators of bilateral trade among the BRICS members, *Khmelevskaya* argues that their common vulnerability to external shocks, asymmetry in the trade network regarding value and structures, and their aspirations to internationalizing their currencies all push them towards common financial and payment arrangements.

"*The BRICS Security Agenda: Russia's Approach and Outcomes of the BRICS Ufa Summit*" is the focus of *Victoria Panova*, of the Far Eastern Federal University and Russia's National Committee on BRICS Research. She contends that the priorities of the BRICS countries lie not only within the domain of the international economic and financial architecture, but also within their aspiration to political and economic governance. In this realm, security issues have become a key item for BRICS attention. The BRICS consider the UN to be the central and only legitimate body for global governance. The five countries assert that only the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is mandated with maintaining peace and security. As rightly noted by *Vyacheslav Nikonov* (2013),

All five countries are interested in increasing to the maximum extent the role of the United Nations, in improving its mechanisms and in responding to global challenges and threats through multilateral diplomacy.

Further on in her chapter, *Panova* describes the distinctiveness of Russia's approach and the outcomes of its foreign policy. Russia's objective is to further institutionalize the BRICS cooperation agenda, because "a stronger BRICS grouping would help to safeguard the interests of all developing countries." The author concentrates on the most crucial issues of the BRICS security agenda, such as terrorism, internet governance and cybersecurity as well as nuclear disarmament.

Describing the BRICS prospects, *Panova* concludes that there is an additional responsibility vested in the BRICS because their cooperation and achievements in

global political and economic governance reform are considered an alternative to the domination of the advanced economies and a new model of equal and mutually beneficial cooperation by the majority of developing countries. Therefore, the five countries should seek viable solutions to security challenges.

*Niall Duggan* of University College Cork, Ireland, explores "*The BRICS and Nontraditional Security*." His chapter reviews how the BRICS have influenced the agenda of global governance bodies and highlights their role as a collective actor in dealing with nontraditional security threats. Two areas of nontraditional security – water security and food security – are examined. The author particularly focuses on the interconnections between food, energy and water, and the impact of climate change on all three sectors. All of the BRICS countries have acknowledged that food and water security is critical to their further development. The chapter makes it clear that the BRICS countries agree that in order to deal with water and food security the issues must be seen as interdependent, and they must be tackled at a global level by bodies dedicated to these areas of nontraditional security.

Despite the BRICS members' vulnerability to water and food insecurity, they have not yet fully developed collective grounds for action. The issue is not fully reflected in the political and legal sources of the countries; to a certain extent water security within the BRICS has been strongly linked to food security and agriculture.

Although the BRICS water security agenda is underdeveloped compared to its food security agenda, both promote a greater role for the current global governance bodies, particularly those that are part of the UN's centralized system. This discourse calls for the water and food security agendas to be returned in full to bodies whose sole purpose is to deal with these areas.

This work plan focuses on five priorities, with new initiatives to be included:

- the prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, to be led by Brazil;
- water resources and pollution treatment, to be led by Russia;
- geospatial technology and its applications, to be led by India;
- new and renewable energy, and energy efficiency, to be led by China;
- astronomy, to be led by South Africa.

In the chapter "*Prospects for Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation among BRICS Members*" *Michael Kahn*, a policy analyst and evaluator of science, technology and innovation (STI), from Stellenbosch University, Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology, studies intra-BRICS cooperation in science, technology and innovation, and informs readers that these issues have been strengthened through the Cape Town Declaration of 10 February 2014, whereby the BRICS ministers responsible for science, technology and innovation committed to a program of STI cooperation (BRICS Science, Technology and Innovation 2014). International scientific collaboration has become a part of the new globalization of knowledge, and the Cape Town Declaration has two objectives: first, to "harness this momentum to the benefit of the BRICS"; and, second, to propose country

specializations in the STI. The “line-up” for the countries is stated as follows: Brazil – climate change and disaster mitigation; Russia – water resources and pollution treatment for Russia; India – geospatial technology and applications; China – new and renewable energy and energy efficiency; and South Africa – astronomy.

To explain the viability of BRICS cooperation in science, technology and innovation *Kahn* answers a number of questions: the current state of STI cooperation among the BRICS members, their fields of interest and the domestic strategies for STI. He also assesses country-to-country interactions and analyzes bilateral STI agreements and the Cape Town Declaration as well as rising geopolitical tensions (in the Black Sea, the South China Sea) and their possible limiting effects on the scope of STI cooperation. The author concludes that effective scientific cooperation is a challenge for the BRICS countries which, unlike the United States and the European Union, have not experienced one hundred years of university and research cooperation. *Kahn* suggests mega science projects as an important channel for scientific development.

Part IV of the book explores the BRICS members’ interests and priorities that shape the cooperation agenda. The objective of this part is to assess the BRICS capability to become an instrument for peaceful and effective governance in the contemporary global community. This goal can be described as the search for a new balance between developed and developing countries mostly in the areas of economics and finance. And this goal can be further contemplated as the movement to a new system of sharing the responsibility for international security and for jointly charting the course for the future of the “global village.”

The opening chapter prepared by *Georgy Toloraya*, Russian diplomat, Executive Director of the Russian National Committee on BRICS research, “*The BRICS for Better Global Governance*,” discusses the BRICS influence in global economics and geopolitics. Assessing the group’s leadership potential, *Toloraya* explains the reasons for the criticism of the BRICS and proves that in spite of many differences – in political systems, economic models and living standards – the group’s members are united by strategic interests:

the desire to reform the basics of world politics and economics, independence in politics, primacy of international law, support for the role of the United Nations as the guarantor of international security, maximum use of the possibilities of complementarity of national economies and cooperation in society’s modernization.

*Toloraya* debates the BRICS role and future strategy from the Russian perspective, mentioning that Russia was one of the initiators of the creation of the bloc. The position of the BRICS group is strengthened through their agenda’s focus on five pillars, namely:

- the promotion of cooperation for economic growth and development;
- the maintenance of peace and security;
- social justice, sustainable development and quality of life;
- political and economic governance;
- the achievement of progress by sharing knowledge and innovation.

At present, the BRICS are substantively broadening the sphere of cooperation, as well as deepening it, shifting from declarations and programs to real action. It is clear that at the next stage, the BRICS can formulate their own global governance agenda to pursue certain aims. The new perspectives are to design permanent mechanisms for foreign policy consultations; to work out BRICS declarations on peace and cooperation with the possible future adoption of a basic treaty on peace, friendship and cooperation founded on UN principles; to promote the BRICS within the UN structure and to create a permanent BRICS secretariat and other coordinating bodies. The future objectives of the BRICS are targeting financial institutions of the group and their interaction with international financial organizations, and an internet domain which can serve for the promotion of the BRICS role in the global governance.

Further in Part IV, the BRICS agenda is considered from the point of view of the group members. In doing so, *Haibin Niu* describes the BRICS agenda in the Asian-Pacific region and Asia's weight within the BRICS. *Vladimir Shubin* contemplates South Africa's role in the BRICS, describing the country's goals and policy within the group. *Tatiana Deych* characterizes the BRICS regional policy in Africa. The focus on this region is relevant, taking into account that in recent years Africa has become the base for implementing the group's efforts to change the existing world order.

In the "Conclusion," *Marina Larionova* looks into the future of the BRICS. The five countries united to form the BRICS group with the aim of creating a platform for dialogue and cooperation. Appearing as a new actor in the global arena, the BRICS primarily have striven to promote peace, security and development in a multipolar, interdependent and increasingly complex, globalizing world, on the basis of universally recognized norms of international law and multilateral decision-making.

The BRICS group development has both supporters and opponents, but it is the common view that the position of the group remains as before and is unlikely to change in the near future. Meanwhile, a certain level of achievement has been reached – various mechanisms for collaboration with international institutions have been developed, the international agenda has been formed and support for the countries on all the members' continents is being provided.

The BRICS mission is to build a multipolar, equitable and democratic world order, based on international law, and to ensure a fair representation of developing countries in the international institutions. The discourse of the BRICS main documents presents the concept of the new world order that is the



democracy at the international level, i.e. where states in the international system, like citizens at the national level, are equal before the law and have equal say in co-management of the international system.

The BRICS have taken many important steps towards achieving their mission; the group has shown its own ability to cooperate, forge and project collective decisions in various public areas.

Economic, financial and trade issues will likely remain the top three priorities. For example, cooperation on social issues, including health, education and science and innovation, may expand, as all members are aware that investment in human capital is crucial for raising actual and potential output. *Marina Larionova* argues that the BRICS members will increase their coordination on political issues and consolidation of efforts to resolve security problems, as well as broaden cooperation on energy efficiency and related issues. The BRICS development cooperation can be significantly reinforced through the New Development Bank and investments in the infrastructure of emerging markets and developing countries.

There are a number of risks with regard to the BRICS performance, such as tensions among the members, political differences on certain decisions at the UN and divergent stances on approaches to certain issues. However, there is much more in common within the group, including their common goals of innovation-driven growth, and inclusive and sustainable development. The shared values and goals of the five members define the BRICS future cooperation as a concert of equals despite having different economic and political weights.

The BRICS would benefit from a change in the institutionalization pattern. An important step for the group's performance should be efficient mechanisms for implementing decisions taken at summits. Enhanced effectiveness and legitimacy, in turn, would maximize the attainment of the group's priorities and consolidate their capability to fulfill their mission and the functions vested in the BRICS by their leaders.

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