

BOOK REVIEW NOTES

THE BRICS SUPERPOWER CHALLENGE. FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY ANALYSIS*

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The authors are reviewing the book by Kwang Ho Chun “The BRICS Superpower Challenge. Foreign and Security Policy Analysis,” published by Ashgate Publishing Ltd. (England, USA). All in-all, this is a welcome contribution, providing a comprehensive analysis of the potential of separate states of the BRICS to become a “superpower” in the sense of disseminating information about this international organization among legal professionals. Yet this contribution harbors several limitations, such as a *de facto* concentration on the foreign policy of Brazil, Russia, India and China and a reliance on the criterion of soft power when approaching the potential of the BRICS, both of which are rather significant in terms of the success of the book with respect to the foreign and security policy of a regional organization. The concluding chapter also concentrates on summarizing the potential of separate BRICS states to develop into “superpowers.” The authors of this review assert that due to the said methodological

* Reviewed book: Kwang Ho Chun, *The BRICS Superpower Challenge. Foreign and Security Policy Analysis* (Farnham, Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013).

limitations, the book by Kwang Ho Chun does not adequately present an analysis of the foreign and security potential of BRICS as a regional organization.

Chung Kwan Ho has become known for his publications in English, dealing with the issues of security and defense policy and studying these issues with respect to the examples of Iran, Kosovo or China¹. Hence, the analysis of the BRICS policy is a continuation of the authors' previous studies on security and defense, in general, and on China, in particular. The author should be commended for writing this analysis in English, which is more likely to reach the audience both within the BRICS states and internationally. Since the topic is relatively fresh and there is still no established corpus of scholarly research on the BRICS organization, this book could require further methodological clarifications.

One of the most obvious methodological limitations of this analysis is its *de facto* focus on the domestic jurisdictions of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Moreover, the comparative analysis of the said jurisdictions appear to lack any common criteria for detailed comparison. Although the author intends to assess the BRICS potential to effectively pursue its own policy as an international law entity, this question cannot be satisfactorily answered by a detailed analysis of national policy frameworks. Furthermore, the concluding chapter focuses largely on the predictions regarding the "superpower" success of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. The conclusion regarding the prospects of the BRICS as a separate regional organization on p. 210–211 of the book is too general and not sufficiently discussed, as it takes less than half a page.

Another methodological limitation of this book is the application of the criterion of cultural influence (soft power) in approaching the "superpower" potential of the BRICS. The authors of this review came across this book by Chun Kwang Ho while working on a project studying possible avenues for individuals to engage in implementing foreign policy.² Participation in implementing foreign policy is customarily viewed in academic literature through the prism of representation. Yet there are opinions favoring, albeit limited, direct avenues of participation in implementing foreign policy, the most prominent authors advocating direct participation in foreign policy being Thomas M. Franck³ and David Held.⁴ Individual engagement in foreign policy

¹ See, for example, Chun Kwang Ho, *Kosovo: A New European Nation-State?*, 18(1) *Journal of International and Area Studies* (2011); Chun Kwang Ho, *Nuclear Iran: Dealing Options for International Community*, 16(1) *The Korean Journal of Security Affairs* (2011); Chun Kwang Ho, *The Future of Common Security and Defence Policy in Europe*, 15(2) *Journal of European Studies* (2010); Chun Kwang Ho, *Analysing China's Energy Security: A Source for Conflict?*, 23(1) *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* (2009).

² Project "Individual Participation in Implementing Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation towards the Nordic States," commissioned by the Russian Foundation for Humanities, grant number No. 15-03-00626.

³ Thomas M. Franck, *The Empowered Self: Law and Society in an Age of Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴ David Held, *Democracy and the New International Order* (London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 1993).

can take the mode of e.g., membership in NGOs or utilizing freedom of expression and, in particular, the media which, according to the opinion of the European Court of Human Rights, can also be a “critic and a watchdog” in the sphere of foreign policy.⁵ Finally, a means for public participation in foreign policy is promoting soft power, which is supposed to be targeted not at public officials but at ordinary citizens of other states. Moreover, understanding soft power as one of the indicators measuring the validity of the BRICS “superpower” is reflected in the analyzed book, which we could not fully support. In particular, the author bases his analysis *inter alia* on four parameters for assessing superpowers designed by L. Miller, i.e., political, military, economic, and cultural (soft power) “axes” (p. 17). On p. 30 of the book the author adds the “diplomatic” parameter to the existing parameters, summarizing: “The power system here encompasses various aspects of power, including economic, military, political, cultural, and diplomatic.” Notwithstanding the author’s intention to employ five criteria for his analysis, Chapter II of the reviewed book concentrates on “the politics, foreign policy, and military power” of the BRICS.

From our perspective, employing a soft power parameter in order to approach the superpower dimension of the BRICS organization is not entirely justified. According to the 2012 index of World soft power, organized by Monocle, a global affairs magazine, of all the BRICS states, only Brazil was mentioned as a soft power state while being ranked number 17 out of 20.⁶ That index, which was widely accepted when the analyzed book by Chun Kwang Ho had been published, ranked nations according to the amount of soft power influence a country has in the world. Taking into account the results of the said index and also Russia and China’s firm reliance on hard power in respect of foreign policy, assessing the BRICS “superpower” potential on the basis of soft power criteria seems questionable. Although the assessment of soft power potential is among the core criteria for the analysis, the concluding chapter lacks any general comments on the cultural policy of the BRICS states, except a statement on p. 212 that “Russia should also temper its aggressive and uncooperative tendencies towards the West.”

The concluding chapter mostly refers to economic and military (not diplomatic, cultural and political) indicators with respect to Russia, Brazil, India, and China and is based on anecdotal evidence. There are also serious factual errors in the book, e.g., on p. 4 the population of South Africa is stated to be “under 50 million” yet it reached over 52 million in year 2010. True, this contribution is a good comparative collection of data on the individual states of BRICS. However, due to the serious methodological

⁵ European Court of Human Rights, *Stoll v. Switzerland*, Appl. No. 69698/01, Judgment of December 10, 2007, para. 128.

⁶ *Who Rules the World? – Monocle’s Top Twenty (Overview)*, How To Attract Publics & Influence States (Dec. 20, 2016), available at <http://howtoattractpublicsandinfluencestates.wordpress.com/2012/11/20/who-rules-the-world-monocles-top-twenty-overview>.

limitations outlined above, this work does not do justice to the foreign and security potential of the BRICS as a regional organization.

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