

## SECURITY ANALYSIS: THE EMERGING POWERS: BRICS

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*The world is changing and is becoming more interdependent. This global interdependence has led to a real international cooperation and, given this configuration, the emerging powers – Brazil, India, Russia, China, and recently South Africa – cannot be ignored in the global government process. Having as starting point a theoretical approach of the concept of emergent power, this article aims to present the positioning of emerging powers (Brazil, India, Russia, China, South Africa – BRICS) in the changing global system and how they are influencing the patterns of power in the system.*

**Keywords:** *emerging powers; BRICS; India; Russia; China.*

### Introduction

**T**he world is changing. Through its socio-effects, globalization changes the hierarchy of power centers both by transforming the way in which actors assume and play roles and by emphasizing the trends of reconfiguring strategic partnerships, depending on the interests and security objectives of the main actors<sup>1</sup>. The world is becoming increasingly interdependent, not only economically, but also with respect to the threats and challenges our societies are facing. The globalization process is characterized by a global interdependence and the international cooperation cannot be ignored; in addition, the emerging powers such as Brazil, India, Russia, China, and South Africa must be taken into account in the new global era. The world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is becoming increasingly multipolar, characterized by the emergence of these new powers (China, India, Brazil, or the resurgence of Russia). The American “unipolar moment”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Poede, *Studii de securitate*, Editura Cavallioti, București, 2005, p. 87

<sup>2</sup> Charles Krauthammer, “The unipolar moment”, *Foreign Affairs*, vol7:1, 1990, pp.23-33

has ended, however, it seems too early to evoke true multipolarity, US remaining the dominant power, or the “lonely superpower”<sup>3</sup>. America’s decline is not an illusion, but it must be understood in relative terms. US global influence is decreasing because it contrasts with the rise of other actors at the local, regional and global level.

The questions who will emerge as a major power and when will US dominance really end are answered by great uncertainty. Still, the emerging countries can be determined and they may create in the 21st century a sort of asymmetrical multipolarity and may want to impose themselves as dominant actors, great powers, regional powers and local powers.

### **1. The emerging powers – theoretical approach**

The 21<sup>st</sup> international relations system is based on sovereign states and on their relations. This situation has known very substantial developments, one of the main characteristics of this period being the transformation of the actors involved. Along with the emergence of regional groupings and organizations, the central role of state signed up on a downward path. Although the state remains the main actor of international relations, the non-state actors are also recognized as they are likely to have the power to influence international relations. This trend is accompanied by a growing multipolarism, because there already exists at global level a growing number of major powers both from a military and an economic<sup>4</sup> point of view.

In the theory of international relations, the **concept of emerging power** has no accepted definition. There is a general confusion about the concept of emerging powers, emerging countries, emerging economies or emerging markets. In this sense, the concept has different meanings.

The emerging powers are characterized by a regional preponderance, the aspiration for a global role, and the challenging of U.S. hegemony. Particularly, the cooperation between these states and possible other powers unhappy with the actual unipolar configuration of international politics can lead to the creation of a coalition able to balance the American power. What is obvious with respect to all these emerging powers is the discontent with the existing international political structure.

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Renard, „A BRIC in the world: emerging powers, Europe, and the coming order”, *Egmont Paper*, no. 31, Academia Press for Egmont - The Royal Institute for International Relations, 2009, Brussels, p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Teodor Frunzeti, Dorel Bușe, *Relații internaționale*, Editura Universitatea Națională de Apărare „Carol I”, București, 2011, pp. 51-52

Many commentators have sought to define emerging powers using a variety of criteria, including geopolitical significance and economic weight. Most of these are evident in the BRIC countries which possess the economic means to merit their political voice. Some run large foreign exchange reserves, for example Brazil and China. Some influence or position themselves to influence global energy markets, as is the case with Russia and likely to be so with Brazil as it rises to become a new major energy player with the discovery of presalt oil fields by Petrobras in 2007. China has become the global manufacturing centre and is also developing stable and solid technological capabilities<sup>5</sup>.

The notion of „emerging power” is partly informed by a theoretical assumption that the international behaviour of states is determined by their place in the international system. Small states generally bandwagon with threats, great powers tend to balance against them, „middle powers” float in a postmodern universe that is largely irrelevant, and hegemonic powers seek to control. Emergent powers are distinctive because their identity is dynamic; their position is changing as their power grows and, along with it, their capacity to shape outcomes. They carry some potential for systemic revisionism – a challenge to the hierarchy of the system in which they exist. The structural interpretation of state behaviour is widely contested, not least by liberal alternatives stressing the nature of the unit as the factor determining its external behaviour, but also by mixed models that posit that the foreign policy behaviour of states is a product of both domestic and international considerations. Between the structural realist and the liberal perspectives there are regional interpretations that suggest that the external behaviour of states may be powerfully influenced by their immediate geographical contexts. Moreover, systemic interpretations tend to emphasize hard power. However, many states, including some emerging powers, may seek to enhance their positions in the international system through the exercise of „soft power”—the promotion of ideas and values that are attractive to others<sup>6</sup>.

Discussions around emerging powers are generally tainted with an economic background, seemingly following Paul Kennedy’s thesis in his „Rise and Fall of Great Powers” that economic development is necessary and preliminary to political

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<sup>5</sup> Mzukisi Qobo, *Emerging powers and the changing global environment: leadership, norms and institutions*, South African Institute of International Affairs, London, 2011, p. 6

<sup>6</sup> Neil S. Macfarlane, „The ‘R’ in BRICs: is Russia an emerging power?”, *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1, January 2006, p.41

and military emergence<sup>7</sup>. Hence, an emerging power is expected to go through a phase of economic development in order to integrate and dominate a growing share of global economy. In this regard, the concept of emerging power could be paralleled to that of emerging market economy forged by Antoine van Agtmael, an analyst of the World Bank in the 1980s in order to characterize countries in rapid transition, industrializing, with high economic growth rates that offered opportunities for economic and financial investments. Not all emerging economies become emerging powers, though. The „Asian dragons” (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan) followed by the “Asian tigers” (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand) are famous cases of emerging markets and yet no one would consider any of these countries as a global or even as a regional power. The reason is that power is not only about finance and economics. There are many other factors that need to be taken into account<sup>8</sup>.

Economic emergence is tightly related to power emergence – and it can reasonably be seen as a necessary precondition – but it is by no means a sufficient condition for global power. A state power can be conceived on three levels: 1) resources or capabilities; 2) how that power is converted through national processes; and 3) power in outcomes, or which state prevails in particular circumstances<sup>9</sup>.

Most emerging countries are still considered today as developing countries which need to catch up with the developed world. Beyond the fact that they are emerging in common, emerging countries are essentially characterized by fundamental differences: 1) they are still at very different levels of development. For instance, they can be found in the four different income groups (per capita) of the World Bank: among low income economies (\$975 or less) there was no emerging power in 2010 although India was still in this group in 2007; among lower middle income economies (\$976-\$3,855) there were China and India; among upper middle income economies (\$3,856-\$11,905) there were Brazil, Russia and South Africa; and among high income economies (\$11,906 or more) there were Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea<sup>10</sup>; 2) they have very distinctive historical and cultural

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Renard, „G20:Towards a new order”, *Studia Diplomatica*, vol.63, No.2, 2010, Academia Press for Egmont - The Royal Institute for International Relations, Brussels, p.8

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p.8

<sup>9</sup> Gregory F. Treverton, Seth G. Jones, *Measuring National Power*, National Security Research Division, Santa Monica, 2005, p.1

<sup>10</sup> Th. Renard, „G20:Towards a new [...]” in *op.cit.*, p.8

backgrounds: China and Russia are (former) communist regimes, India is the former leader of the non-aligned countries and a country with democratic and pluralistic values, and Brazil and South Africa share an autocratic past on two different continents; 3) they have followed distinct paths of development which still influence the shape of their economies today, proving moreover that there is more than one model of development than the Western one. Brazil and India, for instance, have followed a model of industrialization by substitution of importations, while China has followed a model of industrialization by exportations<sup>11</sup>.

In conclusion, an emerging power is a country - or more exactly an actor - that is developing resources and capabilities in most or all dimensions of power, and that is able to convert those resources and capabilities into global power. The emphasis on outcomes is important because a country that is not willing or able to use its capabilities internationally cannot be considered a power. The extent of these resources and capabilities, as well as the will to transform them into power will determine whether an actor will be a global, regional or local power.

## **2. BRICS's role in the global system**

The global system has undergone significant changes in the past two decades since the collapse of the Berlin Wall. While advanced industrial powers such as the US, Europe and Japan are still the driving forces of global policymaking, there is now a shift to non-polarity, inter-polarity or multipolarity, still persisting the uncertainty about what will be in the future and who will have the power. In this regard, the transformation of G8 in G20 symbolises the shift from an old global order, dominated by transatlantic actors, to a new order characterized by the competition for power between the established powers and the emerging ones.

In this changing system, BRICS countries are seen as the main emerging powers. This vision is due to Jim O'Neill, who in his analysis for Goldman Sachs, „Dreaming with Brics. The Path to 2030” gave great importance to the emerging powers. Lately, another study of Goldman Sachs „Building better global economic BRICS” compared the economic results of emerging economies (BRIC) with that of the G7 countries (USA, Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy and Canada)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p.10

<sup>12</sup> Jim O'Neill, „Building Better Global Economic BRICS”, *Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper*, 66, 30 November, 2001, in <http://www2.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/brics/building-better.html>, accessed at 02.02.2012

and considered that their growth in US dollar terms will surpass that of the G7 countries by 2050, which has since been revised to 2040<sup>13</sup>.

BRIC - the group consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, born in 2009 at Russia's initiative, having as central idea the institutionalization and politicization of the acronym „BRIC” created by Goldman Sachs in 2001, and from April 14<sup>th</sup> – BRICS (to the third summit of the BRIC, South Africa joining the club)<sup>14</sup>, is now part of the global geopolitical landscape and represents a heterogeneous coalition of competitive powers that share a common fundamental political objective: to undermine the hegemonic claims of the West, by protecting the principle considered to be threatened, that is, the political sovereignty of states. They do not seek to form an anti-Western political coalition based on a counter proposal or a radically different vision of the world, but are concerned to maintain the independence of national decision and action in a world that is increasingly in an economic and social interdependence.

The growing importance of cooperation between BRICS states has become acknowledged by the leaders of the five states and has led to the organization of official working groups. If on June 16, 2009, the leaders of the four BRIC countries met in Yekaterinburg to discuss various topics related to the 2008 economic crisis, such as international trade, the role of the dollar as reserve currency and the participation in international organizations, among others, at the official meeting of April 16, 2010, in the capital of Brazil, the four major emerging powers expressed their desire to create a new world order to be - „democratic, just and multipolar”. Moreover, the final declaration of the summit stated that it is necessary for international institutions such as IMF, World Bank and UN Security Council to be reformed thus to better reflect the importance of the emerging economies<sup>15</sup>. The primary function of these meetings is to serve as a forum for consultation or an informal pressure group, before acting more effectively in formal multilateral institutions. Thus, for Brazil, India and South Africa, these BRICS forums help to strengthen their international profile and support their desire to project themselves as emerging powers beyond their respective statute as regional powers. Moreover,

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<sup>13</sup> D. Wilson & R. Purushothaman, „Dreaming with BRICS: The Path to 2050”, Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper, 99, 2003, <http://www2.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/brics/bricsdream.html>, accessed at 02.02.2012

<sup>14</sup>Folashadé Soulé-Kohndou – „IBSA, BRICS : l'intégration des pays émergents par les clubs ?” mai 2011 in <http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org>, accessed at 01.02.2012

<sup>15</sup>Dorel Buşe, *Centre și raporturi de putere în relațiile internaționale în epoca post Război Rece*, Editura Universitatea Națională de Apărare, București, 2012, p. 229

in the international institutions, particularly the UN, the cooperation between India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) has a double objective: legitimization (the right of association and inclusion in a system whose decision-making process would integrate them especially in the Security Council) and autonomy (the will to preserve the independence and the autonomy of action vis-à-vis the great powers). The objective is therefore to contribute so as to rebalance the global governance<sup>16</sup>.

Yet this defensively strong coalition remains weak on the offensive precisely because the sovereign states that form it pursue narrow national objectives. Since they are very distrustful of one another for a number of reasons – of which some are historical (Sino-Russian and Sino-Indian rivalry) – the BRICS have trouble interpreting sovereignty as anything other than a zero-sum game. This narrow attachment to sovereignty is both their strength and their great weakness<sup>17</sup>.

This stringency towards sovereignty has increased since the beginning of the Arab Spring. At the United Nations, the BRICS formed a united front against the Western countries to prevent a vote on resolutions likely to breach the sovereignty of repressive states. Granted, they all voted for Resolution 1970, which placed sanctions on Libya. Several weeks later, however, they all abstained (with the exception of South Africa) during the decisive vote, which paved the way for NATO's military intervention. The BRICS abstentions were considered a form of progress towards relativizing state sovereignty on the basis of the responsibility to protect. The West's political optimism proved to be quite premature though; in one way or another, all of the BRICS expressed the view that NATO had overstepped the rights created by resolution 1973 in Libya, and they feared a repetition of this pattern in Syria. Thus, they decided to oppose to the vote that would undermine Syria's, opposing to the West without being able to offer an alternative<sup>18</sup>.

In **demographic terms**, BRICS holds the world's two most populated countries and another two with considerable populations. China holds 19.7% of the world's population, followed by India 17.2%, by Brazil - 2.8% and Russia - 2.1% and South Africa – 0.7%<sup>19</sup>. Despite their large territories – Russia's 17 million km<sup>2</sup>, India's 3.2 million km<sup>2</sup>, China's 9.3 million km<sup>2</sup>, Brazil's 8.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and South

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<sup>16</sup>F. Soulé-Kohndou, „ IBSA, BRICS : l'intégration des [...]” in *op.cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Zaki Laïdi, „The BRICS Against the West?”, Ceri Strategy Papers, no. 11- Hors Série, November 2011, p.2, in [http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/ressource/n11\\_112011.pdf](http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/ressource/n11_112011.pdf), accessed at 02.02.2012

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p.8

<sup>19</sup> Cf. BRICS: Joint Statistical Publication, 2011 in <http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/otherdata/brics2011/P020110412519191303418.pdf>, accessed at 02.02.2012



Africa's 1 million km<sup>2</sup> – the Brics differ from each other in terms of natural resources, level of industrialization and impact on the global economy. Moreover, Russia, India and China are military powers, unlike Brazil which has never engaged into an arm race. These countries have as common features: the recently stabilized economy; the stable political situation, growing production and export levels, large reserves of mineral resources, investment in infrastructure sectors; growing GDP, improved social indicators; decrease, although quite slow, of social differences; rapid access to public communication systems, capital markets that receive foreign investments, etc. All these differences and similarities are important in order to point out just where the heterogeneity of this group of states comes from, given that they do not form a political bloc like the EU or a trade alliance like MERCOSUR, much less a NATO type military alliance, but they have built an alliance with the various treaties of cooperation signed since 2002<sup>20</sup>.

Concerning **competitiveness**, according to the *Global Competitiveness Report 2010–2011* of *World Economic Forum*<sup>21</sup>, this is defined as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country, which in turn contributes to improving the level of prosperity an economy can generate - countries characterised by high levels of productivity produce high standards of living for their citizens – among BRICS this is reflected in the following way: in Russia, goods markets remain inefficient. The country has inept anti-monopoly policies and restrictive conditions for foreign ownership. Russia's institutions are said to be very weak, but domains such as infrastructure, education and health are seen as domains where Russia made improvements; India is weak in its health and primary education pillar of global competitiveness. It has high rates for diseases and infant mortality; the macroeconomic environment continues to be characterised by persistent budget deficits, high public debt and high inflation and need to upgrade its infrastructure. The size of its market and the efficiency of financial markets are strenghts for India's global competitiveness; China has achieved consistent progress in its global competitiveness. The large and growing size of its market, macroeconomic stability, and relatively sophisticated and innovative businesses have put the country in a more favourable light. However, challenges abound in areas such as technological readiness and information and communications technology penetration. Except for China, South Africa ranks ahead

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<sup>20</sup> D. Buşe, *op.cit.*, p.228

<sup>21</sup> WEF, *Global Competitiveness Report 2010–2011*, <http://www.weforum.org/reports/globalcompetitiveness-report-2010-2011-0>, accessed at 02.02.2012



of the other BRICS in the global competitiveness index. South Africa performs well on measures such as the quality of institutions and goods market efficiency. The country is regarded as innovative and benefiting from good scientific research institutions and strong collaborations between universities and the business sector. Brazil is also appreciated for its markets' efficiency and innovation, being weak in the goods markets efficiency and macroeconomic stability<sup>22</sup>.

With respect to **economic freedom**, according to the Heritage Foundation Review which calculated the Index Review of Economic Freedom<sup>23</sup>, this is defined as the fundamental right of every human being to control his or her own labour and prosperity. This index measures 10 components: business freedom; trade freedom; fiscal freedom; government spending; monetary freedom; investment freedom; financial freedom; property rights; freedom from corruption; and labour freedom. Among BRICS, this index is shown as below: South Africa has a high overall ranking compared with the other BRICS countries. Out of the 183 countries assessed, South Africa ranks 74th with a score of 62.7%; Brazil is 113th with a score of 56.3%; India 124th with 54.6%; China 135th with 52%; and Russia is one of the worst performers, ranking 143th with 50.5%; Brazil's investment freedom and also the investment regime is low, with a score of 50%, being marked by restrictions in several industries. Although the banking sector is diversified and competitive, this remains one of the domains the state involves in. Nonetheless, there is foreign participation in the banking sector, with three of the top 10 banks being foreignowned. Corruption remains a government's problem, although this is not as significant as in South Africa, India and Russia; Russia has an underdeveloped financial sector. Russia possesses a minuscule capital market, which is dominated by the energy sector. Foreign investment faces severe restrictions, Russia remaining a highly statist economy that is characterised by pervasive corruption. Corruption is undermining Russia's modernisation efforts, elected officials, civil servants and police being more corrupt than any other BRICS, situating the country far from a modern economy. However, Russia tries to join the World Trade Organization and accede to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. India scores poorly on business freedom, being characterised by a weak legal framework. Investment freedom is also weak and the country is lacking the bureaucratic transparency and

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<sup>22</sup> M.Qobo, *op.cit.*, pp.20-21

<sup>23</sup> The Heritage Foundation & *The Wall Street Journal*, 2011 *Index of Economic Freedom*., Washington, DC & New York: The Heritage Foundation and Dow Jones & Company, Inc., 2011 in <http://www.heritage.org/index/>, accessed at 02.02 2012

the capacity to enforce contracts. India is battling with pervasive corruption in government procurement of telecommunications, power and defense contracts. China scores poorly in point of freedom from corruption, corruption having infiltrated banking, finance, government procurement and construction. According to accounts based on China's Central Bank, Chinese officials reportedly stole \$120 billion from the mid-1990s to 2008. The country has a weak judicial system, with court decisions sometimes ignored with impunity. South Africa generally performs better than other BRIC members on economic freedom. It has a fair scoring on financial freedom at 60%. The financial sector accounts for 20% of the country's GDP. The country has well-developed capital markets but has problems with the lack of transparency and rigid labour laws, which act as a disincentive for investors. Corruption is the biggest challenge undermining economic freedom and, possibly, future political stability in the country<sup>24</sup>. The indexes presented above indicate that these countries are still maturing, that there are challenges to the developing level and even the fact that are differences between BRICS countries.

In terms of **political multipolarization**, the political weight of the BRIC countries is rising as illustrated by the international attention received by the two BRIC Summits held in Russia – 2009, Brazil – 2010 and China - 2011. Together, they now have a voice calling for a multipolar and pluralistic world order, mirroring aspirations of a great number of countries worldwide that question the legitimacy of existing international organizations. Depending on the issue, they can also morph into other acronymic clubs, such as BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) or IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) when discussing South-South cooperation among democracies. There are too many divergences and tensions among BRICS nations (e.g. between India and China) for the forum to become something more than a club meeting once in a while. Beyond the notoriety of the BRIC club, however, each member has gained political clout in the recent years, despite significant differences between each country's political weights. China and Russia sit both in the UN Security Council as permanent members. In this regard, they already belong to one of the most exclusive clubs in the world. Officially, they support a reform of the UNSC, in order to include Brazil and India, although historically China opposed the admission of India and the support of Beijing is still filled with uncertainty. Brazil has been a regular non-permanent member of the UNSC (10 times since 1946), while India was represented six times, but only once since the

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<sup>24</sup> M. Qobo, *op.cit.*, pp. 22-23

end of the Cold War (in 1991-92). BRIC countries, especially India, China and Brazil, have also found interest in another body of the UN: peacekeeping operations. Indeed, they all have increased significantly their human contributions to UN missions (India - 9000 soldiers, Brazil and China have over 2,000 each).

Concerning **regional influence**, BRICS countries stand in completely different positions.

**China.** In recent years, China's global presence and influence have increased, imposing China as a major player in the global geostrategic context. Already established as an important regional power, it fosters wider aspirations, given its history of great power and vision that China is the world center<sup>25</sup>. In BRICS, China is one of the most important actors, with a special status, being an emerging power in the full meaning of the term, but also far from being the most emergent of the emerging powers. It has the ambition of a great power and aims to become the principal challenger to U.S. power through pacific means. China's strategy towards the BRICS stems from this perspective: play the game of integrating into the capitalist system without assuming the political consequences. The fact that China's BRICS partners have different political systems from its own – most prominently because they are democratic - constitutes an additional asset for China, precisely because it allows China to demonstrate to the West that the attachment to sovereignty is in no way linked to the nature of political systems. In other words, if China refuses the slightest interference in its internal affairs, especially for anything related to human rights, it is not because it is not democratic, but rather because it considers the protection of sovereignty to be crucial to a stable international order. China is one of the states most hostile to what could be called a democratization of the international system, an example is its opposition to increasing the number of permanent members of the Security Council. And this because the main beneficiary would be India, which also happens to be a BRICS member that enjoys U.S. support for its claim to a seat. As a result, the BRICS are a curious coalition, wherein members seek to neutralize each other in the most strategic areas of power. By dint of the simple fact that it has become the second greatest economic power in the world, China has seen its economic relations with the other BRICS significantly increase. China is the primary trade partner of Brazil, India, and South Africa. The interdependence among BRICS is thereby considerably deepening. The closer economic ties among the BRICS have more to do with the bilateral agreements than

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<sup>25</sup> Teodor Frunzeti, *Geostrategie*, Editura Centrului Tehnic-Editorial al Armatei, București, 2009, p. 213

with any integration among these countries. For all the BRICS, the region remains the preferred level for economic integration processes<sup>26</sup>.

China is without doubt, a superpower in Asia and began to expand its influence and its direct neighborhood, facing Russia (Central Asia) and India (Indian Ocean) in their traditional spheres of influence. China is by far the richest state in the region, with a gross national product (GNP) of \$ 9.872 trillion, about four times larger than Russia's GDP. In fact, China in its future evolution can reach and even surpass U.S.: due to the large population, China has the potential to become richer. The military power is the only aspect which differentiates between these powers; moreover, China can convert economic power in a military one, because China is developing competitive and modern technologies<sup>27</sup>. China has three geopolitical imperatives: 1) to maintain the internal unity in China's Heartland region, 2) to maintain the control of the buffer regions, 3) to protect against foreign invasions the coastal regions<sup>28</sup>, while China's grand strategy emphasizes that it has a policy aiming territorial integrity (status quo oriented) and tries to reassure neighboring states that China's rise as a great power will not be accompanied by an attempt to become a regional hegemon. China has established strategic partnerships with all major powers in the international relations system – from the U.S. and Japan, to India and Russia. It was specified that this policy would be one in which China seeks to increase its attractiveness as a strategic partner, maximizing the regional power and preparing the international environment for the status of great power. Partnerships with those countries are a tool to build interdependence in terms of complementary interests and to reduce the risk of confrontation, isolation or balancing<sup>29</sup>.

**Russia** is the BRICS' most atypical actor. It is not an emerging power, strictly speaking, but rather a former superpower eager to regain a part of the political status it lost in the aftermath of the Cold War. To this end, Russia can draw on several assets. One is its legacy as a great world power under the tsars and the communists. This is a significant asset because it makes it much easier for Russia than for the other global players to project itself on the global stage, to hold a view

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<sup>26</sup> Z. Laïdi, *op.cit.*, pp. 9-10

<sup>27</sup> Vasile Paul, Ion Coșcodaru, *Centrele de putere ale lumii*, Editura Științelor Politice și Sociale, București, 2003, pp. 281-282.

<sup>28</sup> T. Frunzeti, *op.cit.*, p. 218

<sup>29</sup> D. Bușe, *op.cit.*, p. 246

on most key issues and to have a voice on the world stage<sup>30</sup>. Compared to the other BRICS, Russia holds an ambivalent, or even ambiguous position. The BRICS form a coalition that allows Russia to exist in a broader group when interacting with the West. It is no coincidence that Moscow was most willing to politicize the BRICS at a time when relations with Washington were deteriorating. Unlike the other BRICS, Russia is a global power without being a genuine regional power. Just like the others, however, it sees this group as a tool to multilateralize its power in all the areas where its position is vulnerable. Moscow seeks to protect its status as privileged partner of the U.S., be it to the detriment of other BRICS. Russia therefore has no interest in increasing the number of permanent members in the Security Council. What is certain is that Russia sees its status as permanent member of the Security Council as one of its principal assets next to its nuclear power. Its economic and demographic positions are much weaker. As a rentier state, its vision of the international economic system is warped by the very nature of its economy, which is based on the value of hydrocarbons. It has interest in joining the World Trade Organisation, but like other rentier states, Russia only has a limited interest in complying with trade rules. Again, Moscow only joins the BRICS on sovereignty-related issues. Moscow received no support (or condemnation either) from the BRICS when it decided to invade Georgia in 2008 and did not receive a response from China which is extremely stringent about respecting the territorial integrity of internationally recognized states<sup>31</sup>.

Russia is essentially a regional power, with strong ties with former Soviet states that are institutionalized through various organizations (Commonwealth of Independent States, Collective Security Treaty Organisation). One organization - the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation - is of particular interest as it gathers Russia, China and Central Asian countries into one forum, hence illustrating the potential for cooperation but also competition between Russia and China in the region<sup>32</sup>.

Russia is unlikely to become a potential hegemon in Northeast Asia in the short term, until 2020. Even if Russia had a spectacular economic growth, it would still face the population problem, being less numerous than China. Specifically, China has eight times more people than Russia, and the difference will increase over time. Russia's problems are further complicated by the fact that it has serious

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<sup>30</sup> Z. Laïdi, *op.cit.*, p. 7

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7

<sup>32</sup> Th. Renard, „G20:Towards a new [...]” in *op.cit.*, p. 14

security interests in Europe and at the southern border, which limits the military resources that could be allocated in Northeast Asia<sup>33</sup>.

**India** finds itself in a relatively uncomfortable situation as it is surrounded by countries with which it holds problematic relationships (e.g. Pakistan or China) despite being the largest country in South Asia, and therefore cannot use its regional leadership to support its aspirations to global power. India's relationship with China (between the Indian „elephant” and the Chinese „dragon”) is associated and partially explained by factors such as the exotic nature of the two states symbolized by „elephant” and „dragon”, their impressive structural attributes of power, the population size (military translated in armed forces and economically in labor forces dimensions) or surface, or their fulminating economic development in recent years. Their accentuated profiling in recent years as major global players explains the interest for China and India at all levels and in multiple spheres<sup>34</sup>. In this context, it is expected that the key factor in shaping the pattern of power and dynamics of international system as more multipolar will be the development of this relation between the two Asian „giants” China and India. In a spectacular remake of „Great Game” - the famous label assigned a century ago by Rudyard Kipling to the imperial Anglo-tsarist clash in the same region, many realist observers anticipate a medium-term configuration of a multipolar international system structured as a „balance of power” between two blocks. The first will be Russia and China and would group *inter alia*, as secondary poles of power, Iran, Pakistan and the „classic” Central Asian States group (the 5 former Soviet Muslim republics) - states now united almost completely under the institutional umbrella of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In opposition, the second block would gravitate around two major poles U.S. and India, extended in its turn with other secondary poles such as Japan or South Korea, while the European Union would be, depending the source of interpretation, the balance-holder between the two blocks or an integrated state of the second block. This interpretive grid almost identifies the relation between the U.S. and China as the main axis of competition, while the rivalry between the U.S. and Russia, characterized as a episodic resurgence of Cold War antagonism between the superpowers, is seen to gradually diminish in the context of surpassing the current context of increasing natural gas price that was used by Moscow as

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7

<sup>34</sup> Simona Soare, „Regional security architecture in Asia-Pacific or new „tools” for old security problems”, in *Monitor Strategic*, Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History, Bucharest, no. 1-2/2009, pp. 78-79.



„geopolitical weapon”<sup>35</sup>. The relation between Russia and India cannot be considered as a conflict relation, while the last rivalry – a hypothetical one between China and India – will be vital for maintaining the internal balance of the two blocks of the system. Thus, USA needs to have India’s support to oppose and balance China and Russia’s capabilities and influences<sup>36</sup>.

In this situation, probably, the best term for characterizing the sino-indian relation is „complexity”. Beyond the remarkable consistency of foreign policy principles of the two states (the desire for a multipolar world and the peaceful settlement of international disputes), the empirical analysis of the evolution of bilateral relations revealed a spectacular rapprochement likely to cause headaches in Washington. Times when China and India clashed military at the border (1962) seem history. Under economic pressure, meanwhile, crossing points were opened in all three sectors of the common border, and some intelligence services claim that discrete discussions were initiated between the two parties on regulating the situation in Kashmir. The deepening of economic interdependence drastically reduce the likelihood of a military conflict, the bilateral trade volume increased from 300 million USD in `90s to nearly 18 billion today, China imposes itself as the main import partner (with 7.1% of total) and the second export partner (8.9% of total) of India after the U.S. and seriously threatens the overthrow of the latter in a few years<sup>37</sup>.

**Brazil** is, without doubt, a mammoth in the South Africa, even if it failed to impose itself as a leader, that unites the South America’s nations and is a founder member of MERCOSUR. Under the leadership of Lula and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Celso Amorim, Brazil played a significant role in the emergence of the BRICS. Brazil and Venezuela, too, contest the U.S. „hegemony” and act for UN involvement in the internal conflict in Colombia, where U.S. have already deployed forces<sup>38</sup>, and more recently, with Turkey, it was central to a political maneuver to counter the Americans with regard to Iran by attempting to negotiate a trilateral agreement with Teheran on the nuclear issue. Brazil understands that it does not have the position to get involved in areas where it does not have interests and that it

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<sup>35</sup> Ionut Apahideanu, *Celălalt gigant de la răsărit – India*, in [http://www.strategikon.ro/files/analize/The\\_other\\_giant\\_\\_\\_India.doc.pdf](http://www.strategikon.ro/files/analize/The_other_giant___India.doc.pdf), accessed at 02.02.2012.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>38</sup> Teodor Frunzeti, Vladimir Zodian (coord.), *Lumea 2011: Enciclopedie politică și militară*, Editura Centrului Editorial-Tehnic al Armatei, București, 2011, p. 575

was not able to count on either Russia or China when the time came to vote on the third round of sanctions against Iran. As a result, Brazil found itself isolated. Moreover, even if it shares some common objective with China, it cannot build a strategic alliance given China's economic expansionism and due to its refusal to support Brazil's accession to a permanent seat on the Security Council<sup>39</sup>.

Brazil is considered, at the international level, an emerging power due to its population and rapidly growing economy in recent years. Brazil is the eighth largest economy in the world, accounting economic stability and also managing to attract more foreign investment. In 2006, Brazilian GDP reached 1.888 trillion U.S. dollars, surpassing countries such as Spain, Canada, Italy and France and significantly coming closer to the United Kingdom. Only in 2002-2007, Brazil's exports have tripled, increasing from 60 to 216 billion dollars. In fact, Brazil's foreign policy continuously oscillated between regional ambitions (Brazil already acting as a mediator between pro-Washington regimes (Colombia) and the "new left" (Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Ecuador)) and the global ambitions that materialized in alliances with other large nations to impose itself as leader of the South<sup>40</sup>.

**South Africa.** On December 24, 2010, China invited South Africa to join BRIC, and at the summit held in China, in April 2011 to become a member of BRIC. This decision to accept South Africa has not only economic reasons, but also other important dimensions, being politically important, in terms of geopolitical potential and strategic considerations. Although Nigeria was better placed in terms of GDP, South Africa was chosen, which has an approximately GDP of \$ 285 billion lower compared to that of Russia or India (\$ 1600 billion), Brazil (\$ 2000 billion) and China (\$ 5500 billion). The reason is to promote a polycentric international emerging system. The significance of South Africa joining to the BRIC was highlighted by Aide Arkady Dvorkovich, the president's counselor: „This is a landmark event. The geography is expanding but this is more than just an expansion – this is the addition of another continent, such that BRICS now represents four continents: South America, Asia, Europe and Africa” .<sup>41</sup> Thus, by accepting a new member, BRICS tries to become a voice that could count in the international world.

From a **military** point of view, the military indicators are seen as obsolete tools for measuring power, into a world where wars are deemed to be „improbable”.

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<sup>39</sup> Z. Laïdi, *op.cit.* , p.11

<sup>40</sup> Th. Renard, „G20:Towards a new [...]” in *op.cit.*, pp. 13- 14

<sup>41</sup> Cf. „BRICS: un nou format”, in *Vocea Rusiei*, <http://romanian.ruvr.ru/2011/04/13/48866951.html>, accessed at 03.02.2012

<sup>42</sup> But because no one can predict what will happen in the next 20 years and as surprises are a constant factor of history and tensions are not lacking between emerging powers, for instance between China and Russia or between China and India, the military capabilities remain an important component of the perception of power by the other actors. Hence, military indicators can and should still be used as a measurement of power.

The US is by far the world's largest military spender. In 2008, its military expenditure amounted to approximately US\$550 billion, which is almost equal to the sum of military expenditure by all the other countries taken together. Among the BRICS, China and Russia lead the game, respectively spending US\$63.643 and US\$38.238 billion, although the military spendings of China are subject to intense debates. India and Brazil spend less on their armed forces (respectively US\$24.716 and US\$15.477 billion) but they have both doubled their budget since 1990, while South Africa spend only US\$3 billion<sup>43</sup>.

Beyond absolute numbers, the military spending has evolved between 2000 and 2008. China is undeniably the fastest militarizing country, with an increase of its expenditures by 170%, while Russia follows with a 100% increase. India and Brazil are again far behind their BRIC fellows, with respective increases of 40 and 20%. Regarding the West, the difference between the US and the EU is self-explanatory: while the US increased its spending by 60% (mainly as a consequence of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq), the EU member states taken together increased it by only 6%<sup>44</sup>.

In terms of boots, China has the largest armed forces in the world with over 2\$million men and women in uniform. The EU and the US share the second rank with over 1.5 million men and women in service. India comes in fourth position with 1.3 million, while Russia has seen the most spectacular reduction in its armed forces (1 million). Comparative with these armed forces, Brazil seems weak with its 325,000 men and women in uniform<sup>45</sup>.

A final indicator that is very illustrative of the power of the BRICS countries is the **nuclear power**. The country with the most nuclear weapons stockpiles is Russia (about 14,000), largely outnumbering the US (about 5,400), although the Russians

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. "A Secure Europe in a better world – European Security Strategy", Brussels, December 12, 2003, p.3, in [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf), accessed at 03.02.2012

<sup>43</sup> Th. Renard, „G20:Towards a [...]”, *op.cit.*, pp.17-18

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, pp.17-18

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, pp.17-18

have a relatively similar number of operational ones (5,000 for Russia, 4,000 for the US), and the new START agreement signed in April 2010 plans to reduce the amount of operational nuclear weapons to approximately 1,500 each. China and India have much less nuclear weapons (less than 200 operational ones for China, less than 50 for India), while Brazil abandoned its nuclear program in the 1980s and included a non-amendable clause in its Constitution forbidding itself from ever developing a nuclear weapon<sup>46</sup>.

Despite significant differences among the BRICS countries concerning their military capabilities, they all remain regional powers. China is without doubt the rising challenger, while Russia can still count on its nuclear arsenal for its own prestige, but none of the BRICS countries is currently able to challenge the US in conventional warfare, and this situation is unlikely to change in the near future.

### 3. The emerging powers' potential

What are the opportunities for the emerging powers to be heard, to make their views regarding the operation of a multipolar world be taken into account? Robert Strausz-Hupé referring to the factors that contribute to the realization of a state or a group of countries potential power took into consideration the geographical position, natural resources, population and its degree of training, the national will and the quality of public institutions. Having as starting point the specifications above, Strausz-Hupé believed that the United States is the only power that use these factors most powerfully, and hence, a global equilibrium could be achieved by creating a world federation led by the United States, as a single center<sup>47</sup>. The emerging powers have become, due to the economic fall of Western countries, the main source of global growth and by consequence a decision maker in the G-20 group<sup>48</sup>.

BRICS stays for the moment the „spearhead” of emerging countries and as consequence, the estimates for the GDP trend growth for the period 2010-2050, without considering some possible cooperation or alliances between BRICS and

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, pp.17-18

<sup>47</sup> Sergiu Tămaș, „Schimbări istorice în raporturile de putere”, *Sfera politicii*, no. 165, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/165/art01-Tamas.php>, accessed at 02.02.2012, apud Robert Strausz-Hupé: **“The balance of tomorrow”**, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, N.Y. 1945

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*

other large emerging markets, indicate the year 2035 as the moment when the balance will change for countries of BRIC group<sup>49</sup>.

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
<b>G7</b>	30.437	33.414	36.781	39.858	43.745	<b>48.281</b>	53.617	59.475	66.039
<b>Bric</b>	8.640	13.653	20.226	28.925	40.278	<b>55.090</b>	74.483	98.757	128.324

Actually, the estimated GDP of BRIC surpassed the 8.640 level, situating at 11,000 and 19.000 billion dollars. The World Bank report published on September 11, 2011 estimated that between 2011 and 2025 the average of the global economic growth will amount for the emerging powers around 4.7% while the average of the economic growth of developed countries will be much lower, being estimated to be 2.3%. In these conditions, the contribution of emerging powers to the global GDP growth of 36%, as is now, will stay around 45-50%, or more<sup>50</sup>.

Some experts are advancing the more radical idea that the change of economic power hierarchy will occur quickly, namely in 2016, when China's GDP calculated by purchasing power will reach \$ 19,000, while U.S. GDP will be \$ 18.800<sup>51</sup>.

The ability to press of the emerging powers increased on the international stage because they have significant resources for domestic and international loans investment. In October 2011, state foreign currency reserves, in rounded figures, look like the following<sup>52</sup>:

<b>G-7</b>	<b>billion \$</b>	<b>BRICS</b>	<b>billion \$</b>
Japan	1.138	China	3.200
Germany	231	Russia	510
France	182	Brazil	352
Italy	170	India	312
Great Britain	114	South Africa	50
US	75		
Canada	64		
Total	1.974	Total	4.424

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, apud Goldman Sachs study : „**BRICS and Beyond**” , November 2007

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem* apud IBRD și World Bank: „Global Development Horizons. Multipolarity:The New Global Economy”, 17.05.2011, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem* apud Ziarul financiar, 29 iunie 2011

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem* apud [www.ciattheworldfactbook.com](http://www.ciattheworldfactbook.com), updated with economic news in October 2011

While Western powers forced by the crisis pressure of „sovereign debt” are no longer a reliable source of credit for countries in difficulty, China together with other BRICS countries use their important reserves to invest in the European Union, Africa and South America. World Bank, faced with the real dynamics of international markets, acknowledged the need for changes, being possible that by 2025, the domination of the dollar as international reserve currency to be replaced by a tripolar monetary system consisting of dollar, euro and Yuan<sup>53</sup>. The most spectacular result of emerging powers is the high rate of development, in the context of a global financial crisis, the recession phases and the actual crisis of the sovereign debt of the Western states. This economic and financial potential, which allowed some improvements in the social status of people from the emerging countries, supports the ability to influence of the emerging powers in the G-20 meetings.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, we can say that after the end of the Cold War, world has significantly changed, and the centers of power have started changing too. If after the end of the Cold War, the bipolarity passed to unipolarity, with the U.S. as hegemon of the international political scene, together with globalization, after 2001, the transition to multipolarity began, several states wishing to compete in the race for power and to make their presence felt as great powers on the world stage.

While the economic indicators of the Western powers are worsening, the strongest signal for opening a new geopolitical and geo-economic global cycle is given by the rise of emerging economies and the possible effects of realizing political and economic alliances mostly „South-South”. Re-balancing the global geopolitical relations towards building a new power pole, stating its willingness to help improving the management of international affairs has recently become a reality accepted by the Western powers. In these conditions, BRICS has appeared (although is quite a strange coalition, where the differences and the strategic interests of each actor has a weight in their affirmation as a whole), a group that in the future will be able to attract the other world actors’ attention, as they account for more than 15% of the world economy and comprise almost 40% of the world population.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem* apud „Global Development Horizons. Multipolarity: The New Global Economy”, 17.05.2011 in [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)



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