

The Diplomatic Ambitions of the BRIC States: Challenging the Hegemony of the West

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Abstract

The 21st century has seen an emergence of rising world powers that pose a threat to the hegemony of the West. Politically and economically, the BRIC states have sought to extend their global reach. This essay examines the diplomatic ambitions of Brazil, Russia, India, and China and assesses their challenges to Western hegemony. Although the BRIC states have their own particular interests in increasing their global power, each of the BRIC states seems to follow a pragmatic approach by carefully challenging the West to maximize their benefits while minimizing their costs. !

Keywords: Brazil; Russia; India; China; BRICs; Western Hegemony

Introduction

As the Cold War came to an end in the late-20th century, global affairs became heavily influenced by the United States (US). Politically and economically, the US filled the gap left by the downfall of the Soviet Union and sought to assume the position of the global hegemon.

However, in the early-21st century, global affairs were preoccupied with the terror attacks of September 11th and their affects on the global economy as “world equity markets lost approximately two trillion US dollars, with 20 of the world’s major stock exchanges dropping more than 10 percent” (Cornelius et al, 2003: 6).

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Against the background of a slowdown in the global economy, the BRICs grouping of large emerging markets were forecasted by Jim O'Neill at Goldman Sachs to grow at a higher rate compared to the G7, which consists of seven of the world's advanced economies. Economically, Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) were projected to be "safe places for investors in the 21st century" because of their increasing influence in and share of the global economy (Mielniczuk, 2013: 1075). In his recognition that the growth of emerging markets would exceed the growth of the G7, Jim O'Neill (2001: 1) declared that "world policymaking forums should be reorganized and...be adjusted to incorporate BRIC representatives".

The increased global economic share of the BRIC states would result in increased political power and, therefore, present a challenge to the authority of the Western-dominated developed economics of the G7. Regular meetings between BRIC states began in 2006 as foreign ministers met on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The ambitions of global partnership by the BRIC states led to an independent meeting of states' foreign ministers in Russia (DIRCO, 2014). In response to "the four BRIC countries...seeking to form a political club" as evidenced by the meeting in 2008, O'Neill asserted that "Western leaders [should] take note of that meeting and start to accelerate bringing them into the G8 club and the IMF" (Faulconbridge, 2008). In 2011, the BRIC foreign ministers extended their political and economic reach to the African continent as they welcomed South Africa into the grouping. Ebert and Maurer (2013: 1055) observed, "The emergence of a coalition between Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa has substantiated the assumption of a concerted counter-hegemonic move...".

Despite the efforts by economists, politicians, and scholars to group emerging countries together, Cooper and Flemes maintain that the proliferation of these groups "does not mean that there is any precision in determining which countries are in ascendancy" (Cooper and Flemes, 2013: 945). For example, some scholars suggest that China is the main force to be reckoned with at the global level because it leads the grouping in every indicator (ibid: 949). Other scholars highlight the decline that Russia has experienced since the Cold War, which might suggest that it is as much a declining power as it is an emerging power (MacFarlane, 2006).

Another cluster, stemming from the Heiligendamm process proposed as an "extended outreach or consultative initiative with the G8", includes Mexico in a grouping of Brazil, India, China, and South Africa (Cooper and Flemes, 2013: 946).

Although both Mexico and South Africa warrant an examination of their efforts to challenge the hegemony of the West, this essay will examine the original BRIC grouping proposed by Jim O'Neal in 2001, which has been meeting at annual BRICS summits since 2009 (DIRCO, 2014).

The purpose of this essay is to critically assess the diplomatic ambitions and efforts of the BRIC states to challenge the hegemony of the West. For the purpose of this essay, the West that includes individual states in Western Europe and North America and Western-dominated multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Despite the variety of actors in the West with differing foreign policy objectives, the West is referred to as a collection of states and organizations that is often perceived as being hegemonic by dominating the global agenda. Challenges against this hegemonic directive by the BRIC states may be directed at global governance institutions, individual states, or policies perceived as Western and may take the form of unilateral or multilateral action. Unilaterally, the BRIC states have their own unique foreign policies regarding their national interests ranging from territorial issues to nuclear capabilities. Cooper and Flemes (2013: 954) suggest that "the most serious drag on the prospects of BRIC being a major force in global governance is...serious differences of values and interests among the group's members". Multilaterally, however, states may recognize that, figuratively, an army of many is more capable than an army of one in its challenges against Western hegemony. For example, including South Africa, the BRICS states make up "43% of the world's population, 18% of global trade, and 20% of the world's GDP" (Mielniczuk, 2013: 1076). These numbers accentuate the influence of the BRICS collective in global affairs and illustrates why this grouping commands the respect of global actors. This unilateral and multilateral approach is important for understanding the variety of challenges by BRIC states to Western hegemony.

Whether militarily, economically, or politically, the tactics and strategies employed by the BRICS states differ based on their specific capacities, domestic circumstances, and interests.

In terms of assessment, this essay will examine both the unilateral and multilateral efforts of Brazil, Russia, India, and China to increase their share of power in global affairs.

Whether challenges to Western hegemony are voiced rhetorically or take the form of overt action, it is important to recognize that these emerging states are pushing for more of the global spotlight. In order to examine the diplomatic ambitions and individual challenges to Western hegemony, this essay is organized into four sections before concluding. The sections will seek to provide a fundamental, yet not complete, review of key challenges directed against Western hegemony by Brazil, Russia, India, and China in the 21st century. In conclusion, this essay will revisit and assess the variety of efforts taken by the BRIC states to increase their power share in global affairs and challenge the hegemony of the West.

Federative Republic of Brazil

Since the turn of the 21st Century, Brazil has secured itself as a regional power in Latin America and an emerging player in global affairs. Brazil occupies almost half of the South American continent making it the fifth largest country in the world and the largest country in Latin America (National Geographic, 2014). Furthermore, Brazil's population of almost 200 million and its GDP of \$2.4 trillion makes it "the largest economy in Latin America and the seventh largest in the world" (Meyer, 2011: 7). Peter Meyer (2011: 1) captures Brazil's capability when he writes, "Given its size and resources, Brazil has long held potential to become a world power". Brazil's diplomatic ambitions under President Lula and current President Rousseff exemplify its approach to challenging Western hegemony through efforts of diversifying "relations by forging stronger economic and political ties with other nations of the developing world, and supporting multilateralism by pushing for the democratization of global governance" (Meyer, 2011: 11).

In terms of regional multilateralism, Brazil has played an active role in organizations such as the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) and the Union of South American Nations (Unasur). Similar to the agendas of the European Union and North American Free Trade Agreement blocs, Mercosur's purpose is to promote free trade among member states and eventually implement a continent-wide economic trading bloc. One important feature of Mercosur is its goal to create a customs union that applies a common external tariff on goods from outside the bloc and prevents member states from negotiating bilateral free trade agreements (ICTSD, 2007; Klonsky et al, 2012).

Brazil also plays a formidable role in Unasur, which is an intergovernmental body that combines the membership of Mercosur and the Andean Community of Nations in order to “build a South American identity and citizenship and to develop an integrated regional space” (Flannery, 2012). Brazil is crucial to any effort by South American nations to create an economically and politically integrated continent because of its economic size. For example, 60 percent of Unasur’s total economic output is accounted for by Brazil’s economy (Flannery, 2012). Furthermore, Professor Maria Victoria Murillo of Columbia University is quoted as saying that “Brazil is to Unasur like German [is] to the EU. Success will depend on member countries’ willingness to accept Brazil as a leader” (Flannery, 2012).

Following its core value of multilateralism, Brazil has also promoted and supported the Community of Latin American and Caribbean Countries, “which includes all of the countries of the [Western] hemisphere except Canada and the United States” (Meyer, 2011: 14). Brazil’s most pronounced stance regarding challenging Western hegemony has been its rhetoric regarding the reformation of global institutions as Brazil has continued to call for adjustments to global governance so that it better reflects the changing world order. In 2010, Celso Amorim, who was then Brazil’s Minister of Foreign Relations and is currently Brazil’s Minister of Defense, wrote a guest column in *Financial Time* that highlights Brazil’s stance on the democratization of global governance. He writes that, despite emerging and developing states playing a larger role in the world, “their ability to express legitimate interests is constrained by global governance structures that are no longer representative” (Amorium, 2010).

Furthermore, Amorim (2010) declares that “The idea is simple: representativeness brings legitimacy and thus greater efficacy...Let us practice democracy not only domestically but also in the global sphere”. These statements illustrate the role that expanded multilateralism plays in Brazil’s diplomatic ambitions and foreign policy. In a rhetorical challenge against the US, the Brazilian president took an antagonistic stance regarding Middle East policies and efforts surrounding Israeli and Palestinian negotiations saying that “As long as the United States is trying to negotiate peace there won’t be peace. The one who should oversee the negotiations is the United Nations, and that’s why Brazil wants to reform the UN system” (Dantas and Moura, 2009).

In terms of an actual challenge to Western hegemony, Brazil seems to take a stronger rhetorical approach while limiting action that might significantly harm its interests. An article published by Bloomberg in 2009 quotes Christopher Garmin of Eurasia Group as suggesting that Brazil's challenges to the West must be delicate so as to not harm its standing in the world. In his words, "The delicate balancing act here is how to [demonstrate independence from the US] without overly antagonizing the US or assuming very controversial positions that may have ripple effects that compromise their ability to actually play a more important international role" (Dantas and Moura, 2009).

Russian Federation

In the 21st century, the Russian Federation has sought to reestablish its role regionally and globally as guided by "the belief that the West, and in particular the United States, had taken advantage of Russia's political turmoil" after the Cold War (Nichol, 2014: 38). Despite this belief, Putin directed the relationship between the West and the Russian Federation to follow a strategy of 'pragmatic westernism' focused on Russian modernization through economic growth (Tsygankov, 2010: 133). The efforts to increase and sustain economic growth have been primarily concentrated on the vast natural resources of which Russia's economy is highly dependent upon as it accounts "for more than 50% of the federal budget revenues" (US Energy Information Administration, 2014). As the world's second-largest producer of dry natural gas and third-largest producer of oil (ibid), Russia has a lot to gain by playing a larger role in the global energy market. Tsygankov (2010: 134) writes that Putin "saw the first task in improving the state of the Russian economy by capitalizing on domestic oil reserves and increasing the ability to export to the West", which would stimulate economic growth and "preserve the required space to maneuver [and] defend Russia's political interests in world politics". In the early 21st century, the economic goal of exporting natural resources to the West was coupled with threats of international terrorism. The terrorist attacks on the US in 2001 provided an opportunity for Russia to reposition itself towards the US, and the West more generally, in order to achieve greater economic growth. This is illustrated by Putin's emphasis on "Russia as a reliable alternative to traditional Middle Eastern sources of oil and natural gas" (Tsygankov, 2007: 105). The cooperation between the West and the Russian Federation further combined the realms of economics and politics as the 'war against terror' continued.

At the meeting of the G-8 in 2002, President Bush and President Putin bilaterally pledged to “act as a united front against terrorism” and President Bush described President Putin as a “strong ally in the war against terror” (US Department of State, n.d.).

According to Tsygankov of San Francisco State University, the year 2008 marked a transition in the relationship between the Russian Federation and the West. Despite Putin (2006) declaring that economic growth and the establishment of economic relationships with the West were an “absolute priority”, political and military relationships were much less amiable. The key concern for Putin and the Russian Federation was security along Russia’s border regions as evidenced by Putin’s (2007) call for Russia to “declare a moratorium on its observance of [the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty]”, which establishes limits on conventional military equipment. As Tsygankov suggests, negative rhetoric against the West, specifically against the US, intensified in 2008 after the Russia-Georgia war and the global financial crisis as illustrated in Dmitry Medvedev’s inaugural presidential Address to the Russian Federal Assembly. In his speech, President Medvedev (2008) proclaims that the “barbaric attack on South Ossetia...was used as a pretext for NATO naval vessels to enter the Black Sea and then to speed up the imposition of an American missile defense system on Europe”. In terms of Russia’s challenge to the West, Tsygankov (2010: 201) writes that the “Russia-Georgia war undermined the United States’ and Europe’s monopoly for use of force in world politics”.

Despite the obvious tensions between the West and Russia, President Obama has pursued efforts to reset bilateral ties since becoming president. The 2010 National Security Strategy, released by the White House (2010: 44), maintains that the US seeks “to build a stable, substantive, multidimensional relationship with Russia, based on mutual interests” due to the US’ interest “in a strong, peaceful, and prosperous Russia that respects international norms”. However, tensions once again became inflamed in 2012 when “Russia requested that the United States wrap up USAID programs in Russia” asserting that the US “was interfering in its affairs” (ibid: 52). The overt challenges have continued as Russia granted intelligence leader Edward Snowden, who was charged with espionage by the US Department of Justice, temporary asylum. Due to overall “inadequate progress in [the] bilateral agenda”, President Obama cancelled the US-Russia presidential summit (ibid: 54).

Most recently, the Russian Federation has challenged the West with its incursion in Ukraine. Stemming from Russian pressure for "Soviet successor states to join the Eurasian Economic Community and the Customs Union", Ukraine's government decided against signing an Association Agreement with the European Union (Nichol, 2014: 45). Anti-government protests erupted in Ukraine following the decision, which led to the collapse of the Yanukovich regime in February of 2014. Russia took a confrontational stance against the phenomena in Ukraine and criticized "Western partners of acting not out of concern for the people of Ukraine, but out of unilateral geopolitical considerations" (Woehrel, 2014: 8). In response to the situation, Russian-speaking troops entered the Crimea region of Ukraine and seized important government buildings and other key infrastructure. Despite the claim by President Putin that troops were not Russian Federation Military, "training, equipment, vehicle license plates, and even statements by the soldiers themselves all point to the Russian armed forces" (ibid: 4). On March 18th, President Putin "signed a treaty with Crimean leaders...formally incorporating Crimea into Russia", which was denounced by the West as "a blatant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and a violation of international law" (ibid: 4).

Republic of India

India's population of over 1 billion makes it the largest democracy in the world, which underlines its importance to the West. However, the history of colonialism in India has remained an important dimension in the relationships between India and the West. During the Cold War era, India's leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement portrayed an agenda of balancing against great powers (Narlikar, 2013: 599). In order to better understand India's rise and whether or not it is a challenge to the Western-dominated system, Amrita Narlikar compared India's negotiations with actors including established powers and other rising powers. In her analysis, she found that India's "actions suggest little evidence of bandwagoning with the established powers" despite rhetoric of strategic partners (ibid: 601). In contrast, "the rhetoric of cooperation among the four original BRIC countries...is strong" (ibid: 601). This point is further illustrated by India's active role in organizations such as the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum and the India-Africa Summits (see Cooper and Flesmes, 2013: 950 and Flesmes, 2009). Narlikar contends that "almost all such collective initiatives have represented a form of balancing against the established power" (ibid: 603).

This balancing stance has been echoed throughout the 21st century as leaders in the Indian government maintain that global governance structures are not representative.

Addressing the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Singh (2004: 14) declared that India has “the capabilities and capacity to...participate in the restructuring of a just and dynamic world order”. In 2009, Minister for External Affairs of India, S. M. Krishna (2009: 27) stated, “It is of concern that, even after more than six decades of existence, our international governance structures are neither inclusive nor participatory”. Democratizing global institutions to reflect the current global situation has continued to be a focus of Indian foreign policy.

In recognition of India's importance in Asia and the world, the West has been accommodating of its emergence in international affairs. One of the most recent watershed moments in US-India relations was the nuclear cooperation garnered during the presidency of George W. Bush. In a continuing challenge to the West, India is one of the three states in the world that has not signed on to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that limits the possession of nuclear weapons to the US, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom (Arms Control Association, 2012). The deal garnered by Presidents Bush and Singh in 2005 grants inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Association access to India's civilian nuclear program, pressures India to strengthen its security of nuclear arsenals, prevents India from spreading enrichment technologies to states that do not already possess those capabilities, and allows US companies to build nuclear reactors in India and supply nuclear fuel for the civilian programs (Barjoria and Pan, 2010). This deal fostered a closer relationship between India and the US as they pursue their “common interest in fighting terrorism, spreading democracy, and preventing domination of Asia by a single power” (ibid). More recently, the West has supported India's bid to reform the Security Council. In 2010, President Obama announced his support for India's bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council (Stolberg and Yardley, 2010). Furthermore, Germany and India vowed to work together in 2010 in order to expand the permanent membership of the Security Council (Ashraf, 2010).

Despite efforts of cooperation by the West, India remains in its strategic stance. Narlikar (2013: 612) writes, "bending over backwards to bring India into the centre of international power politics has not yet transformed it into a conformist, pro-West negotiating partner, and there is little reason to believe that it will do so in the future". In other words, it seems that India has mastered the art of "hedging strategies" as it pursues a path focused on benefits without contributing costs (Kronstadt et al, 2011: 12). Concerning its regional role, India has been described as a "reluctant power...in its own vicinity...[as it] has shown little appetite to lead on regional security issues" (Pant, 2011). Although this reluctance could stem from its decentralized foreign service (see Miller, 2013), it is acutely similar to foreign relations approaches of Brazil and Russia described in the previous sections: a consistent and cautious challenge to Western hegemony. In other words, India employs pragmatic approach to international cooperation that is limited to strategic interests allowing countries to reap benefits while maintaining sovereignty on other issues. This approach is rooted in a combining of two visions found throughout India's foreign policy: traditional nationalist and pragmatist. In a Congressional Research Service report, Kronstadt et al (2011: 12) write, "...analysts see policy makers tending to 'split the difference' by mouthing traditional nationalist rhetoric while pursuing a largely pragmatic course". For example, India has long defended nuclear nonproliferation, but India has ignored its own rhetoric as it became a nuclear weapons state in 1998 and remains steadfast in its decision to not sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (Carpes, 2013: 1122).

Despite its preference for multilateralism and opposition to unilateral action, India has once again employed a method of hedging strategies by voicing support for Russia's recent incursion in Ukraine. In March 2014, India's National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon proclaimed that "there are legitimate Russian and other interests involved" in the conflict (Keck, 2014). The perceived support of Russia and the lack of rhetorical opposition, likely due to its military arms relationship with Moscow, against Russia's actions highlights a challenge to the West. Furthermore, India's support may stem from its own ambitions along its borders suggesting that India "has an interest in an international precedent in which major powers can intervene in countries along their borders" (ibid).

People's Republic of China

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 20th century, China's foreign policy remained guided by the principles of the non-aligned movement: mutual respect for sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; non-interference; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence (Mielniczuk, 2013: 1083). However, as a regional and international power, a permanent member on the UN Security Council, and its surpassing of Japan to become the second largest economy, China's influence in global affairs has significantly expanded in the 21st century. It is, therefore, important to examine if and how China's foreign policy has departed from its long guiding principle of *Tao Guang Yang Hui* (TGYH) that originated with Deng Xiaoping. According to Chen and Wang (2011: 196), "It is rather striking...that there is very little systematic theorizing about [TGYH] in spite of the frequent explicit or implicit mentions of it in almost all writings on Chinese foreign policy since the 1990s". The various interpretations, ranging from a peaceful, domestic-centered foreign policy to a foreign policy focused on biding time while strengthening, of TGYH has caused confusion surrounding China's rise. An annual report to Congress published by the US Department of Defense (2013: 19) interpreted the term as meaning that China should "observe calmly, secure [its] position, cope with affairs calmly, hide [its] capabilities and bide...time, be good at maintaining a low profile, and never claim leadership".

General Xiong Guangkai (2010) argues vehemently that many of these interpretations are inaccurate and dangerous since they suggest that China is waiting for the opportunity to go on the offensive. He writes that the term TGYH is meant to stress "the great dream of rejuvenating the Chinese nation by seizing the important strategic opportunity for national development in order to promote the peaceful development of the world" (ibid). General Guangkai's interpretation results from a historical and contextual examination of the meaning of the term as connoted by Deng. Guangkai writes, "it is clear...that Deng's main focus was...on domestic development when the term...was used" (Chen and Wang, 2011: 197). However, as an emerging power, China has had to transition from this minimalist, inward-looking approach to world affairs to play a greater role in order to protect its interests.

This more active approach was illustrated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi during a press conference as he described China's diplomacy in 2013 as being "broader in horizon and more active in conduct" and declared that in 2014 "China will continue to pursue an active foreign policy" (Yi, 2014). According to the Foreign Minister (*ibid*), China "will be more active in playing the role of a responsible, big country" as it advances and protects its legitimate interests and seeks to make the international order more "just and reasonable". As China plays the role of a world power, its transitory phase can be interpreted as a challenge to Western hegemony of the international system. One example of China's challenge to the status quo of global order is its growing assertiveness surrounding sovereignty issues such as in the South China Sea and unwillingness to use international organizations for mediation, despite its rhetoric of multilateralism. China has reportedly declared the strategic South China Sea as a 'core interest', which is "a level reserved for Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang - territory that is integral to China's vision of itself as a nation and that must be protected at all costs" (Yoshihara and Holmes, 2011: 46). However, China's territorial claim of the body of water overlaps with maritime claims from Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines (Stares, 2013). The US has declared that maintaining freedom of navigation in the South China Sea is a national interest and that "the nations of the region should work collaboratively and diplomatically to resolve disputes without coercion, without intimidation, without threats, and without the use of force" and in accordance with international law (Ventrell, 2012). China's "pattern of aggressively asserting its sovereignty claims in the South China Sea" is an outright challenge to the international order (Thayer, 2011: 78). Its disregard for multilateral negotiations and hostile approach to any opposition stems from what it perceives to be an incontrovertible territorial claim. A Chinese white paper published in 2013 asserts that "China will resolutely take all necessary measures to safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity" (Chinese Ministry of Defense, 2013).

Another example of China's efforts to challenge the status quo of the current global order is visible in its pivotal role in founding and participating in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (n.d.) was created in 2001 for the purpose of strengthening mutual confidence and relations among member states; promoting effective cooperation in a variety of fields such as politics and trade and economy; maintaining and ensuring peace, security, and stability in the region; and working towards a new, democratic political and economic international order. The SCO agenda of cooperation, security, and a new international order is essentially the same agenda found in the foreign policy directives of China.

In this sense, China is using the guise of an international organization to extend its reach and influence throughout Eurasia. Weiqing Song published an article in 2013 that examined China's use of the SCO as a soft balancing tool to achieve institutional balancing; in other words, China's efforts "to counter pressures or threats through initiating, utilizing, and dominating multilateral institutions" (He, 2008: 492). Song (2013: 668) explains that, due to its interests in the energy resources and economic opportunities in Central Asia, "China needs a cooperative framework to engage with states in the regions, in order to pursue its interests and increase its influence". In accordance with China's rhetoric of a peaceful rising power (Breslin, 2013: 623), "China [has tried] to use non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine aggressive US policies" (Song, 2013: 680). Breslin (2013: 628) writes, "SCO summits have been used as forms for articulating a shared dissatisfaction with...the actions of major Western powers". Similar efforts are visible in China's efforts in Africa such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Campbell (2008: 90) writes, "Behind the language of friendship and cooperation lay an understanding of the vast treasures of Africa...". Using these indirect, soft balancing techniques, China attempts to mask the pursuit of its foreign policy directives in multilateralism and cooperation among a number of countries, which allows China to steer perceptions of its rise as an international power and challenge to Western hegemony while continuing to extend its influence throughout the world.

Conclusion

Since its conception by Jim O'Neal at the beginning of the 21st century, the grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, and China has become a fixture in world politics. Collectively, the BRIC states command the attention of world leaders due to their emergence in the global economy and their united stance on democratizing global governance. However, although converging on key issues of multilateralism, anti-hegemonic actions, and democratizing global governance, the BRIC states are individual countries before they are a collective. Individually, the BRIC states each pursue foreign policy directives that directly or indirectly challenge the status quo of international politics and, therefore, the hegemony of the West. These foreign policy directives revolve around rhetoric of disapproval of unilateral action, calls for multilateralism, and the lure and importance of international organizations such as the UN.

Although employing a variety of strategies in the pursuit of these directives, the BRIC states stand united in their unequivocal challenge to Western hegemony as they demand a greater voice. This essay has provided an overview of the diplomatic ambitions of the BRIC states and their strategies for challenging the West. The relationships of Brazil, Russia, India, and China to the West are similar in that they have all been based on maximizing benefit and minimizing cost. Brazil's approach to international relations is to challenge the West through dominating South American affairs and calling for a restructuring of international organizations without being perceived as a hostile challenger to the status quo. Russia has approached international politics disguised as an ally to the West by cooperating on issues such as terrorism and positioning itself as an alternative to Middle Eastern oil.

However, since 2008, Russia has taken an aggressive stance against Western hegemonic expansion as it takes issue with the reach of NATO and the EU to its border and has moved beyond rhetoric as evidenced by its incursion into Ukraine. India's approach has been dominated by multilateral rhetoric and pragmatic efforts to reap benefits without contributing. However, its more concrete challenges to the West have been the refusal to sign the Non- Proliferation Treaty and its recent perceived support of Russia's incursion. China has approached its emergence as a regional and world power with confusion. Despite the claims by the government that it follows a path of mutual benefit, multilateralism, and non-intervention, its assertiveness on issues of territorial sovereignty, such as in the South China Sea, and its founding and domination of the SCO. In conclusion, each of the BRIC states has cooperated with the West during the 21st century as it seeks to incur the benefits of association with the West; however, the BRIC states have declared a shared diplomatic ambition to restructure global governance so as to play a more important role in the international arena.

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