

**BRICS in Global Governance: A Progressive and Cooperative Force?** Friedrich Ebert  
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## UN Peacekeeping and the Responsibility to Protect

All BRICS countries are key UN members when it comes to maintaining international peace and security. Both China and Russia are permanent members of the UN Security Council. Others within the group are frequently elected as non-permanent members of the Council. In fact, in 2011 all BRICS countries were on the Council. Most of them make valuable contributions to UN peacekeeping operations by providing troops, training, or voting for supportive mandates. Besides peace operations, BRICS members consider the UN to be the most legitimate institution for adopting collective action for restoring and keeping peace such as preventive deployments and post-conflict peace-building. All member nations want the UN to play a central role in international peace and security affairs; a role that has expanded from international conflicts to domestic turmoil, global pandemics, transnational terrorism, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In view of the importance of the UN in dealing with international security affairs, BRICS countries are trying to play a greater role within the UN framework, either by contributing more available resources or by promoting reform of the UN Security Council.

Most BRICS members are regular UN peacekeepers. These deployments enable emerging powers to assume their international responsibilities and, at the same time, to train and exercise the overseas military operation capacities of their armed forces. Policymakers in Brazil consider peacekeeping to be part of the price that the country has to pay to be among the nations that make the rules. As a result, the country has sent troops to take part in half of the approximately 60 UN operations since 1948.<sup>2</sup> India has contributed nearly 100,000 troops, and participated in more than 40 missions,<sup>3</sup> as well as continuing to provide eminent Force Commanders for UN Missions and training to military officers from many different countries. China now has a record of international peacekeeping commitments spanning the globe, which represents a big departure from the country's unwillingness to support any peacekeeping mission during the 1970s. South Africa is also a major contributor to the UN's peacekeeping efforts in Africa. Russia has contributed \$22 million to the UN's peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, Ivory Coast and in Darfur. A lack of sufficient funding is one of the main challenges for collective action at the UN. Declining military and financial contributions to UN peacekeeping operations from G7 countries, particularly as a result of the budgetary constraints triggered by the international financial crisis, have boosted the importance of the contributions of either military personnel or financial resources made by BRICS countries to UN peacekeeping.

UN peacekeeping is facing more complexity as internal conflicts have increased. Internal conflicts on the African continent, manifested by violent armed struggles between governments and opposition or militia groups, have repeatedly left BRICS facing dilemmas around the notion of sovereignty, especially when humanitarian crises require external intervention. The attitude of BRICS towards the concept of »Responsibility to Protect (RtoP)« is a key dimension for evaluating their depth of peacekeeping determination in this regard. RtoP, as it was adopted by all UN Member States in 2005, stipulates that each individual state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. If a state cannot – or deliberately does not want to – assume this responsibility, the international community is tasked to step in and, as a last resort, the Security Council may have to authorize a coercive intervention. In general, BRICS countries are hesitant to vote for military action in the UN Security Council. This cautious posture can be explained by their history as victims of external power interventions: a process that resulted in the adoption of strict interpretations of sovereignty. It is in this light that recent voting on Libya and Syria has reflected the concerns of BRICS countries about UN Security Council resolutions being abused by Western powers. However, in the case of Libya, BRICS criticized the way that the intervention was implemented by NATO rather than the RtoP principle itself. Consequently, to prevent future abuses of the authorization of military means in RtoP cases, Brazil proposed the norm of »responsibility while protecting«.

Though the UN upholds basic normative standards on the use of force, it will take emerging powers more time to accept RtoP than it took them to accept peacekeeping norms. It is difficult for emerging powers to acknowledge that human rights norms should be considered to have primacy over national sovereignty. This is partly because of their history of colonization and partly because, as rising powers, they have no intention of playing an aggressive international role. However, the increasing scope of their international ambitions, coupled with the growth in their vested interests overseas, has meant that emerging powers are being challenged to rethink their attitudes towards RtoP on two counts. The first challenge for BRICS countries is that by adopting an overly cautious or even a »non-cooperative« approach on RtoP, they might influence the chances for UN Security Council reform: established Western powers might conclude that a reformed UN Security Council with new BRICS members might make it even more difficult for the council to reach any resolution, thus reducing the political will of established powers to permanently accommodate these new powers within the UN Security Council. The second challenge for emerging powers is that their increasing overseas interests make it more difficult for them to stay away from countries that turn out to be RtoP cases. Emerging powers are becoming the main investors in, importers from, and exporters to regions where most peacekeeping efforts have been undertaken. In the Middle East for instance, China and India are the main importers of oil, but also the primary exporters of goods to the region. The Arab-South American summits have underlined the importance of the region for Brazil. Broader involvement of this kind might be creating opportunities for emerging powers to assume their responsibility. In the future, the decisions of BRICS countries on RtoP cases are therefore likely to be more pragmatic and interest-based rather than ideological.

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