



CENTER FOR HOMELAND
DEFENSE AND SECURITY
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL



HSx: REGIONAL POWERS ATTAINING GLOBAL INFLUENCE



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CONTEXT

- There is some dispute over what exactly constitutes a regional power; generally speaking, however, a regional power is a state that enjoys significant influence within a particular region of the world, but that has not reached the ability to influence policies and economies globally.
 - Commonly cited regional powers = Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS).
 - Countries such as US, UK, etc. typically categorized as traditional global powers rather than regional powers (even though they also exercise regional power).
 - These states are uniquely poised for increasing influence in an interdependent international system.
 - International influence takes a variety of forms including: a seat at the table in negotiations, the ability to influence policy outside of their state and region, and the ability to negotiate increasingly beneficial trade deals.

CONTEXT (CONTINUED)

- The increasing relevance of BRICS and other regional powers has a variety of political, social, economic, and security implications within the international system.
- The rise of these regional powers has been facilitated by technological advances, global interdependence, and lack of stable international hegemony in the 21st century.
- Traditional international powers in a multipolar system have a declining will and/or ability to exert global influence → this often leaves a vacuum for regional powers to expand influence.
 - In the aftermath of unsuccessful global interventions by global powers (Vietnam War, Iraq War, etc.) traditional global powers are more hesitant to directly intervene in many regional situations.
 - This creates an opportunity for regional powers to become more heavily involved in situations that may have been handled by global powers such as the United States in the past.

CASE STUDY: BRAZIL

- Brazil is one of the world's largest economies, and has widely been considered a regional power in South America.
- From the late 19th century through World War II, Brazil attempted to gain global power by seeking favorable relations with the United States and keeping South American nations at a distance.
 - The country was focused on becoming a global power rather than a strong regional actor.

“An underlying assumption pervading Brazilian thinking at the time was that one could become a major power without being a regional power”

—*Brazil as a Regional Power*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars



Image source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Brazil>

CASE STUDY: BRAZIL (CONT'D)

- 1970's: United States-Brazil relationship weakens and Brazil begins to engage strategically and deliberately in the region.
- Post-1970's: Brazil emerges definitively as a regional hegemon and some would argue as a global power as well.
 - Regional power moves: role in rigging Uruguay's elections & supporting Chile's coup.
 - Globally: increased economic power, focus on technology, promoting itself as a moderating global force, multipolarity means a relative increase in power.
- Brazil begins to recognize the benefits of engaging with its regional neighbors and establishing a solid regional hegemony.
- The only potential regional challenge to Brazil was Argentina—which was highly unstable in the late 1970s.
 - Thus Brazil becomes the *de facto* hegemon and increasingly involved in regional affairs.

CASE STUDY: BRAZIL (CONT'D)

- Engagement in regional institutions and security projects; however, there are very clear limits to what the state has been able to achieve globally.
- Regional institutions are still weak.
 - Mercosur (South American trade bloc) is less coherent and carries less clout than it did in the late 20th century. This weakens not only the region's economic power but Brazil's power to use institutions to influence regional states.
- It could be argued that Brazil's regional hegemony is somewhat contested.
 - Colombia's ties to the United States may weaken Brazilian hegemony.
- Overall, Brazil is somewhat reluctant to take on a more active hegemonic role within the region. The issue is not that Brazil tries and fails to accomplish regional objectives, but that it often does not actively try in the first place.
- Some international clout, but Brazil still not considered a global "rule-maker"
 - Still undisputedly less powerful than traditional forces such as the United States, UK, Germany, etc.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

- In the absence of international hegemony, global nonpolarity has emerged.
- Interdependent global policy makes it easier for regional hegemons to exert international influence.
- BRICS have growing political clout as their regions experience rapid development.
 - For example, Venezuela increasing trade with Brazil in the late 20th century in order to decrease reliance on the United States — this decreased/counterbalanced U.S. power in the region
 - Regional powers can fill roles traditionally inhabited by global powers such as the United States (e.g., trade, alliances, brokering negotiations, etc.).

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS (CONT'D)

- Traditional global powers must now contend with the political interests of emerging powers.
 - Global system of multipolarity means that traditional global powers are seeing a relative decrease in power, while rising powers see relative increase as the number of powerful actors increases.
 - Traditional global powers (United States, UK, Germany, France, etc.) wield less overall influence; the system is less predictable.
- This is somewhat interconnected to trade: political influence as a result of economic interdependence and high levels of trade.
- The interests of a dominant traditional power (maintaining status) vs a rising power (continuing to gain influence).

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- Some scholars argue that regional power fluctuations have a significant impact on global trade and whether countries and regions buy into economic interdependence.
- As regional powers—particularly in Asia—gain international influence, some argue that economic global governance will—and must—shift in response.
- Emerging and developing economies critical of the IMF quota share of governance—they are excluded in favor of European countries.
 - This has been acknowledged by the IMF Board of Governors and an adjustment to the governance shares was proposed in 2010 to reduce European shares and increase shares to developing countries.
 - However, the United States (a traditional global power with about 17% of vote shares in IMF governance) is unable to get Congressional approval to go ahead with these quota adjustments.
- This is indicative of the tension between rising economic powers and traditional global powers.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS (CONT'D)

- Institutions such as the IMF may struggle to reconcile the interests of traditional powers with emerging regional powers.
 - It is obviously not in the interest of European powers to decrease their own shares in the IMF.
 - However, given the growing economic and trade power of countries such as the BRICS, these shifts are warranted and arguably crucial.
- If the states with greater input in IMF policy (economic stability, growth, cooperation, trade, etc.) are those with greater historical economic influence rather than current economic power, the institution may not come to the best decisions or key countries may decline to cooperate.
- The difficulty experienced by the IMF in taking global economic shifts in stride is indicative of the tension between the established global economic order and the economic trend-line.
- The further disbursement of economic powers in a nonpolar world may lead to uncertainty and uncharted economic territory.

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

- Security issues typically emerge within a regional context, and thus some scholars argue that they are best understood and dealt with regionally
- This gives increasing importance and power to regional powers.
- This impacts not only how regional security issues are dealt with, but how outside actors generally interact with states within the region.
- Regional powers are important actors within regional institutions formed to deal with security issues.
- However, security cooperation may be difficult when a state is seeking to make a power grab in the region, or when trust is low.
 - Sometimes regional security threats come from powerful states within the region itself.

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS – CASE STUDY

- Asia marked by security uncertainty as China and other states pursue territory in the South China Sea and increase military expansion.
- These tensions are compounded by China's growing status as a regional hegemon and international influence.
- ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) intended to enhance security cooperation in the region.
 - May ease tension between China and states such as Japan.
 - However, this cooperation is not easy to initiate as it may not be perceived to be in the best interest of an individual state.
- Some would argue that an active, dominant role in regional security is more beneficial to China than power plays for territory in the South China Sea.
 - Regional security influence provides opportunities to set the agenda and stay informed of other states' priorities.

POLITICAL / ECONOMIC / SECURITY IMPLICATIONS – CASE STUDY

- China's increasing influence in the South American region seen as somewhat of a threat to U.S. security.
 - Competition for scarce resources such as oil.
 - Trade between Brazil and China counterbalancing U.S. power/influence.
 - Requires the United States to focus more attention and resources on the Western hemisphere rather than involving itself further in Asia.
- Historically, the United States has seen little competition in the Western hemisphere; however, interdependence and technological advances make it easier for China to involve itself in South America, complicating regional security for the United States.
 - This not only increases China & Brazil's relative power, but creates uncertainty for the United States → it is beneficial for regional powers China and Brazil.

EXISTING AND RECOMMENDED POLICY

- Existing global institutions—such as the IMF—are structured in the interest of advanced economies and traditional global powers.
 - Some scholars predict that these structures must shift to accommodate the growing influence of less developed regional powers in the future.
- Some publications also recommend the increased leverage of regional powers to solve regional security issues that impact the broader international system.
 - For example, relying on regional powers to facilitate regional cooperation stemming the flow of illegal arms to terrorist groups.
- Multilateralism and increased relations between established global powers and rising regional powers are essential.
 - Established powers will certainly maintain influence, but must take into account the relevance of the interests of the BRICS.

RESOURCES

- The following resources provide further information on this topic:
 - Nolte, Detlef. "How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics." *Review of International Studies* 36.04 (2010): 881-901.
<https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/212a550d-597b-4f60-86df-ec73a8e43707.pdf>, Accessed March 16, 2017.
 - Allen, Michael A. "The Influence of Regional Power Distributions on Interdependence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2016):
<https://wpsa.research.pdx.edu/papers/docs/Regional%20Power%20and%20Trade%20-%20WPSA%202015.pdf>, Accessed March 16, 2017.
 - Stewart-Ingersoll, Robert, and Derrick Frazier. *Regional Powers and Security Orders: A Theoretical Framework*. London: Routledge, 2012.

- Additional research materials and information sources regarding this topic can be found in the associated *Literary & Scholastic Resource List*.

Literary and Scholastic Resources – Regional Powers Attaining Global Influence

Date of information: February 2017

Overview: While not exhaustive, the following resources provide a roadmap to understanding the shifting international system and changing role of regional powers. These resources provide a baseline of understanding, but as the international landscape continues to evolve, new data will become available and resource lists will require updates.

Module Resource Lists to Cross-Reference: Managing Issues as Actors Multiply, Changing Role of the Individual, Asymmetric Population Growth

Organizations:

- Pew Research Center, Global Balance of Power: Pew produces a broad range of research products and trend reporting on international and regional power dynamics. Information on research studies and publications can be found at <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/global-balance-of-power/>

Recent Publications and Journal Articles:

- Emerging Powers and Global Governance: Whither the IMF?: This article describes the increasing power and influence of regional powers Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. It speculates on the implications for the global system.
 - *Citation:* Mohan, Rakesh, and Muneesh Kapur. Emerging Powers and Global Governance: Whither the IMF? Working paper. International Monetary Fund, 2015. Accessed March 2017.
- How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics: This paper discusses criteria and characteristics of regional powers as well as their international role. It provides a basic overview of regional powers while also addressing their role in the changing international system.
 - *Citation:* Nolte, Detlef. "How to Compare Regional Powers: Analytical Concepts and Research Topics." *Review of International Studies* 36.04 (2010): 881-901. Accessed March 15, 2017. <<https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/212a550d-597b-4f60-86df-ec73a8e43707.pdf>>.
- Brazil's Global Ambitions: This Brookings article details the growing influence of Brazil and the challenges it faces as an increasingly powerful yet still notably impeded international actor.
 - *Citation:* Trinkunas, Harold. "Brazil's Global Ambitions Brookings Institution, 28 July 2016. Accessed February 4, 2017. <<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/brazils-global-ambitions/>>.
- The Influence of Regional Power Distributions on Interdependence: This paper addresses several hypotheses concerning the dynamic between regional hegemony and international trade.
 - *Citation:* Allen, Michael A. "The Influence of Regional Power Distributions on Interdependence." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2016): n. pag. Web. 16 Mar. 2017. <https://wpsa.research.pdx.edu/papers/docs/Regional%20Power%20and%20Trade%20-%20WPSA%202015.pdf>.
- Brazil as a Regional Power: Views from the Hemisphere: This report presents multiple perspectives on the role of Brazil both within the region and the world.

- *Citation: Brazil as a Regional Power: Views from the Hemisphere.* Rep. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholar.
- The Roles of Regional Security Institutions in the Era of Power Shift: The Implications for Japan-China Relations: This articles examines regional security issues within Asia and the roles and attitudes of Japan and China within this dynamic.
 - “The Roles of Regional Security Institutions in the Era of Power Shift: The Implications for Japan-China Relations.” The Tokyo Foundation, 29 Aug. 2012. Accessed April, 10 2017. <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/topics/japan-china-next-generation-dialogue/roles-of-regional-security-institutions>.

Books:

- Regional Powers and Security Orders: A Theoretical Framework: The authors explore the definition of a regional power and how such a power can influence international security issues.
 - *Citation:* Stewart-Ingersoll, Robert, and Derrick Frazier. *Regional Powers and Security Orders: A Theoretical Framework.* London: Routledge, 2012.