

# NOREF Report

## The BRICS and international peacebuilding and statebuilding

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### Executive summary

The emergence of the BRICS has generated a renewed debate about peacebuilding and donor activity. This has slowly influenced the aims, norms and practices of international peacebuilding, statebuilding and development. There are subtle differences in BRICS members' interests, approaches and motives, power, influence, and adherence to or rejection of established standards (such as OECD-DAC principles). These states' activities have often attracted scepticism and criticism from traditional donors. An examination of their engagement with interventionary forms of development, peacebuilding, statebuilding, and their related institutions and practices shows that the BRICS can be both "status-quo" and "critical"

actors. On the one hand, they all engage with the liberal peace paradigm and its often-neoliberal agenda that allows them to protect sovereignty and non-intervention, pursue trade interests, and advance their own interests (like a seat on the UN Security Council, regional stability or maintaining their often-ambiguous status of being both aid donors and recipients). On the other hand, their involvement has challenged peacebuilding's and development's Euro-Atlantic character through the unfolding of their own donor and peace agendas. This report highlights the instances in which traditional and emerging actors' agendas converge and diverge – and the motivations behind these agendas.

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## Introduction

The emergence of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) has generated a new politics of aid and donor activity. Some of it, for instance China's, is targeted towards infrastructure in the hope of gaining access to contracts and resources, but at the same time China is respectful of sovereignty and wary of sensitive political issues. Some BRICS activity in this area reflects the race for a UN Security Council (UNSC) seat and international status, as in the cases of India and Brazil. Yet these countries also have their own experiences of poverty, inequality and related development strategies to offer. Along with Russia, they endorse sovereignty and are keen to secure their regions. South Africa brings an interest in discrimination, racism and its region's development.

All five BRICS and most other emerging donors agree with some (but not all) aspects of the liberal peace architecture that existing donors focus on: a stable bureaucratic state with control of the means of violence and varying degrees of capitalism. With respect to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and civil society, these are mainly supported by India, Brazil and South Africa (known as the IBSA grouping, who are most in favour of the liberal peace).<sup>1</sup> None support these factors as possible justifications for intervention without international broad consensus and local consent.

Understanding these dynamics, institutions and processes assists in understanding the various emerging actors' engagements (rejection or disinterest) with interventionary forms of development, peacebuilding, statebuilding, and their related institutions and practices. Key issues include how peacebuilding, statebuilding and development may evolve into hybrid forms; how these interventions impact on the UN and donor system, international norms and law, co-ordination, and efficiency; and what the implications are for the practice and theory of the liberal (or post-liberal) peace paradigm. The embryonic BRICS peacebuilding agenda is complex and multifaceted. It is connected to their international and domestic ambitions and norms,

regional security interests, contributions to peacekeeping, positioning in the UNSC, history of state-society relations and development.

In what follows, we examine the convergences and points of contention between the existing liberal peace architecture and the emerging role of the BRICS. Do they support the liberal peace architecture or are they critical of it? Do they work through it to reform it or work outside of it? Are they status-quo or critical actors, or do they play both roles?

## Convergences and differences

BRICS member states have operated both within and outside the spectrum of the liberal peace. When conformity with the liberal peace paradigm has occurred (e.g. China in Sudan and Liberia, and Brazil in Haiti), this occurred in select circumstances when there were considerable "soft power" gains for the BRICS member in question. Russia has chosen to focus its "peacekeeping" on strategic interests in its near abroad. On other occasions, the BRICS have operated independently of the liberal peace. Brazil and India have focused on in-kind payments for food, as well as on education, agriculture and health-care assistance, perhaps consistent with a focus on the everyday, "human-centred" approach consistent with more recent and critical thinking about peacebuilding. This is in contrast to the aid patterns of Western nations, which are marked by a focus on providing finance to the public sector often via Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-oriented approaches to budgetary support.

While China sees development and peacekeeping as a chance for profit and status, its increased participation and involvement in international affairs has led it to soften its hardline stance on non-intervention: China is now the biggest contributor to consent-based peacekeeping of the UNSC's permanent five members (Zhengyu & Taylor, 2011). On the other hand, in their attempts to secure a seat on the UNSC, Brazil and India prefer to be seen as donors and/or peacekeepers, often distancing themselves from Western approaches and offering their own

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes Qatar, Turkey and South Korea are included; see below.

innovations. Russia's agenda is geared towards the preservation of its sphere of influence rather than towards any emerging principles of South-South co-operation (Mwase & Yang, 2012), while South Africa's role is generally based on its experience of overcoming apartheid and discrimination.

As we have seen, support for the liberal peace framework is strongest from the IBSA grouping, which has a clear concern for political variations at the local level, although its members have different approaches to poverty, inequality and discrimination. Nevertheless, the BRICS are all particularly concerned about any dilution of sovereignty, thus reinforcing the problematic political bias of the UN system towards the state, non-intervention, official forms of politics, status and hierarchy. These tensions and dynamics are linked to the earlier rise of the Non-Aligned Movement, the G77, and other such movements in the 1960s and beyond (Wagner, 2009), but there are now qualitative differences in this new development in that norms, ideas and material resources are configured in very different ways in the international system.

Other emerging donors such as Qatar, South Korea and Turkey (Aras, 2009; Jerve & Selbervik, 2009; Hursoy, 2005) could be added to the IBSA grouping. These countries are rapidly developing their own donor institutions, policies and infrastructures, which follow in the whole, but not completely, the liberal peace consensus (Richmond, 2005). Qatar is attempting to push back some of the liberal elements of the more traditional donor consensus, Turkey has regional ambitions, and South Korea more generally wants to join the BRICS club. South Korea and Turkey are now developing their own agencies rather than working through their foreign ministries.

BRICS engagements in what can now only loosely be called peacebuilding have been gradually increasing. Technical assistance, debt cancellation or reduction, and investment have often been claimed to be development- or peacebuilding-oriented even if mainly aimed at cruder material bargains (John de Sousa, 2008). China's foreign direct investment reached \$21 billion during 2006-07. Brazil, South Africa, India and, more recently, Russia have established new

state institutions to co-ordinate their development aid and various peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions abroad, as well as becoming increasingly aware of the advantages of foreign investment in such locations.<sup>2</sup>

Such engagements – which might also be termed a broader solidarity, collective action and mobilisation, or merely the pursuit of interests – are now beginning to have a double impact. On the one hand, the already established traditional donors within the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have attempted to dilute or disqualify these alternative initiatives by claiming they fall outside the definition of official development assistance (ODA), because they fear it is an attempt to overturn or replace their agenda and, most importantly, already established rules and norms.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the mobilisation and actions of emerging actors have an impact on peacebuilding in general, reshaping what has been described as the OECD-DAC's "Euro-logic" (Aguilar, 2010).

This impact can be seen in various ways: China's role as an "investment donor" around the world working on infrastructure in return for access to resources; India's and Brazil's attempts to use peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development contributions in their regions (as regional donors) in return for a UNSC seat and to stabilise their internal or regional politics (India in Kashmir, Bihar and Nepal; Brazil in Haiti); South Africa's role in African development and peacekeeping; and Chinese and Russian stances on sovereignty and non-intervention. The BRICS appear to want to be part of the peacebuilding architecture to a greater or lesser degree. They see it as an avenue to contribute where they see regional security and political advantage to be at stake. Yet they do not want to be called upon to make mandatory donations to any part of the

2 The BRICS Policy Centre at PUC in Rio de Janeiro is amassing such data at present; see <<http://bricspolicycenter.org/homolog/>>.

3 ODA is defined by OECD-DAC as: "those flows to countries on the DAC List of Aid Recipients and to multilateral institutions which are: (i) **provided by official agencies**, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and (ii) each transaction of which: (a) is administered with the promotion of the **economic development and welfare of developing countries** as its main objective; and (b) **is concessional in character** and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent)." See <[http://www.oecd.org/document/4/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_37413\\_46181892\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_37413,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/4/0,3746,en_2649_37413_46181892_1_1_1_37413,00.html)>.

peacekeeping, peacebuilding, statebuilding or donor system, partly because they still receive donor resources themselves. Indeed, some of them are afraid of losing their status as recipients and exchanging it for being donors, with all the attendant expectations.

The ongoing crisis of the liberal peace has made space for some BRICS, most notably India and Brazil, to develop their own donor and peacebuilding agendas with state-society relations in mind. Some emerging donors are supportive of markets and remain clear of politics; others focus on infrastructure; while still others are focused on development and various versions of social justice.

Thus, it may be argued that the BRICS are exercising critical agency vis-à-vis the established modes of peacebuilding, statebuilding, peacekeeping and development. This is generally expressed within the confines of the contemporary “international community”, but often also represents their attempts to modify it, perhaps according to their own historical and social experiences of colonialism, poverty, inequality, intervention, globalisation, and civil or cross-border conflict. In terms of global norms and representation, this may push peacebuilding and statebuilding into a hybrid, post-colonial state of being, as opposed to its current Euro-Atlantic character. However, it is also clear that in some cases the international community and its norms are simply being ignored (particularly in the case of Russia), with a predictable retreat behind sovereignty.

## Conceptualising the role of the BRICS: status-quo or critical states?

All the BRICS appear to be prone to both critical- and status-quo-oriented modes of behaviour (Richmond, 2011; 2012). In general, they contribute to the liberal peace, although they concentrate on areas relevant to their own experience, norms and interests. They seek to advance themselves through its architecture, while also being critical of some of its aspects, particularly its tendency towards interventionism. They may also tend to work autonomously outside of its frameworks where issues of regional or

strategic interest are at stake. In response to what may now be seen as competition among old and new donors, as well as resistance from recipients towards some aspects of the liberal peace model (particularly relating to its interventionary, conditional and programme-driven character, as well its neoliberal bias in some cases), there has been a turn to national ownership. This has been seen as a way of improving the legitimacy of much of what international donors may do. This may be partly associated with the increasing prominence of alternative donors – from the BRICS to Qatar (Burgess & Daudein, 2007; Zhengyu & Taylor, 2011).

Indeed, it might be expected that the BRICS might be more cognisant of diverse local identities and agencies (as Brazil has argued in the context of its peacebuilding engagement in Haiti). Yet this shift has been heavily diluted by the BRICS’ concerns with sovereignty, territory, profit, interest in material resources, and not aggravating their recipient status or their already significant internal inequalities. Most new donors are very concerned about Western interventionism and the biases of the liberal peace system, and are interested in bringing their own diverse experiences to the international peacebuilding architecture. Nevertheless, they have found themselves having to work within that system for their own advantage, to influence or reform it, while also perhaps trying to hold it at arm’s length.

Old and new donors agree that domestic and international stability is a priority, and the state is crucial to both, although the detail of what this may mean or how it may be achieved is fraught. Attitudes on justice, accountability, transparency and the role of conditionality differ, due mainly to experiences with structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the indexing of “failed states” or benchmarks from the OECD are seen as problematic. The BRICS have not signed up for the Busan “New Deal” for these reasons.<sup>5</sup> The dynamic is more complicated than merely claiming that traditional donors (e.g. liberal peace supporters) are under critique by the

4 Author interviews with Richard Gowan, Jake Sherman and W. P. S. Sidhu, Center for International Cooperation, New York, February 6th 2012.

5 Author interviews with Richard Gowan, Jake Sherman and W. P. S. Sidhu, Center for International Cooperation, New York, February 6th 2012.

BRICS. The latter (and other new donors) have a stake in the international system and the state-centric order, which they want to preserve, while improving its efficiency, influencing its norms and following their own interests.

Thus, the BRICS plus other emerging donors in the international system normally operate along the lines of existing frameworks for peace and development engagements already established or run within existing institutions. Contributions towards peacekeeping missions have long followed one of these strategies, along with membership of or attendance in various UN committees or agencies related to security, human rights or development processes. Sometimes these have been aimed at currying favour for a bid for more status (as with Brazil's desire to attain UNSC membership or with problems in its region, as with its contribution to the peacekeeping force in Haiti) (Gauthier & Sousa, 2006). South Africa argues that it brings a particular dimension related to its own understanding of discrimination to the debate in support of a more inclusive international community.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes resources are contributed, like Russia's and China's commitments to the UN Peacebuilding Fund.<sup>7</sup> However, these are often limited and the main contribution is rhetorical (to avoid offering resources or undermining donor-recipient status) or geared towards the donors' self-interest (Jordan 2010; Chin & Malkin 2012). Many traditional donors are sceptical about the role of the BRICS in general.

Some BRICS may see themselves as critical states, seeking to challenge, improve or replace the traditional system, even if they are more focused on other issues (see above). Assuming a critical role offers more significant ethical, ideological, material and influence challenges. This role may offer the BRICS' own development or security experiences as a model (as with Brazil or South Africa). It may involve a development strategy experience within its own boundaries that might be used as an example for others, as with India's local development councils and its long experience of engaging with issues of poverty, either with external donors, or now increasingly

through its own national and regional policies (Planning Commission of India, 2007: 239).

If the BRICS were to be seen as "critical" states, actors or donors, then it would be likely that they would contest the predominant liberal-internationalist and liberal-institutionalist idea of the international community from their different historical, cultural and strategic locations. Many critical scholars have argued that the international community is an empty signifier because it is ideological (in liberal terms), cannot live up to its promise, or merely represents the interests of a few states rather than many. Globalisation dominates weaker states and communities, many of which do not hold liberal values (even if they may aspire to a social democratic state of their own). It also misreads their subsistence environments and needs. These critical views are concerned with social justice, equality, and developmental issues of peace and conflict, as well as global sustainability, responsibility, and equality. This mirrors the positions of India, South Africa and Brazil to varying degrees. They all have a stake in the existing order, but also seek to use their experience to change it according to such critical views, for their own political advantage (increased global status or a UNSC seat) or local legitimacy, according to their own capacities.

For China and Russia, development, peacebuilding and statebuilding are seen as interventionary and opportunist in a strategic sense, particular vis-à-vis U.S. foreign policy. The IBSA grouping supports the international architecture of peacebuilding and the "international community", but also has a modified view of its *raison d'être*, especially where peacebuilding, development, aid, intervention and statebuilding are concerned. India also has concerns about sovereignty because of its involvement in Kashmir and problems in Bihar, yet given its role in Nepal, it also sees the value of regional involvement in peacemaking, as do South Africa and Brazil. This means they are all status-quo-oriented, but also want slow change, as with China's "peaceful rise" (Lum et al., 2009; Fijalkowski, 2011; Higgins, 2009), or a UNSC seat, as in Brazil's and India's cases. Their critical positions on development, regional stability, and the responsibilities of the international community (for, against, or advancing the Responsibility to Protect – R2P) are influenced by the fact that many of them have their own conflicts to deal with, as with China, Russia and India, or internal

6 Author interview with a confidential source, Office of the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the UN, New York, February 9th 2012.

7 Russia contributed \$8 million between 2006 and 2012 while China delivered \$5 million of the \$6 million promised for the same period; see <<http://www.unpbf.org/donors/contributions/>>.

development issues and inequalities, as with most, but in particular South Africa. They still need external support, their sovereignty to be protected and a place in the current international architecture, but they also want to transform the latter.

The framework of the “international community” has been seen as part of the first approach – via a liberal peace. It represents a coherent understanding of rights, norms, law and how to uphold them in international politics, of which the R2P doctrine is taken to be indicative (ICISS, 2001; Chandler, 2010). This is a progressive liberal agenda, but it is also ambitious and interventionary. The BRICS are resistant to this progression. This, to varying degrees, indicates a primary tension over peacebuilding and development between existing liberal states and some BRICS, notably Russia, China and India (mindful of their own internal or border conflicts in Chechnya, Tibet and Kashmir, respectively) over Article 2(7) of the UN Charter. Despite this, they also contribute to aspects of the peace agenda, if only by supporting some regional stabilisation measures or investing in infrastructural development, albeit for their own self-interest. These states still see themselves as part of the international community, but do not see it as fully representing their interests or norms.

These variations in interests, ideology, capacity, and experience influence their peacebuilding agendas and profiles. They represent a double movement – entry into the “elite club” of the international community via an agreement on some or all of the aspects of the liberal peace (democracy, human rights, civil society and capitalism) in its a priori qualifying sense. At the same time, the BRICS’ selection of which aspects of the liberal peace to accept means that their contributions are varied. They may offer support for a liberal peacebuilding consensus or the post-Washington consensus, without democracy or human rights, or with a lesser focus on capitalism, or avoiding military interventionism, while also inserting their own norms and interests. This leads to a subtle renegotiation of what it means to be a member of the “international community” and its many institutions, what it stands for, and its effectiveness.

The multiplication of actors involved in development, statebuilding, and peacebuilding

activities has the potential for a significant impact on the identity, legitimacy, capacity, co-ordination, and representation of the international community, and the organisations, institutions, agencies, and international NGOs that are taken to be part of it (Nel, 2010). India and Brazil, for instance, do not see themselves as renegade, revisionist or opposed to the international order backed by liberal states such as the U.S., Britain and their allies. They do, however, have concerns about the path of development of this order, and intend to use their influence to modify this path and maintain their own interests, norms, and foreign policies in their regions. Increasingly, such actors have the confidence to adopt contrary positions or methods, simultaneously co-operating with but also adopting “standard” international practices, as demonstrated in the Brazilian and Turkish joint approaches to Iran in 2010 (Borger, 2010) or the Brazilian peacekeeping strategy in its own “civil war” in its slum areas.<sup>8</sup> They select aspects of, but also maintain exceptions to the liberal peace consensus. China’s “development investment” in Africa and many other places is another case in point – while violations of sovereignty are rejected, basic development co-operation and investment are not. Such practices are significant variations on those the liberal peace consensus espouses, acting as a bridge to other more problematic state elites or providing alternatives for local agency.

At the same time some emerging actors have attracted the wrath of their poorer and less influential “kinsmen” in the G77, who see them not as instigators of global institutional change, but as empires-in-the-making designed to compete with the former liberal peace hegemony, promoting only their interests at the expense of less-developed countries (LDCs). Even the increasing number of development, trade and aid projects by Southern states towards other Southern states as part of South-South co-operation and development (SSDC) is contested: despite the broadening of partnerships and donors that such frameworks offer to LDCs, the latter feel as marginalised in South-South initiatives as in the older North-South frameworks (Malhotra, 2010). While SSDC, aid and contributions to peacebuilding are less tied to conditionalities than Southern relations with traditional donors (Penderis, 2011),

<sup>8</sup> This is called “pacification”; see Thuswohl (2011); Global Voices Online (2012).

trade initiatives are not as transparent and there is little concern for human rights (Reality of Aid Management Committee, 2010: 14). These processes are often a government-level affair, leaving grassroots and civil society organisations outside both the consultation and implementation stages, thus negating a democratic ownership of SSDC and its broader role in peacebuilding (African Forum and Network on Debt and Development, 2010: 38).

## Conclusion

Expansive interventionist agendas (whether called development, peacebuilding or statebuilding) do not seem to be attractive to the BRICS. Their membership of groupings like the Non-Aligned Movement allows them to check what they see as Northern excesses in the post-colonial international system. They are also suspicious of agendas such as R2P, which they see as potentially problematic because of its bias towards Western interventionism. They are, however, interested in refining the traditional donors' approach to some extent, as well as making profits, increasing their status, forming trade links and spreading their experiences of development in a post-colonial world. Indeed, their positionality is complex. They resist some aspects of the liberal peacebuilding and neoliberal statebuilding process and embrace others. They are often both donors and recipients, drivers of some processes and the subjects of others, while simultaneously rejecting OECD-DAC-led approaches. They are sensitive to anything that smacks of Northern hegemony, but are also aware of a capacity deficit in some areas. At the same time as they keep their distance from the donor system and peacebuilding, BRICS also stay connected to it for these reasons. Although peacekeeping is attractive in its traditional consent-based form, they have also been mindful of its implications for their own positionality in the state system. They see the merit of investing in global public goods for a range of reasons, some less strategic than others. All of them are ultimately aware of tensions in the existing order and their standing in it, and are also concerned with the nature of the state and globalisation's effects, both negative and positive. They have different approaches to their "contributions" to post-conflict and development settings, and often do not contribute much more than their own expertise. Their own development often occurred through

the state (often in authoritarian form), so they all agree on the significance of the state being the main partner for aid, development, peacebuilding and statebuilding.<sup>9</sup>

Being an economic, rather than normative grouping, the BRICS do not offer a coherent picture in terms of peacebuilding and development. The IBSA grouping, on the other hand, is more interested in peacebuilding and sharing its members' own experiences, and is concerned with non-discrimination in terms of age, gender or class. Thus, they have issues with peacebuilding's often liberal or neoliberal bias and also have political interests at stake in the UN. All are concerned with issues of dependency, autonomy and social justice, but this has to be couched through national rather than social forms of ownership (i.e. through the state).<sup>10</sup> At the same time, Brazil and India desire UNSC seats. In contrast, China and Russia's approaches tend to be more bilateral and profit driven: they are not concerned with discrimination. Russia and China do have an interest, however, in constraining the role of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) (where gender and human security issues are often highlighted) in order to keep peace and security issues at the UNSC level, where they have a more direct role.<sup>11</sup> In other words, they do not support the peacebuilding agenda in practice, do not want to see the UNSC reformed and yet are members of the PBC.<sup>12</sup>

It should be noted that the so-called Islamic donors, like Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as well as other emerging or highly developed economies such as Turkey, Mexico, Indonesia and South Korea, are all for different reasons currently also establishing domestic institutions and links in the South. This is for reasons of identity/religion, development, peacebuilding, trade, regional stabilisation or long-standing solidarity.<sup>13</sup> Some of these actors have different views of economic relations (e.g. through "Islamic finance") and also

<sup>9</sup> Author interview with confidential source, UNDP, New York, February 8th 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Author interview with confidential source, UN PBSO, New York, February 6th 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Author interview with Robert Jenkins, Ralph Bunche Institute, New York, February 7th 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Author interview with confidential source, UN PBSO, New York, February 6th 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Author interview with confidential source, UN PBSO, New York, February 6th 2012.

want to revise what they see as the inappropriate or failing international structures that emanate mainly from Western hegemony.

As we have seen, the BRICS and other emerging donors engage with the liberal peace architecture for different reasons. Most, however, accept that sovereignty, capitalism, and development are necessary, even if equality and democracy are not. India, Russia and China are not supportive of the idea of civil society in general and a consensus has emerged between neoliberal economists in international institutions and BRICS' views on development.<sup>14</sup> Varying degrees of the latter, as well as varying intentions to be more proactive or not, perhaps represent the main differences. If states such as South Korea, Qatar and Turkey were also to be included in this discussion as new entrants in the great game of peacebuilding, statebuilding and development, no doubt more nuances would be available. All tend to see the UN as a Western club, however.<sup>15</sup>

In effect, the BRICS and new donors work through the existing international peacebuilding architecture as well as seeking to change it. They are both "status-quo" and "critical" actors, depending on their local, regional or global interests; norms and ideological preferences; and historical experiences of war, peace and development. No clear alternative model, ideology, or model of the state or peace is offered by the BRICS and/or other emerging powers. Any nuances are mainly brought about through the interests and historical experiences of the various BRICS in their regional settings. Their stances on R2P are telling. Until these differences are resolved between traditional donors and new actors, and the latter engage on a more significant scale, it looks as if any alternative to the liberal peace will be fragmented and indeterminate. As they tread this difficult path, "new donors" play a complex role in both the status-quo and critical guises.

<sup>14</sup> Author interview with official source, World Bank, Washington, DC, February 2nd 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Author interviews with Richard Gowan, Jake Sherman and W. P. S. Sidhu, Center for International Cooperation, New York, February 6th 2012.

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