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in a Multipolar Order

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Strategies of Rising Powers in World Politics

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Abstract / Keywords

Abstract

To what extent can rising powers build on their momentum to affect, alter and transform world politics, and if so, how do they do it? The paper analyses five international regimes and policy fields (climate change, security, trade, development, and finance), concentrates on the dominant international organizations and institutions (the UNFCCC, UNSC, WTO, World Bank and IMF), explores to what extent rising powers take issue with the central principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures therein, and develops six strategies of foreign policy – to conform, ally, reform, veto, bypass, replace. We find evidence that all six strategies are applied by rising powers. In some cases they are combined. They are often applied as a reaction to strategic moves of the established powers, but so far “to replace” remains a long shot. We find the most interesting results with respect to the international development and finance regimes. Rather than fully joining and embracing the Western liberal order and the respective international institutions as the liberal-institutionalist-constructivist take on rising powers behavior would suggest, rising powers have set out to create new institutions, such as the NDB or the common reserve pool. This is intended to put pressure on reform-resistant major players of the old order. But it also serves to demonstrate that rising powers are able to go it alone. We are witnessing the emergence of a parallel order and a parallel set of institutions. Rising powers have not left the existing institutions of the Bretton Woods era but they might well be able to push them into increasing irrelevance should their economic and financial rise continue and should their quest for more of a say in these institutions be permanently ignored.

Keywords

Rising powers, global order, international regimes, global governance, BRICS, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Security Council (UNSC), World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), New Development Bank (NDB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)