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## Report

### **New configurations of international order: values, principles, alliances and alignments**

Sunday 22 – Wednesday 25 November 2015 | WP1436

In association with:





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### Background

In the light of a rapidly evolving international system, Wilton Park and the Pandiá Calógeras Institute organised a conference that analysed the current sources of order in the international system as well as future trends, shifting dynamics and challenges related to them. In addressing these issues this international conference brought together officials, military officers, and experts from Western countries and the BRICS.

The meeting aimed to:

- Better understand how current and future global conditions and frameworks affect relations amongst states;
- Explore the importance of values and principles in world politics;
- Identify strategic approaches to help strengthen a rules -based international order.

The main challenges related to the construction of a more balanced international order, the possible tools to minimise these difficulties and political recommendations to reinvigorate multilateralism were among the most important issues examined.

### **Challenges to International order**

1. There is a clear consensus that the international system is not well adjusted to the current configuration of international politics. There are two dimensions of the distribution of power in which this discrepancy is readily seen: i) the distribution of power amongst states themselves and ii) the distribution of power between states and other actors.
2. In examining international politics and the characteristics of the international system there is a tendency to focus on the outcomes that they produce, which can create an image of a failed system. But besides outcomes, it is also important to analyse the most important features and processes related to the system and to understand how they have been formed, which can lead to the emergence of propositions and ideas that can help in the forging of a new reality.
3. The high level of complexity of the current international system leads some analysts to argue that there is no international order, but only elements of an international order. Most of these elements are reminiscent of the past, since the rules and institutions that underpin them were developed after the Second World War.
4. In addition to the traditional tension between power, interests and ideals that has historically compromised the creation of a more balanced international order, new unprecedented challenges have been emerging in the last decade. There aren't any

pre-agreed processes or methods through which countries and non-state actors can deal with crises. There is an urgent need to discuss the shape of the table in every one of these crises.

5. Many changes in the values and principles through which states relate to each other and in the balance of power between them have been occurring, especially since the end of the Cold War, leading to a general sense that the current system is under significant stress or even broken. Analysts who agree with this statement mention examples such as Libya, Syria, the emergence of so-called Islamic State and others.
6. On the other hand, there are several examples that could demonstrate that although the system is not formed by a universal set of parameters that influence states' behaviours, many positive outcomes have been achieved. Successes such as the nuclear agreement with Iran, the results of peacekeeping operations such as MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the fight against Ebola are examples of how countries and institutions can cooperate to resolve or at least attenuate international problems.
7. Even analysts who focus on the strengths and successes of the system recognize that they tend to be related to ad hoc initiatives or they are a consequence of specific conditions that allow states and non-state actors to produce solutions from cooperative efforts. This notion minimises the importance of the idea of a system that has been working well and it leads to an almost consensual belief that there remain important obstacles to the creation of robust, smoothly functioning international order.
8. There are four main challenges that undermine the system's capacity to produce a more stable environment:

### **Lack of leadership**

9. Since the end of the Cold War the world has shifted from a bipolar distribution of power to a unipolar one and then to the current configuration, in which there is no evident dominant power. Although these changes have been quite visible, there is a perception that they haven't been followed by a reorganisation of the systemic decision-making frameworks. As a consequence, decisions taken within the existing framework have their legitimacy questioned and are often seen as ineffective and inadequate. The so-called fragmentation of the international system or the idea that there is a proliferation of different international systems is one sign that states are trying to find alternative arrangements to deal with issues that they do not perceive can be effectively dealt with through the existing structures.
10. It is evident that there's a need to reform the system. The difficulty lies in finding a viable path to pursue that reform or which country/institution will be willing and able to guide the process. There is no obvious successor(s) to whom power can be transitioned. Moreover, in a complex world where there are many diverse interests to take into consideration, it is hard to achieve political consensus. When considering existing international institutions as representative forums, there is strong criticism regarding the fact that they are dominated by developed countries.
11. Both in democracies and autocracies, governments are facing more demanding populations, which leads many states to place more power at least nominally into legislative bodies. These domestic pressures and the responses to them can diminish the possibility for countries to create coherent and long term foreign policies. The lack of a clear global leadership can be, to a certain point, related to this.
12. Historical perspectives point to the idea that it is easier to produce order if there is a global leader to pay the cost for the maintenance of this order. On the other hand, there is no consensus about the importance of this leadership in the current environment. It is possible that a rearrangement in relations between governments can substitute for the traditional idea of strong leadership. Civil society, for example, can play a more important role, although the difficulties related to the process of creating this more fluid

order should be recognised.

13. Although many expected that Western values would dominate international relations after the end of the Cold War, an emergence of hatred against these values can be perceived in certain parts of the world, mainly in the Middle East. Western powers still don't understand this phenomenon and therefore cannot respond to it.

### **Emergence of new state and non-state actors**

14. Both states and non-state actors from time to time disregard international norms in order to achieve specific benefits that range from the maximisation of their power to the infliction of terror in a country or region. Since terrorism, international crimes and disrespect for international regulations and institutions are behaviours that can characterise both state and non-state actors, the difference between them is being reduced. Currently, there are states that behave like gangs and gangs that behave like states.
15. A plethora of actors today can hold a lot of power, which sometimes is very positive, but sometimes can be harmful to the notion of international order. Although analysts tend to generally refer to a large number of states as "emerging powers", it is very important to note that this is a very complex and diverse group. It is very difficult to conceptualise what an emerging power is. The systemic productivity of a country is an important variable, but there are plenty of other variables that should be considered. Which emerging country has the ability and the intention to make international rules, for example? Both persuasion and legitimacy are required for that. Most emerging powers are rule takers, not rule makers, but it is also important to mention that a country can be both at the same time.
16. Even in the case of specific cooperation efforts such as the BRICS initiative, states' expectations, capabilities and intentions can vary widely. Heterogeneity is one of the main characteristics of the BRICS group. On the other hand, some common characteristics can be noted. In general, emerging powers are beneficiaries of globalisation. The BRICS are not trying to defy the system. When the common interests of the G7 are compared with common interests inside the BRICS, there are important similarities.
17. Despite the fact that trade among the BRICS grew more than 1000% since the group was launched, none of these countries see the BRICS as an alliance. It's a new model of relations, in which countries support their partners without "stepping on their toes". BRICS have particular norms and a particular understanding of international norms. This is also a peculiarity of countries that come from other regions. They show frustration over the lack of reform in the international system, but they also are willing to cooperate on some issues.
18. In the last decade, the role of emerging powers has been restricted both by their own limitations and by systemic constraints. Even the coalitions that they have set up are secondary. These countries are not experiencing the kind of influence they expected to have when dealing with international matters.
19. The emergence of China, for example, is seen by some analysts as a threat to the system, but the country has been investing a lot in trying to minimise that perception. In recent years, China has been adapting its economy to meet international parameters and has been accepting requirements related to environmental and social issues, for example. Transnational cooperation and the maintenance of its global ties are essential assets to China and the country's official positions defend a symbiotic coexistence with the rest of the world. Foreign policy originates to a large extent from domestic policy, so it is necessary to understand how domestic forces operate and the values and ideas underpinning those forces in order to comprehend the country's international positions.
20. There is an intense debate about how to accommodate emerging powers, but these discussions can be misplaced. Emerging powers are already part of the international

system, so it is necessary to accept that. The way that issues are phrased is important and can determine the outcome of international negotiations. Established Western powers try to negotiate with the BRICS bilaterally, even when they present themselves as a group. This is likely to continue to be the case unless the BRICS are able to take action as a more cohesive alternative bloc on major international policy issues.

### **Illegitimate use of force**

21. Legitimately, only two kinds of actors, and in very specific conditions, use force: states and the UN. More recently, on the other hand, two phenomena related to the spread of technology have complicated this assertion. Firstly, more actors have been able to use force to more devastating effect, since the tools to do so have become more widespread. Secondly, since technology can minimise the chance of casualties, states with advanced weaponry tend to perceive lower costs when deciding whether to engage in conflicts. These two features have increased the number of actors taking part in conflicts in the international arena.
22. Text It is possible to separate the reasons for which countries normally use force into 5 different categories:
  - a. For classical reasons (such as land and resource disputes);
  - b. When they engage in wars of liberation;
  - c. To maintain critical relations with allies;
  - d. To “set things right” (a response to some form of attack or a pre-emptive conflict);
  - e. For “personal” reasons (regime stability in times of political crises, to divert popular attention away from internal problems, etc.).
23. Two additional characteristics of wars that have been fought during the past several decades appear to be very important. Firstly, there are more conflicts whose legitimacy has been widely challenged under international norms and law . Secondly, even when the international community legitimises a conflict, current wars tend to be resource-intensive processes. Stabilisation, for example, is a political process that takes a lot of time, but is also hard to maintain in the long run due to its resource intensity. Even the most powerful countries in the world have failed to recognise these realities.
24. The characteristic of modern conflicts makes it very hard to recognise when wars end. The idea of exhausting enemies does not always work, since one group can constantly be replaced by another, sometimes with even more damaging strategies. Depending on how a country uses force, it can create stability or plant the seeds of violence even deeper.
25. When one side is winning a conflict, its values and interests are going to prevail. In that sense, to understand what outcomes and environments are going to emerge from a conflict, an analyst should look to both the international and the national levels, but the analysis must consider that the acceptance of the prevalent values and interests by local populations will only rarely happen.
26. The Syrian and the Crimean crises increase the notion that the system needs better ordering tools, but they also highlight some of its strengths and provide some lessons. The international balance of power is decentralised and it is not restricted to the traditional powers. Some of these powers, such as France and the United Kingdom, have been adapting well to this new reality, but others are still trying to renegotiate their role in the new global framework. A competition among different kinds of sovereignty can emerge from this rearrangement.
27. On the other hand, the Ukraine and Syrian crises have also shown that cooperation between regional and global institutions can emerge and help alleviate some of the consequences of these crises. Although the overall effectiveness of these institutions can be questioned, it is clear that they provide the only available mechanisms for

conflict mitigation and resolution. Finally, the most important lesson from these crises is the notion that Western leadership is being strongly challenged. Actors that were traditionally marginalised or did not even previously exist are emerging, and international institutions have not been able to respond to this process. In this specific case, alliances remain very important, although in general alignments tend to be the rule.

28. Besides the above mentioned general challenges to a more balanced international order, three main issues that have been at least qualified if not full successes for the international system may raise significant threats in the near future. These are nuclear proliferation, climate change, and problems with UN peacekeeping operations.
29. The Non-Proliferation Treaty is a very important tool to counter the spread of nuclear weapons, but has been controversial since its start. It froze the world power alignment, differentiating nuclear and non-nuclear states. When doing so, it determined different levels of obligations for different groups without a clear justification for doing so. Today, these differences still apply and basing inspections on a state level approach is also harmful for the regime's acceptance. The nuclear deal between the US and India and the nuclearisation of North Korea are only the most recent challenges to the regime. On the other hand, it is important to emphasise that despite these problems with the regime, nuclear weapons are still under control. This per se is a very significant achievement.
30. Climate change is one of the most important current threats to international order. The demise of the Kyoto Protocol in the 2000s increased the size of the problem, but increasing numbers of states and non-state actors have recognised the importance of the problem, leading to a clear tendency to invest in low carbon technologies. Improvements have been achieved and even without universal support to the Protocol and in the absence of a global institution to regulate the matter, progress is being made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Analysing how cooperation was achieved in this field, even without a single universal institution or clear leadership could produce interesting lessons. If this logic could be replicated in the security area, many gains could possibly be achieved.
31. The UN peacekeeping system is also going through many problems. The system does not work as it was designed to and the main reason for its flaws is the lack of connection between the decision-making process in New York and the reality in the field. Relations between the UN and the actors in the field, such as local governments and NGOs, can be very problematic. There is a coordination problem and a lack of transparency is not unusual. There is often enough money and investments, but the lack of structured plans and priorities harms the ability of UN Missions to deliver clear results to the population. The mandates create expectations that are never achieved, which is very harmful to the UN's image.
32. The UN is a political, not an operational institution. This characteristic strongly affects its capacity to achieve results when using force. There is an evident conflict between states' interests, and therefore the UN's political and operational implementation, and the requirements in the field.
33. Moreover, it is difficult to find answers when factions among local populations support the breaking of international rules and benefit from it. In this case, emphasising values and principles will not help solving the dilemma.
34. The challenges that the international community has been facing today can be considered new, especially when taking into account how global the tools are that transnational actors are using to organise themselves. The tools to create order must also have this global appeal and they need to go through significant reforms, but it is not clear what the basis for these reforms should be.
35. If the international system is close to failing or indeed broken, and if states start worrying enough about the consequences of this reality, they might be more driven to

act. But unfortunately it seems that most states are not really worried about the system as a whole, but solely about the functioning of their alignments. Can this reality change in the coming years?

### **Reinvigorating international order**

36. The challenges mentioned above could be better addressed if a more balanced and legitimate international order was in place. Although this can be seen as a consensual idea, the construction of such an order is a very difficult task as it must be based on a combination of different interests, values and principles. Both the content of these sources and how they are combined are politically defined, so more powerful states tend to remain advantaged by these constructions, which once again can minimise the legitimacy of the new order that might emerge.
37. When trying to understand the new balance of power among states, analysts tend to consider a historical perspective. Power transitions have traditionally happened when one state or an alliance of states tried to become the balancer of the system. Today, a multi-polar world exists, in which there is no state or even configuration of states willing to pay the price of stabilisation by itself. The emergence of new issues and threats has increased the cost and the requirements for stabilisation. Since History does not provide many examples of a stable international order, it is difficult for actors to define their patterns of behaviour. Where are the energy and the power to create a new order?
38. In the 1990s, people became caught up with the idea that the most powerful states could solve global problems. Today, there are more modest ambitions, and it has become clear that the mitigation of major international problems will only come if multi-stakeholder coalitions emerge.
39. The debates about how to reinvigorate international order considered these difficulties and were concentrated on finding possible ways to address them, such as the emergence of more widely accepted principles, values and norms, as well as more stable alliances and institutions.

### **Principles, values and norms**

40. It is important to discuss values and principles, since they regularly represent the basis on which countries establish their international insertion and positions when negotiating agreements. On the other hand, values and principles do not provide policy prescriptions. It is necessary to use them as a starting point, but discussions should concentrate on political interests and consequences.
41. In a more balanced world, how legitimate will wars be? The peaceful resolution of disputes between states is already a widely accepted international principle, and it is interesting to note that even in the case of the most controversial military interventions, such as Iraq in 2003 and Crimea in 2014, the states in question strongly argued that they were in compliance with international law. It is still difficult to imagine a scenario and circumstances in which states stop using wars as a foreign policy tool or international organisations are able to prevent the most powerful ones from resorting to armed force.
42. Countries tend to be selective in the application of values, especially because values are constantly mixed with national self-interest. Values are core ideas and concepts that generate a pattern of behaviour that is presumably universal. If certain values are only applied in specific situations and to a specific group of people, they lose credibility and legitimacy

### **Alliances and alignments**

43. For the most part, the current world is not a world of fixed and stable alliances, but one of ad hoc alignments that deal with specific issues. The continued relevance of NATO,

one of the most significant enduring alliances in history, was undergoing arguably its most meaningful questioning since the end of the Cold War when the Russian intervention in Ukraine gave it reinvigorated purpose.

44. Although it is unlikely that alliances and alignments will deliver the correct answers for every problem, they remain important assets. Their limitations are related to the fact that they normally only represent the interest of their members. A more global approach should be the main goal of the international community, since current challenges can only be solved by global efforts. The international system needs a renewal of multilateralism, which could come from two different actions: a) the strengthening of International Organizations; and b) more emphasis on the role of regional institutions.
45. The potential role of the G20 is very important. If it doesn't work, increased fragmentation will likely result.
46. Some analysts defend the emergence of regional approaches and institutions, but critics argue that a strong concentration on the regional level can undermine the system. There is, in this sense, divergences on the role that should be played by regional entities, because although most of the problems that have been affecting the international arena are global and universal, regional organisations have proven to be successful in addressing certain issues in a way that more global international organisations have not.
47. Although regional approaches have been partially successful, at the state level even Western countries with very largely shared values and principles disagree amongst themselves regarding policy prescriptions. This leads to the idea that interregional consensus can be even harder to achieve.

## **Institutions**

48. The United Nations is and should remain the most important global institution, and it has been successful in dealing with several critical issues. On the other hand, it should be more representative of the world balance.
49. Although there is disagreement on the idea of regional approaches to seek solutions for global problems, the importance of regional institutions stems from their consensual nature. Ideally, they can play a very important role when dealing with local and regional problems. The African Union has been making progress on many regional problems, which is a welcome development.

## **Policy Recommendations**

50. Producing policy recommendations to minimize the challenges to international order is a difficult task for two main reasons: firstly, because shifting and different characterisations of these challenges make it hard for states to come up with solutions. Most of the tools that are proposed are based in historical experiences and neglect to consider a case by case analysis, while current problems are too complex to be solved by generalisations. Secondly, even when possible solutions are formulated, it is difficult to know exactly when and to what extent they should be applied. In general, a combination of policies seems to produce better solutions than the traditional "one size fits all" recipe that has often been used.
51. The last decades have shown that the "are you with us or against us" approach does not work as well as some traditional powers expected. Although more decentralisation of power provokes uneasiness, countries should invest in adapting to this new reality. The idea of a multi-centred world means that there should be no core and therefore no periphery. Even in the toughest negotiations, the door should always be left open for communication, and communication should be based on the understanding that others will not always think in the same ways.
52. International relations are ordered by different combinations of rules and power

distributions among states and other actors. In the financial area, for example, rules tend to be more important than the balance of power among states. In the security field, on the other hand, the respective weight of these elements is different. It is necessary to understand these differences and to look for the more stable combination in each field.

53. States need to understand the differences in dealing with authoritarian, democratic and hybrid powers. It is important not to ignore societal forces in each one of these regimes in order to comprehend their behaviours.
54. A reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC) would be very important, especially to include a bigger representation of African countries. On the other hand, it is important that this process is conducted wisely, since there is a risk that the reform of the Council could weaken the UN. Pragmatism is an important asset when trying to address international problems. There is a need to reframe international institutions and this is a deeper process that needs to go beyond the proposals for reform of the UNSC. Forging new parameters and decision-making processes will be important.
55. A valuable tool to address global problems is to create multi-stakeholder coalitions. These coalitions would produce better results if they were stable and connected to specific issues. A coalition to deal with environmental problems would obviously be different than a coalition related to security ones. This idea can be better understood by comparing domestic and international politics. Domestic coalitions are essential for any government to implement policies, even in the case of authoritarian regimes. Internationally, the same logic can be applied.
56. Universal parameters and points of understanding have been difficult to find. Until more global solutions can be achieved, regional and more ad hoc solutions can help achieve progress, even if they only provide a temporary solution. In Africa, for example, progress has been achieved in several areas by regional institutions and organisations.
57. With regard to the improvement in UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), many recommendations apply:
  - Mandates should be more comprehensive and realistic, which would be better enabled if decision makers had better knowledge about the specificities on the ground.
  - Better connections between force commanders on the ground and the decision makers in New York are very important.
  - Accountability tools should be increased. Corruption has to be criminalised and punished.
  - Better analyses of the local actors that determine the environment for or contribute to Peacekeeping Missions and the capacity of local governments should be a priority. Only when the strengths and weaknesses of local actors are understood can better cooperative results be achieved. Problematic relations with local governments are one of the most important challenges to a PKO. Working with local governments is mandatory, but to understand the best strategies for doing so is a challenge.
58. In relation to international negotiations, the following recommendations apply:
  - Negotiators should undertake proper consultations during the entire process.
  - They shouldn't give up on democracy.
  - It is also important to consider that the achievement of one-sided results is an exception. More balanced approaches tend to create longer- term solutions.
  - Double standards give rise to perceptions of hypocrisy and are very harmful. If a country wants to be accepted as a legitimate deal broker, consistency is very

important.

Language matters. The way that actors frame negotiations can lead to more or less balanced outcomes. It is important to include more voices at the negotiating tables.

59. Specifically tailored arrangements can provide better answers to different problems. It is difficult to imagine that the same kind of configuration will constantly work, since the complexity of international problems has become greater. Even though several analysts seem to think that ad hoc solutions can mean that the system is becoming less stable, there are certain areas in which they are the only feasible solution. When these ad hoc solutions are combined with long existing institutions, stability and the attenuation of problems can be achieved.
60. While it remains difficult to find shared values on which to base the creation of a more balanced order, states and non-state actors should concentrate on shared goals. There are goals related to minimising poverty, reducing the drivers of climate change, and achieving international peace that can be the basis for a more integrated and balanced international order.
61. Emerging powers have, in the past years, sought alternative structures that could be seen as new forms of alignments. But most representatives from these countries assert that this does not mean they do not support the current system, or at least many of its elements, It just means that some goals cannot be achieved through current institutions and therefore they are looking for alternative approaches. There is an understanding that the existence of many forums might be a natural evolution of a complex international environment. Under this point of view, international actors should embrace this diversity and accept that a complex reality can only be dealt with through a combination of different arrangements.

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