



BRICS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO WESTERN HEGEMONY
L.S. Okunev and A.A. Orlov, eds., *Rising BRICS Giants: Their Role in Global Politics and Modernization Strategies* (Moscow: MGIMO-University, 2012), 392 pp.

Review by Anastasia Kovaleva

BRICS has become one of the most promising groups in recent years. This new political player is being watched very closely by the developed countries and the developing nations which pin their hopes on multi-vector diplomacy.

The collection of research papers entitled “Rising BRICS Giants” consists of materials published following a large science conference held by the MGIMO-University in Moscow in 2011. The authors offer a detailed statistical analysis of the BRICS countries’ shared problems, and discuss their international positioning, the distinctive features of their foreign policy, and their modernization strategies. They place particular emphasis on the foreign strategies of the BRICS nations, and on multilateral relations within the RIC subgroup and BRICS as a whole. The experts also try to find an answer to the two questions that are the most pressing for Russia: what is the country’s role in that group, and how will it continue to position itself?

The book reflects the authors’ hypothesis that the role of BRICS in this day and age is to offer an alternative to the emerging Western hegemony. It is an attempt to create a multi-polar world based on mutually complementary cooperation and shared security. Exactly how complementary that cooperation is going to be is still a subject of debate, as different authors offer different views. Some believe that China stands out from among the BRICS states; through its sheer weight, the country is shifting the balance of power, and using its participation in the organization to lobby its economic interests in Africa. That is why they argue that the BRICS group is not an effective mechanism for resolving global problems.

Other experts, however, offer persuasive arguments in favor of integration in the BRICS format. They stress that the participating countries have shared political and economic interests. According to this view, the founding members of the organization are not simply developing economies, but rising emerging-market giants which have many shared goals, such as combating terrorism and piracy, multilateral cooperation, similar views on decision-making within NATO, and the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time, BRICS is primarily a forum for dialogue, as opposed to a new form of economic integration, let alone a military-political union. But it is also a model of redistribution of influence in the world, which represents a transition from a unipolar world to a new and more just world order. In this context, BRICS is also a kind of answer to the crisis of political identity.

Speaking of the problems and prospects for cooperation, the authors highlight that not only China, but India as well, is gaining international clout; they also draw attention to the BRICS countries’ work within the G20 format. A large section of the book is devoted to analyzing relations between the BRICS states, and to answering the important question of whose interests the BRICS group really represents, and what makes it different from the G8 or the G20.



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The key idea for all the member states is the strategy of modernization. Each state has its own strategy, but a particular focus is placed on a comparative analysis of Chinese modernization and Russian reforms.

On the whole, the book covers in great detail the entire range of BRICS-related issues, and systematizes the contradictory views regarding the organization's future. The analysis is backed by an impressive amount of statistical data, enabling readers to make their own assessment of the role of each BRICS country in the formation of a new world order. 🐘