Review of International Studies (2010), 36, 881–901 © *2010 British International Studies Association*
doi:10.1017/S026021051000135X

How to compare regional powers: analytical concepts and research topics

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Abstract. Although the concept of regional power is frequently used in International Relations (IR) literature, there is no consensus regarding the defining characteristics of a regional power. The article discusses different theoretical approaches that address the topic of power hierarchies in international politics and make reference to the concept of regional power. Marking differences as well as common ground with the more traditional concept of 'middle powers', the article outlines an analytical concept of regional powers adequate for contemporary IR research. The analytical dimensions of the framework may be employed to differentiate regional powers from other states and to compare regional powers with regard to their power status or relative power. Furthermore, the article investigates the possible repercussions of the rise of regional powers for international politics and discusses the probable importance and functions of regional governance structures for regional powers.

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Introduction

The debate concerning regional power shifts, the rise of regional powers and the future configuration of the global order has been going on for a while. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, investment bankers promoted the concept of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, China, India) as the future emerging economic powers to prospective investors.[1] Having started as an analytical concept, in June 2009 the BRICs organised their first presidential meeting, making constructivist colleagues in International Relations (IR) theory feel reaffirmed. The research departments of the investment banks prognosticated that at the end of the third or the during the fourth decade of the twenty-first century China will have overtaken the US as the largest economy, and that India may follow suit in the second half of the century.[2]

[1] Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, 'Dreaming With BRICs: The Path to 2050', Goldman Sachs, Global Economics Paper No. 99, London (2003).
[2] Goldman Sachs, *BRICs and Beyond* (London 2007). This study also includes the 'Next-11': Mexico, Nigeria, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. See also, Deutsche Bank Research, 'Globale Wachstumszentren 2020. Formel-G für 34 Volkswirtschaften' Aktuelle Themen No. 313, Frankfurt (2005).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021051000135X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Other researchers have extended the BRIC concept to the BRIC plus[3] and to the BRICSAM countries with the objective of putting more emerging (economic) powers on our radar screen.[4] The latter include Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, some (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand) and Mexico.

In 1999 Samuel Huntington[5] made the prediction that global politics will pass through one or two uni-multipolar decades before it enters a truly multipolar twenty-first century. With the global financial crisis underway since 2008, one may ask whether the previously mentioned trends with regard to a power shift and a reconfiguration of the global order will be reinforced.[6] The crisis appears to benefit the rising powers, as the proliferation of multilateral and interregional forums (G 8, G 8 + 5, G 20, BRICs, IBSA, etc.) gives them more voice in the emerging global governance structure.[7] Moreover, the new global governance structures tend to reflect both the relative political-economic weight of these rising powers as well as the fact that they represent different world regions in these more or less formalised international institutions. At the same time, one can observe a strengthening and extension of regional organisations, for example, in Asia[8] and Latin America.[9]

So on the one hand, the claim seems to be substantiated – namely, that regions will play an important role in the future world order, that we live in a world of regions,[10] that there is an emerging regional architecture of world politics,[11] and that a 'multiregional system of international relations'[12] is in the making. On the other hand, the ongoing discussion about the rise of regional powers[13] is gaining new steam. What are the consequences for the corresponding regional orders? What are the repercussions for the global order? Will international politics become more conflict prone?

[3] The 'BRIC plus' include Brazil, Russia, India, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey; Timothy M. Shaw, Andrew F. Cooper, and Agata Antkiewicz, 'Global and/or Regional Development at the Start of the 21st Century? China, India and (South) Africa', *Third World Quarterly*, 28:7 (2007), pp. 1255–70.

[4] Andrew F. Cooper, Agata Antkiewicz, and Timothy M. Shaw, 'Economic Size Trumps All Else? Lessons from BRICSAM', CIGI Working Paper No. 12, Waterloo (December 2006); Manmohan Agarwal, 'The BRICSAM Countries and Changing World Economic Power: Scenarios to 2050', CIGI Working Paper No. 39, Waterloo (October 2008).

[5] Samuel Huntington, 'The Lonely Superpower', *Foreign Affairs*, 78:2 (1999), pp. 35–49.

[6] Randall Germain, 'Financial order and world politics: crisis, change and continuity', *International Affairs*, 85:4 (2009), pp. 669–87.

[7] Andrew F. Cooper and Agata Antkiewicz, *Emerging Powers in Global Governance. Lessons from the Heiligendamm Process* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008).

[8] Evelyn Goh, 'Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia', *International Security*, 32 (2007/2008), pp. 113–57; for a critical view on East Asian regionalism, see John Ravenhill, 'East Asian regionalism: Much Ado about Nothing?', *Review of International Studies*, 35:S1 (2009), pp. 215–35.

[9] Diana Tussie, 'Latin America: contrasting motivations for regional projects', *Review of International Studies*, 35:S1 (2009), pp. 169–88; Carlos Malamud, 'Four Latin American Summits and Brazil's Leadership', Real Instituto Elcano, Working Paper No. 3, Madrid (2009).

[10] Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[11] Amitav Acharya, 'The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics', *World Politics*, 59:4 (July 2007), pp. 629–52.

[12] Andrew Hurrell, 'One world? Many worlds? The place of regions in the study of international society', *International Affairs*, 83:1 (2007), pp. 127–46.

[13] See the special issue of *International Affairs*, 82:1 (2006) on regional and emerging powers.

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But what constitutes regional power, and which countries currently classify as regional powers? At first glance it is not too difficult to identify the usual suspects: China, India, Brazil and South Africa. In addition, some analysts would also include Mexico, Nigeria, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia and perhaps Israel.[14] But some of these countries have also been classified as middle powers, and a few of the above-mentioned regional powers have been credited with great-power status. It can thus be said that there is a general lack of analytical instruments to identify and to compare regional powers, and to differentiate regional powers from great powers and middle powers. Perhaps a major difficulty in coming to grips with the concept of regional powers is related to the fact that it comprises two terms – 'region' and 'power' – that are conceptualised quite differently in IR theory, with great variation with regard to their meaning. As a result, if you add up two ambiguous or multifaceted concepts, the semantic problems will not balance each other; instead, they will accumulate. As a consequence, the research topic of regional powers is a complex and multifaceted one.

This article as well as the other contributions to this special section will deal more with the power component of regional powers than with the concept of region.[15] There is still a lack of analytical tools and empirical research with regard to how regional powers exercise influence in their corresponding regions. And there is a lack of instruments to delineate the configuration of regional power hierarchies[16] and to measure the real influence of regional powers in their respective regions. The articles of this section deal with these topics/issues both in a theoretical and in an empirical way, combining different IR approaches.

When we analyse regional powers, it is necessary to combine different approaches in IR theory. A narrow realist, liberal, or constructivist approach is not sufficient to capture the complexity of this subject matter. The structure of the international and the regional systems (the distribution of power resources and the polarity) constitute an important stimulus for the rise of regional powers, so the realists and neo-realists may feel that their perspective is validated. But ideas about leadership, about the aspired international or regional order or about the boundaries of the region also matter. So our constructivist colleagues also have a point. Last but not least, from a liberal perspective, the political and economic dynamics within the prospective regional powers are important factors that have an impact on the exercise of regional leadership. Therefore, most approaches to

[14] The internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia presents the most all-embracing list of regional powers. The list includes India, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Israel, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, France, United Kingdom Germany, Russia. Robert. A. Pastor (ed.), *A Century's Journey. How the Great Powers Shape the World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 25. includes among the regional powers: Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. China is ranked as a great power.

[15] More than ten years ago Barry Buzan remarked: 'The concept of region is widely used and seldom very clearly defined.' Barry Buzan, 'The Asia-Pacific: what sort region in what sort of world?', in Christopher Brook and Anthony McGrew (eds), *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order* (London: Routledge 1998), p. 68. The same applies for much of the current debate on regions in international politics. For a summary of the current research with regard to the study of regions and future research topics see Rick Fawn, 'Regions" and their study: wherefrom, what for and whereto?', *Review of International Studies*, 35:S1 (2009), pp. 5–34.

[16] David Lake's study, 'Regional hierarchy: authority and local international order', *Review of International Studies*, 35:S1 (2009), pp. 35–58 focuses on the influence (relational authority) of the US in different world regions; perhaps some of his indicators may be adapted to the analysis of the influence of regional powers within their regions.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021051000135X Published online by Cambridge University Press

conceptualising regional powers combine elements of different IR approaches; they include the internal power base (liberal), the power resources (realist) and their application (realist), role definitions and strategies (constructivist), and interaction patterns in the region with a special emphasis on the role of regional institutions

Currently, there are few regions or sub-regions that demonstrate the clear dominance of a regional power. The norm is competing power centres and a leadership that is often contested. In many regions minor powers have the option of cultivating special relations with the global superpower, and this is meant to limit the influence of the prospective regional powers. Thus, the relationship between the regional power and the corresponding region can be ambiguous and encumbering. Regions can reduce rather than increase the power projection of regional powers on the global level; the troubles in the backyard can be burdensome.[17]

This introductory article discusses different IR concepts and theories related to the study of regional powers, develop some analytical tools for the study of such regional powers and identify future research topics. It first discusses different theoretical approaches within the IR literature that may be useful for the analysis of regional powers and power shifts in the 21st century. It addresses the differences between regional powers and alternative concepts such as middle powers, and it presents an analytical concept which can be used as a tool to identify, analyse and compare states that aspire to the status of a regional power. Philip Nel and Matthew Stephen make a good point in this respect when they argue that we should refer to regional aspirations rather than leadership achievements.[18] However, the analysis and conceptualisation of regional powers should not stop at this point.

It should not be taken for granted that each region quasi-automatically produces its regional power. Instead, this is an open empirical question. Therefore, an analytical framework will be developed that can be used to take a closer look at states that are powerful (with regard to their material resources or capabilities) in a certain regional geographic setting and which try to exercise leadership in this regional setting. Furthermore, the analytical framework may help us to differentiate between different types of regional powers and regional leadership, a topic that is dealt with in the articles by Destradi and Nabers in this section.

Extending the topic of regional powers and regional power hierarchies, the article deals with the questions of what might be the dominant pattern of regional hegemony in the first decades of the 21st century and how regional powers might exploit or depend on regional governance structures as part of their strategy for achieving regional hegemony. Finally, the article delineates future research topics with regard to the challenges for regional leadership in a multipolar world and provides a short summary of the other articles in this section.

Power hierarchies and power shifts in IR theory

The topic of regional powers delineates a research area that combines a geographic concept – region – with a basic concept of International Relations theory – power.

[17] Hurrell, 'One world'.

[18] Philip Nel and Matthew Stephen, 'Agents of Change? The Foreign Economic Policies of the IBSA States', in Daniel Flemes (ed.), *Regional Leadership in the Global System: Ideas, Interests and Strategies of Regional Powers* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2010), pp. 71–90.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021051000135X Published online by Cambridge University Press

It refers to power hierarchies in the international system. Power has been a central concept of the realist tradition in IR, and it has been defined as control over resources – principally military resources. Other authors have conceptualised power as a relationship between two actors (states),[19] as in Joseph Nye's definition.[20] Power may have an ideational component, as in the concept of authority used by Lake[21] or in the concept of productive power by Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall.[22] Other articles in this section will deal extensively with the concepts of power and hegemony and how they may apply to regional powers.

While in the scientific literature and in the mass media the status of the US as the only remaining superpower (or hyperpower)[23] and the 'number one' in the international power hierarchy is not contested (with some variations in regard to the dominance in different power dimensions[24] and a once again growing literature on America in decline and the post-American world),[25] there is much less consensus as to the further characteristics of the international power hierarchy. Not even with regard to the terminology – secondary powers, second-tier states, great powers, intermediate states, middle powers, middle-tier states, regional (great) powers, to enumerate some examples – do the different authors or scientific approaches agree. The same applies to the semantic discrimination with regard to the concepts of great power, regional power and middle power.

This article will now make a brief reference to those approaches in IR theory that are most suitable for both the analysis of regional power hierarchies and the status of regional powers in the global power hierarchy. Martin Wight, in his classical text *Power Politics* (first published in 1946), differentiates, for example, between dominant powers, great powers and minor powers. He sets apart two categories of states: regional great powers and middle powers. The interests of regional great powers are focused on a limited region where they can act on their own accord. Regional great powers are potential candidates for the status of middle powers in the international system.[26] In contrast, middle powers are

[19] David A. Baldwin, 'Power and International Relations', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage 2002), pp. 177–91.

[20] 'Power is the ability to effect the outcomes you want, and if necessary, to change the behavior of others to make this happen.' Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 4.

[21] David A. Lake, 'Escape from the State of Nature. Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics', *International Security*, 32:1 (2007), pp. 47–79; Lake, 'Regional hierarchy'.

[22] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization*, 59:1 (2005), pp. 39–75.

[23] Amy Chua, *Day of Empire. How Hyperpowers Rise to Global Dominance – and Why They Fall* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

[24] For a summary of different indicators of US dominance see G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno and William C. Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, State Behavior, and Systemic Consequences', *World Politics*, 61:1 (2009), pp. 1–27.

[25] See the title of *Foreign Affairs*, 87:3 (May/June 2008); Michael Cox, 'Is the US in Decline-again?', *International Affairs*, 83:4 (2007), pp. 643–53; Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008); for an opposite or balanced point of view, see Stephen G. Brooks and William Wohlforth, 'Reshaping the World Order', *Foreign Affairs*, 88:2 (2009), pp. 49–63; Cristopher Layne, 'The Waning of US Hegemony – Myth or Reality?', *International Security*, 34:1 (2009), pp. 147–72; Germain, 'Financial order'.

[26] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull et al. (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1978), p. 63.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021051000135X Published online by Cambridge University Press

classified on the basis of their power in comparison with great powers, and power is, first of all, military power.[27]

Another and more up-to-date analytical approach that explicitly deals with power hierarchies in international politics is the so-called power transition theory originally formulated by A. F. K. Organski.[28] In contrast to realist balance-of-power theories, power transition theory posits a hierarchical international system with a dominant power at the top and great powers, middle powers and small powers subordinated to it. The hierarchy reflects the distribution of power resources and is based on political and economic resource allocation patterns that serve the dominant power.

In an extension of power transition theory, Douglas Lemke has developed a multiple hierarchy model.[29] Instead of one international hierarchy of power, the international power hierarchy consists of a series of parallel and superposed power hierarchies.[30] The subsystems[31] function according to the same logic as the overall power hierarchy – each of the regional or sub-regional systems has a dominant state at the top of the regional or sub-regional power pyramid. The regional or sub-regional subsystems are subordinated to the global power hierarchy. The dominant power in the global hierarchy, and also other great powers, can interfere in the sub-systems, especially if the local *status quo* is at odds with the global dominant power's preferences or the global patterns of political and economic resource allocation. Other issues – such as the delimitation of boundaries and territorial control in the region/sub-region – can be resolved within the framework of the regional/sub-regional power hierarchy. They are part of the regional/sub-regional *status quo*.

Regional power hierarchies are also central to another theoretical approach. In the framework of their regional security complex theory(RSCT), Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver[32] differentiate between superpowers and great powers which act and have an impact on the global level (or system level) and regional powers whose influence may be large in their regions but have less of an impact at the global level. This category of regional powers includes Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq,

[27] 'A middle power is a power with such military strength, resources and strategic position that in peacetime the great powers bid for its support, and in wartime, while it has no hope of winning a war against a great power, it can hope to inflict costs on a great power out of proportion to what the great power can hope to gain by attacking it.' Wight, 'Power Politics', p. 65. Other authors emphasise size (population) and economic power (GDP) as long-term preconditions for middle-power status. See, Paul Kelly, 'Punching Above Our Weight', *Policy*, 20:2 (2004), pp. 29–34.

[28] A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); Jacek Kugler and A. F. K. Organski, 'The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation', in: Manus I. Midlarski (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 171–94; Ronald L. Tammen et al., *Power Transitions Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2000).

[29] Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace* (Cambridge/New York: CUP, 2002).

[30] Huntington, 'Lonely Superpower', p. 36, also conceives of a multi-level hierarchy. On top is the US as the single superpower. At a second level are the 'major regional powers' – the German-French condominium in Europe, Russia in Eurasia, China and potentially Japan in East Asia, India in South Asia, Iran in Southwest Asia, Brazil in Latin America, South Africa and Nigeria in Africa – and a third level is composed of secondary regional powers.

[31] Lemke's definition of a region is very restrictive, based on the power projection capabilities of states, and results in a great number of small regions.

[32] Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Barry Buzan, *The US and the Great Powers. World politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

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Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey. The status of a great power requires material resources together with the formal recognition of the power's status by other great powers as well as observable repercussions on the operation of the international system and the behaviour of other great powers (or superpowers).

Regional powers define the structure (polarity) of any regional security complex. Their power capabilities might be considerable, but they are restricted to the regional context. Higher-level powers from outside the region don't take them into account in their global power calculations. Buzan and Wæver[33] have devised their typology in order to analyse regional security policies and complexes. It would be interesting to expand their analytical scheme – for example, with respect to the analysis of the distribution of economic power – to create a multi-dimensional power model (including economic and soft-power resources) for the study of the regional and global power distribution.

Neither global nor regional power hierarchies are stable. What are the consequences of power shifts? There exist more or less conflict-prone, benign and open-ended scenarios, for example, with regard to the future relationship between the US and China, the latter of which is seen as a possible challenger to a US-dominated world.[34] As an illustration, the article will discuss two contrasting IR approaches which have a direct impact on foreign policy discourses and foreign policy strategies.

Power and the struggle over predominance and the creation of a balance of power are outstanding topics in the realist approach to IR. In this respect, regional hegemonies and great powers are very important. According to one realist vision of IR, the current unipolar (or uni-multipolar) constellation of US hegemony can only be transformed if regional unipolarities, that is, regional hegemonies, are established.[35] These regional hegemonic powers could attempt to create a counterbalancing factor against the US.[36] At the same time, it is possible that countries in the regions themselves could form counter-alliances against the emerging regional power. This process could be boosted by the leading global power.

In his theoretical framework of 'offensive realism', John Mearsheimer[37] postulates that great powers strive for hegemony in their own region of reference. At the same time, they try to frustrate other great powers' efforts to gain hegemony in their respective regions. Great powers don't like peer competitors. Instead, they are interested in ensuring that several states compete for regional leadership in

[33] Buzan and Wæver, 'Regions'.

[34] Jacek Kugler and Ronald L. Tammen, 'Regional challenge: China's Rise to Power', in Jim Rolfe (ed.), *The Asia-Pacific: A Region in Transition* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004), pp. 33–53; William H. Overholt, *Asia, America, and the Transformation of Geopolitics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); G. John Ikenberry, 'The Rise of China and the Future of the West', *Foreign Affairs*, 87:1 (2008), pp. 23–7.

[35] William C. Wohlfort, 'The Stability of a Unipolar World', *International Security*, 24:1 (1999), p. 30.

[36] T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, *Balance of Power. Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). With regard to the topic of soft balancing: Robert A. Pape, 'Soft Balancing against the US', *International Security*, 30:1 (2005), pp. 7–45; T. V. Paul, 'Soft Balancing in the Age of US Primacy', *International Security*, 30:1 (2005), pp. 46–71.

[37] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York/London: Norton, 2001); John J. Mearsheimer, 'Better to Be Godzilla than Bambi; Showing the US the Door; It's Not a Pretty Picture', *Foreign Policy*, 146 (January/February 2005), pp. 47–8.

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other regions but not in their own. From a US point of view, it has been a great advantage that, in the past, no state in the western hemisphere has posed a serious threat to US security or survival. For this reason the US has been free to cause troubles in the backyards of other potential regional hegemonic powers. Therefore, the US suspects that emerging regional powers could try to build beachheads in its own backyard. In this context, the growing economic presence of China in South America is perceived as a challenge to US security. This is especially the case with regard to access to scarce raw materials (first of all oil). On the other hand, there exist suspicions that some Latin American countries, while playing the Chinese card, could steer a more independent course in their relations with the US. The Chinese presence in the western hemisphere is perceived as a sign of the erosion of both the power and the geopolitical position of the US in the region.

In contrast to realist balance-of-power theories, power transition theory maintains that the international system is stable if there is a dominant power at the top. States accept their position in the international order and recognise that influence is based on differences in the power distribution among nations. In contrast, instability and the probability of conflict increase during periods of relative power parity among potential competitors in the international system. In this view, the conditions for a peaceful international order are more propitious when the dominant power has a large power advantage over potential contenders. The dominant power defines and enforces the rules of the international order. These rules project the political and economic resource allocation patterns which the dominant power employs domestically to the international level.[38] This provides not only material gains for the dominant power but also legitimacy for its leadership and the guiding principles of the international order because they have been proven to be successful domestically.

Contrary to realist approaches, power transition theory posits that international competition between states is driven not by the states' ambition to maximise their power but rather by their aim to maximise the net gains that could be accrued from the competition for scarce resources in the international order. The international order is stable as long as the great powers and potential power contenders are satisfied with the distribution of benefits and the rules by which it is run.[39] The system becomes unstable when a great power possesses power resources[40] comparable to those of the dominant power and is dissatisfied with the way the international order functions. The combination of parity and dissatisfaction is dangerous. In such a constellation, conflicts and wars are possible but not inevitable. If the declining dominant state is able to negotiate a satisfactory compromise between the demands of the rising state and its own requirements, a peaceful power transition is possible, as the transfer of international leadership from the UK to the US demonstrates.[41]

[38] Lemke, 'Regions', p. 22.
[39] Kugler and Organski, 'Power Transition'.
[40] Power is a combination of the population (number), the economic productivity (GDP per capita) and the effectiveness of the political system (political capacity) to mobilise human and material resources.
[41] Jacek Kugler, 'The Asian Ascent: Opportunity for Peace or Precondition for War?', *International Studies Perspectives*,7:1 (2006), p. 40.

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The approaches presented so far are based mostly on structural characteristics such as the distribution of power capabilities. However, for the analysis of regional powers, it is necessary to connect structural elements with strategies and the outcome of such strategies (regional orders). This article agrees with the different analytical approaches which posit that it makes sense to act not on the assumption of only one global power hierarchy but rather on the presupposition of a parallel and superposed system of global, regional and, in some cases, sub-regional power hierarchies which are in a permanent process of interaction. Regional powers are the nodes between the global and the regional power hierarchies.[42] The stability of a regional power hierarchy depends on the perceived net gains of the involved states. The influence of outside great powers on regional power hierarchies will vary according to the strength of the regional power and the policy arenas. Regional powers are at variance in regard to their influence on the global layer. Some are very influential in their own region but exert little influence on a global scale.

Regional powers and middle powers

Up to now we have not had persuasive indicators and analytical models[43] for the definition and conceptualisation of the different dimensions that characterise a regional power.[44] States, which are usually listed as regional powers, generally display a large population in the regional context and a high GDP. They possess strong conventional armed forces and in some cases also nuclear weapons.

While there are some hints as to how to differentiate between great powers and regional powers, there is still the problem of making a clear-cut distinction between regional powers and middle powers. At the same time, it may be useful to further dissect the category of minor powers within the region. Perhaps not all potential followers have the same importance for a regional power in the making.

In one of the small number of publications on regional powers in the IR literature[45] a regional great power is defined as

- a state which is geographically a part of the delineated region,
- a state which is able to stand up against any coalition of other states in the region,
- a state which is highly influential in regional affairs,
- a state which, contrary to a 'middle power', might also be a great power on a world scale in addition to its regional standing.[46]

[42] Brantly Womack, 'Teoría de la asimetría y poderes regionales: los casos de India, Brasil y Sudáfrica', in Juan Gabriel Tokatlian (ed.), *India, Brasil y Sudafrica: el impacto de las nuevas potencias regionales* (Buenos Aires: Libros del Zorzal, 2007), pp. 15–34.

[43] An exception is Stefan Schirm, 'Führungsindikatoren und Erklärungsvariablen für die neue internationale Politik Brasiliens', *Lateinamerika Analysen*, 11 (2005), pp. 110–11; Stefan A. Schirm, 'Leaders in Need of Followers: Emerging Powers in Global Governance', *European Journal of International Relations* (2009).

[44] This may be a reflection of the lack of consensus with regard to the concept of power. See, Felix Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (eds), *Power in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2007).

[45] Iver B. Neumann (ed.), *Regional Great Powers in International Politics* (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

[46] Oyvind Osterud, 'Regional Great Powers', in Iver B. Neumann (ed.), *Regional Great Powers in International Politics* (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 12.

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Contrary to this differentiation between regional (great) powers and middle powers, a revision of the relevant literature reveals that it is sometimes quite difficult to discriminate in a clear-cut way between the new concept of regional power and the traditional concept of middle power. Quite a few of the actual candidates for regional leadership are also listed as middle powers – for example, India, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa.[47] To complicate things even more, in the most recent scientific literature there is a differentiation made between traditional middle powers – for example, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries – which in some measure are losing influence, and new emerging regional powers or emerging middle powers.[48] This category includes, for example, South Africa, India and Brazil.

It is important to highlight the differences and common connotations with regard to the concepts of '*regional power*' and '*middle power*'. While traditional middle powers are, first and foremost, defined by their role in international politics, the new middle powers are, first of all, regional powers (or regional leaders) and, in addition, middle powers (with regard to their power resources) on a global scale. For a better discrimination between middle powers and regional powers it makes sense to differentiate between a leading power, which is defined by means of its power resources, self-conception, and leadership.[49] Leadership refers to political influence in diplomatic forums, which could be exercised by middle powers. Regional powers usually combine leadership and power over resources.

Regional powers, in contrast to middle powers, have to bear a special responsibility for regional security and for the maintenance of order in the region. However, in order to fulfil this role, regional powers – in our terminology and emerging middle powers in the terminology of Maxi Schoeman[50] – have to meet various conditions:

- The internal dynamics of such a state should allow it to play a stabilising and leading role in its region.'
- Such a state 'should indicate and demonstrate its willingness, and of course also its capacity or ability, to assume the role of regional leader, stabiliser and, if not peacekeeper, or at least peacemaker'.
- 'Should be acceptable to its neighbours – the members of the security complex in which it operates – as a leader responsible for regional security. A broader, or extra-regional acceptance is perhaps a necessary condition, but not sufficient, even if supported and promoted by big powers.'

[47] Andrew F. Cooper (ed.), *Niche Diplomacy. Middle Powers after the Cold War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); Jan van der Westhuizen, 'South Africa's emergence as a middle power', *Third World Quarterly*, 19:3 (1998), pp. 435–56; Andrew Hurrell, 'Some Reflections on the Role of Intermediate Powers in International Institutions', in Andrew Hurrell et al., 'Paths to Power: Foreign Policy Strategies of Intermediate States', Latin American Program. Woodrow Wilson International Center, Working Paper No. 244, Washington, DC (2000) pp. 3–4; Maxi Schoeman, 'South Africa as an Emerging Middle Power: 1994–2003', in John Daniel, Adam Habib and Roger Southall (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2003–2004* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2003), pp. 349–67; Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony, liberalism and global order: what space for would-be great powers?', *International Affairs*, 82:1 (2006), pp. 1–19.

[48] Schoeman, 'South Africa'; David Dewitt and Ryerson Christie, 'Los poderes medios y la seguridad regional', in Tokatlian, 'India, Brasil y Sudafrica', pp. 55–96.

[49] On the topic of leadership, see Joseph S. Nye, *The Powers to Lead: Soft, Hard, and Smart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[50] Schoeman, 'South Africa', p. 353.

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While it might be possible to discriminate in a more or less clear-cut manner between regional powers and middle powers, some reflections and research approaches applied in the analysis of traditional middle powers can be adapted productively to the analysis of regional powers, since many regional powers currently utilise strategies which are attributed to traditional middle powers. Because of the ongoing power disequilibrium in many political areas between the existing regional powers and the only (military) superpower (US), one can argue that, when they try to assert their interests, regional powers often have to resort to strategies normally attributed to middle powers. So, traditional middle powers have been credited with a special interest in international institutions or in forming coalitions in such institutions, both of which serve the objective of constraining the power of stronger states.[51] In many regions the conflicts over power and influence will increasingly come to be settled within the framework of such institutions.[52] Therefore, the power of traditional middle powers as well as of new regional powers could be measured, among other things, by means of the influence they bring to bear on the structure of international institutions and regional institutions. This article agrees with Andrew Hurrell that

> institutions are not just concerned with liberal purposes of solving common problems or promoting shared values. They are also sites of power and reflect and entrench power hierarchies and the interest of powerful states. Indeed sovereignty may be increasingly defined not by power to insulate one's state from external influences but by the power to participate effectively in international institutions of all kinds.[53]

At the same time one has to take into account that, from the perspective of regional powers, global and regional institutions comply with different functions.[54] They may be used, in the first case, as an instrument to balance other great powers or the US, and in the second case, they may be an instrument of domination and a mechanism to keep other powers out of the region.

Like traditional middle powers[55] many regional powers favour a multilateral and cooperative approach in international politics, and articulate a preference for international / regional institutions. This preference attaches special importance to two categories of states: On the one hand, regional powers have to take into account states with relatively high power capabilities (and possible challengers of the regional power) – Samuel Huntington[56] uses the term 'secondary regional powers'. On the other hand, there might be a category of states that may be denominated 'regional middle powers' (it may be that this label will cause confusion because it is confounded with the traditional middle-power concept).

[51] Denis Stairs, 'Of medium powers and middling roles', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Statecraft and Security. The Cold War and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 270–86; Andrew F. Cooper, 'The Evolution of Multilateralism in an Intermediate State: The Re-orientation of Canadian Strategy in the Economic and Security Arenas', in Andrew Hurrell et al., 'Paths to Power: Foreign Policy Strategies of Intermediate States', Latin American Program. Woodrow Wilson International Center, Working Paper No. 244, Washington, DC (2000); Hurrell, 'Some Reflections'.

[52] With regard to Southeast Asia see, Goh, 'Great Powers'.

[53] Hurrell, 'Some Reflections', pp. 3–4.

[54] Hurrell, 'Hegemony', p. 11.

[55] According to Robert O. Keohane's 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics', *International Organizations*, 23:2 (1969), p. 296, a middle power is 'a state whose leaders consider that it cannot act alone effectively, but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution'.

[56] Huntington, 'Lonely Superpower'.

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Regional powers depend on the cooperation (or at least toleration / acquiescence) of both the 'secondary regional powers' and the 'regional middle powers' when they try to assert their interests in the region and partially as well at the global level. They constitute a special category of followers. Traditional middle powers (at the global level) display a specific political approach of coalition building and cooperation, in which they can act as a catalyser or a 'facilitator'. In a similar manner 'regional middle powers' are highly valued cooperation partners for regional powers of the corresponding region.[57]

The difficulty of classifying a state as a regional power is related to the fact that this status has to do not only with power resources (hard and soft power or smart power – the right combination of hard and soft power)[58] but also with perceptions about the configuration of global and regional power hierarchies. It also has to do with the role definitions of political elites regarding a country's position within such power hierarchies.

Therefore, self-conception, which is important for the classification as regional power, constitutes another link to the scientific literature on middle powers. Most authors do not refer to specific objective criteria or resources (GDP, military power, etc.) to differentiate middle powers from great powers or less powerful states. Rather, they define a middle power from a constructivist point of view as a self-created identity or an ideology for the conduct of foreign policy. Therefore, what applies for great powers is also true for middle powers and regional powers: 'You can claim Great Power status but membership of the club of Great Powers is a social category that depends on recognition by others – by your peers in the club, but also by smaller and weaker states willing to accept the legitimacy and authority of those at the top of the international hierarchy. So a constructivist approach would view power hierarchies in terms of shared understandings that develop amongst groups of states.'[59] The status of middle power or regional power is a social category that depends on the recognition of this status and the corresponding power hierarchy by other states. Nevertheless, inclusion in this social category also presupposes the corresponding material resources.

For that reason Stefan Schirm,[60] in his definition of regional power, combines power resources ('hard power') with the role definition and the perception of the regional power by other states. He proposes the following criteria for the classification of a state as a regional power:

- The articulated claim for leadership as rule maker, which is part of the state's own role definition and is communicated to other actors/states.
- The material and organisational resources for regional and international power projection (power over resources).
- Activities to honour the claim of leadership and to mobilise power resources.
- The recognition and acceptance of leadership status by other actors/states in the region and outside of the region.
- Real political influence in the region (power over outcomes).

[57] Especially as we can identify a trend since the 1990s towards stronger interregional networks of middle powers. See Cooper, 'Niche diplomacy', pp. 17–9.
[58] Nye, 'Powers to lead'.
[59] Hurrell, 'Some Reflections', p. 3.
[60] Schirm, 'Führungsindikatoren'; Schirm, 'Leaders'.

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The compliance with these criteria is variable, so the claim of regional leadership can be substantiated differently. The same is true with regard to the material resources to support the leadership claim.

Before proposing a definition of regional power, it should be clarified that the label used depends on the topic one is interested in analysing. Thus, the same object or country could be labelled differently, as great power, middle power or regional power. Therefore, these concepts are not mutually exclusive; in a certain way, they can be complementary. The label 'regional power' refers to countries which are influential and powerful in certain geographic regions or sub-regions (especially in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East). The same states could be middle powers or great powers in the global context. In short, the concept of 'regional power' delineates a research programme that refers to regional power hierarchies and places the focus on the question of whether a regional power exists in the corresponding regions, what the reasons for that are, and what the implications of its existence or absence are.

Based on the preceding discussion, this article proposes an analytical concept that includes both some core criteria to identify regional powers as well as some further analytical dimensions for the comparison of different regional powers. We expect that different regional powers will comply in a different way with these criteria and that there may be a fragmented or faceted regional leadership.

A regional power is defined as a state

- which articulates the pretension (self-conception) of a leading position in a region that is geographically, economically and political-ideationally delimited;
- which displays the material (military, economic, demographic), organisational (political) and ideological resources for regional power projection;
- which truly has great influence in regional affairs (activities and results).

In addition, it is expected that a regional power is a state

- which is economically, politically and culturally interconnected with the region;
- which influences in a significant way the geopolitical delimitation and the political-ideational construction of the region;
- which exerts this influence by means of regional governance structures;
- which defines and articulates a common regional identity or project;
- which provides a collective good for the region or participates in a significant way in the provision of such a collective good;
- which defines the regional security agenda in a significant way;
- whose leading position in the region is recognised or at least respected by other states inside and outside of the region, especially by other regional powers;
- which is integrated in interregional and global forums and institutions where it articulates not only its own interests but acts as well, at least in a rudimentary way, as a representative of regional interests.

It is not taken for granted that each region quasi-automatically produces its regional power. Instead, this is an open empirical question. Therefore, this article develops an analytical concept intended to take a closer look at those states that are powerful (with regard to their material resources) in a certain regional

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geographic setting (and perhaps in the global context) and which try to exercise leadership in this regional setting. The concept provides a checklist for the identification and comparison of regional powers.

Based on this analytical framework, the following further research questions may arise:

- What is the relative weight of material and ideational factors for the rise and consolidation of regional powers?
- What are the implications of the absence of a regional power for the corresponding region?
- What are the implications of the interplay between regional and global power projections?
- What are the repercussions of the existence of a regional power for conflict resolution and regional institutionalisation?[61]

Regional hegemony and regional institutions

Regional leaders need regional followers. The question of defining and conceptualising 'followership' is an important one. The same applies to the strategies of regional powers that may be conducive to creating allegiance and a following. What kind of strategies are at the disposal of regional powers? What are the reactions and strategies of minor powers or, more importantly, 'secondary powers' in the region with regard to the strategies of regional powers? Recent research[62] on the regional architecture and the power hierarchy in Southeast Asia demonstrates that the influence of minor or secondary powers on the configuration of a region and its institutional architecture could be quite significant.

Until now the relationship between regional hegemony and regionalism or *regional governance* has barely been explored.[63] What is the role of regional powers with regard to the processes of political and economic cooperation / integration in the corresponding regions? What importance and function do regional governance structures have for regional powers and great powers outside of the region? From a US point of view,[64] a strategy of embedding the middle powers, middle-tier states or regional powers – explicitly mentioned are China and India – in regional multilateral institutions may offer an opportunity to influence their behaviour and make their actions more calculable. But the same institutions can also be used as instruments of discrimination and exclusion against other states. At the same time, the shape of the institutions of regional governance can be used as an indicator for the power distribution in the region and the type of regional hegemony. For strong

[61] See Douglas Lemke, 'Dimensions of Hard Power: Regional Leadership and Material Capabilities', in Daniel Flemes (ed.), *Regional Leadership in the Global System: Ideas, Interests and Strategies of Regional Powers* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 31–50.

[62] Goh, 'Great Powers'.

[63] Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony and Regional Governance in the Americas', in Louise Fawcett and Monica Serrano (eds), *Regionalism and Governance in the Americas. Continental Drift* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), pp. 185–208.

[64] Hugh De Santis, 'The Dragon and the Tigers. China and Asian Regionalism', *World Policy Journal*, 22:2 (2000), pp. 23–36; G. John Ikenberrry, 'Power and liberal order: America's post war world order in transition', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 5:2 (2005), pp. 133–52.

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states (rule makers) regional institutions are often more cost-effective and reliable instruments for dominance. For weaker states – as rule takers – regional institutions offer an opportunity:[65] (1) to constrain the freedom of the powerful states by means of established rules and procedures; (2) to make their interests known in a broader forum and by this means garner the support of other states and, (3) to provide political space for the building of coalitions to lay down new norms that are congruent with their interests or can restrain the influence of the more powerful states.

However, according to the concept of cooperative hegemony[66] the processes of regional institutionalisation are best explained by the interests and strategies of the strongest state in the region – in our terminology, the regional power. Cooperative hegemony is a 'soft' form of domination by means of cooperative institutional arrangements based on long-term strategy.[67] The preconditions for a strategy of cooperative hegemony are a capacity on the part of the corresponding regional power: (1) for power aggregation, that is, the capacity to convince a sufficient number of states in the region to rally around its regional project; (2) for power-sharing *vis-à-vis* weaker states in the region and, (3) for the commitment to a long-term strategy of regional institutionalisation.

From the perspective of a regional power, a strategy of cooperative hegemony (in contrast to unilateral hegemony) offers the following advantages: regional institutionalisation and integration are instruments of power aggregation (advantages of scale). This is especially important for emerging regional powers, which want to boost their influence in global politics. A domination based on cooperative hegemony is more stable and more legitimate because it co-opts other states via positive incentives, because it guarantees stability in the region, and because it makes it more difficult to form counter-alliances inside the region or with states outside of the region. It is inclusive because the strategy facilitates and hedges the access of the regional power to strategic resources (raw materials) in the region. It facilitates the diffusion of political ideas and models which serve the interest of the regional power.

A distinction can be made between an offensive and a defensive version of cooperative hegemony. In the first instance regional integration / institutionalisation provides the basis for the claim of an emerging regional power to perform a more important role on the global stage. These are often states that dispose of much soft power – economic power, technological expertise, institution building, cultural and ideological influence – but little or no military power. The second category of cooperative hegemony includes, on the one hand, great powers that have lost military power compared to other great powers. They try to stabilise their power base by means of a stronger integration with their region. On the other

[65] Hurrell, 'Hegemony and Regional Governance', pp. 196–7; Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 73–4.

[66] Thomas Pedersen, 'Cooperative Hegemony. Power, Ideas and Institutions in Regional Integration', *Review of International Studies*, 28:4 (2002), pp. 677–96.

[67] In addition to formal institutions, dominant powers can use transnational regulatory networks as an instrument to prevail with their interests. 'Such networks allow powerful states to shape and influence the process of integration without the need for formal inter-state bargaining. For powerful states the choice is often not between institutions and no institutions, but rather which institutions offer the best trade-off between effectiveness on the one hand and the maximization of the control and self-insulation on the other.' Hurrell, 'Hegemony and Regional Governance', p. 202.

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hand, the second category also includes states which are weak with regard to specific power resources – including legitimacy and prestige – and therefore try to compensate for these deficiencies by means of regional institutions.

In the context of global economic integration and the power disequilibrium in many political areas between the existing regional powers and the only superpower (US), regional dominance is currently only possible for most states in the form of cooperative hegemony. To defend regional hegemony it is necessary to exclude outside powers – and, if necessary, powers competing for regional leadership – from the regional institutions of cooperation. The dispute over the consolidation of regional leadership is also a conflict over the creation of exclusive institutions of cooperation and integration.

In this process 'secondary regional powers' and 'regional middle powers' are of great importance.[68] From the point of view of regional powers, these powers are pivotal actors for the construction and maintenance of regional governance structures in the framework of cooperative regional hegemony. Therefore, it is important to analyse regional powers in their interaction both with 'secondary regional powers' and with 'regional middle powers'. As a consequence, we should ask the following interesting question: What are the conditions or facilitators that cause 'secondary regional powers' and 'regional middle powers' to accept the leadership of a regional power? It would be interesting 'to know why followers follow [. . .] We argue that the dynamics of leadership in international politics are more clearly revealed by an examination of followership'.[69]

Research perspectives on regional powers in a changing multipolar world

In general, Huntington's forecast of a multipolar twenty-first century may be a good description of the future structure of the international system. But what kind of multipolarity will emerge from the rise of regional powers? Is it the multipolarity of a cartel, or a concert of regional powers who will dominate and set the rules in international politics? Or, will the multipolarity of various power centres open up more freedom of action (a new market of opportunities) for the less powerful countries in the different world regions? Will the uni-multipolar world be transformed into a non-polar world[70] or multi-multipolar world?[71]

To answer these questions, it will be necessary to take a closer look at the internal order of regions, which are the result of the interaction between states that aspire to regional leadership and the other states in the corresponding region. For this purpose, it would be useful to take the research tools and concepts that have until now been applied in the study of global power hierarchies or with regard to

[68] For a discussion of the same topic from a different perspective see David R. Mares, 'Middle Powers under Regional Hegemony: To Challenge or Acquiesce in Hegemonic Enforcement', *International Studies Quarterly*, 32:4 (1988), pp. 453–71.

[69] Andrew F. Cooper, Richard Higgott and Kim Richard Nossal (eds), *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993), p. 16.

[70] Richard Haass, The Age of Nonpolarity, *Foreign Affairs*, 87:3 (May/June 2008), pp. 44–56.

[71] Aaron L. Friedberg coined the concept of 'multi-multipolarity' to capture the power diffusion both at the global and the regional level. See Aaron L. Friedberg, 'Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia', *International Security*, 18:3 (1993–1994), pp. 5–33.

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the US' hegemony in international politics and adapt them for the analysis of regional power hierarchies. It would also be useful to include, in a more systematic way, theories that deal with authority and hierarchy in IR[72] or that categorise different patterns of interaction between major and minor powers[73] and apply them to regional orders or hierarchies.

There may be an ambiguous relationship between the rise of regions in global politics and the rise of regional powers. The EU, a supranational actor that combines the functions of a regional institution and a global player, will continue to be the exception. The global projection of a region may depend on a powerful state in the region, that is, a regional power. However, the rise of a regional power might be resented by secondary or minor powers in the region.

Amitav Acharya[74] is right when he argues that 'regions are constructed more from within than from without' and that 'power matters, but local responses to power may matter even more in the construction process of regional orders'. A recent study by Douglas Lemke[75] provides empirical support for the thesis that regional powers matter. From an IR approach, which is based on the distribution of power capabilities within a region, he demonstrates on the one hand that the greater the power share of the region's strongest state, the less likely militarised interstate disputes within that region are. This implies that the more powerful the regional power, the more peaceful its region. On the other hand, the study provides empirical support for the hypothesis that the greater the relative power capability of the regional power is, the greater the number of regional international organisations. Lemke's findings support the basic arguments of power transition theory (a dominant power leads to less conflicts) and of hegemonic stability theory,[76] which claims that institutions designed to help states to cooperate with each other are more likely to be created and maintained when there is a powerful state that is capable of providing collective goods and willing to do so.

The results of the empirical analysis are more or less the same when the Lemke uses different definitions of regional powers and their corresponding regions. Thus we have strong empirical evidence that the existence of a powerful state (with regard to the distribution of hard-power resources) within a region has an impact on the regional order, because there are less conflicts and more regional organisations. However, we don't know how the causal relationship functions. What are the strategies of regional powers in regional conflict management or conflict prevention? Do regional powers create or support the creation of regional organisations? Do these regional organisations constitute a collective good for the region, and is the regional power the principal responsible for the maintenance and funding of these organisations? What about the interests of the minor powers and followers of the regional powers in the configuration and maintenance of regional

[72] Lake, 'Escape'; Lake, 'Regional hierarchy'.
[73] Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005); G. J. Ikenberry, *Liberal Order & Imperial Ambition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).
[74] Acharya, 'Emerging Regional Architecture', p. 630.
[75] Lemke, 'Dimensions of Hard Power'.
[76] See Charles Kindleberger, *The World in Depression, 1929–1939* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1974); Robert Keohane, 'The Theory of Hegemonic Stability and Changes in International Economic Regimes', in Ole Holsti, Randolph Siverson, and Alexander George (eds), *Change in the International System* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 131–62; Duncan Snidal, 'The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory', *International Organization*, 39:4 (1985), pp. 579–614.

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institutions? Are regional organisations an instrument with which minor powers can engage the regional power and hedge against hegemonic endeavours? We need more empirical research and better analytical tools with regard to some of these questions.

The analytical concept of regional powers presented here could be a good starting point for mapping the internal structure of regions and the type of regional power(s) in each region. Subsequently, we could make the most of the concept of cooperative hegemony developed by Thomas Pedersen[77] to analyse the regional power relations and architecture. The concept of cooperative hegemony is probably not sufficient to analyse all forms of regional power relations or regional orders: some may be coercive, some may produce 'contested leadership',[78] some may result in a hegemonic order, and others in a balance of power. In future we should differentiate more clearly between hegemony, authority, hierarchy and the scope of hierarchy (the number of actions of a subordinate state that a dominant state can legitimately regulate) in regional power relations.[79] Moreover, it will be necessary to include outside powers in the analysis of regional orders and regional power relations in a more systematic manner. As stated earlier, Amitav Acharya[80] is right when he identifies the relationship between regions and powerful actors from outside and from within as one key area for further research.

The articles of this section deal with several issues discussed above, but they raise new research questions as well. Destradi's theoretical-conceptual article closes an interesting gap between structure (the distribution of regional power capabilities) and outcome (regional orders) because it focuses on those strategies of regional powers that may be more or less cooperative or benevolent. Destradi rightly criticises a certain bias in the conceptualisation of regional powers – including this introductory article – that excludes 'harder' patterns of dominance from the analysis. Destradi differentiates between three major strategies that regional powers follow to influence the other states in the region. She places these strategies on a continuum reaching from a unilateral and coercive strategy to an extremely cooperative one. Subsequently, through a theory-based distinction and the clarification of the underlying concepts, she compares three strategies: an imperialist strategy (which may lead to a regional empire), a hegemonic strategy, and a sort of regional leadership that may be initiated by the regional power or by followers. This is an interesting aspect for further theoretical reflections and empirical research: regional orders may also be initiated or constructed by the minor powers (followers) within a region. The hegemonic strategy is subdivided into three subcategories that comprise a hard, a soft and an intermediate variant. The main criteria for differentiating between the various strategies of regional powers are the objectives (self-interested or collective) and the means (from military intervention to persuasion). Other criteria for differentiation are the self-representations of regional powers and the kind of legitimation they claim as well as the strategic options of the subordinate states. Destradi argues that in the real

[77] Pedersen, 'Cooperative Hegemony'.
[78] See Daniel Flemes and Thorsten Wojczewski, 'Contested Leadership in International Relations Power Politics in South America, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa', GIGA Working Paper No. 121, Hamburg (February 2010).
[79] Lake, 'Escape'; Lake, 'Regional hierarchy'.
[80] Acharya, 'Emerging Regional Architecture', p. 651.

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world there will be an overlay or mixture of different strategies on the part of regional powers (depending on the issue area), but normally a particular form of strategic orientation prevails. As an extension of Destradi's study it would be interesting to look for the causes and consequences of the different strategies of regional powers and to illustrate the analytical framework with empirical examples. Moreover, one should differentiate more clearly between the strategies of regional powers, the reaction of other actors in the region, and the final outcome because the strategic objectives of regional powers do not automatically become reality. The objectives and strategies of the different regional actors may be concordant, complementary or divergent. As a result, regional orders may include overlapping mechanisms of regional governance. This is an area of research still open for further investigations.[81]

As Destradi mentions, the meaning of regional hegemony is difficult to grasp and often contested. She differentiates between the more or less benevolent or coercive nature of hegemony based on the means employed to exercise hegemony, which may consist of material power resources or ideational factors such as the persuasion to accept norms and values. This is where Dirk Nabers's article places its attention. Based on the concept of discursive hegemony, the article analyses the prerequisites of effective leadership in regional institution building. Nabers differentiates between power (as capabilities) and leadership (the exercise of power). In this context, the relationship between leaders and followers is of central importance, because leaders are constrained in their actions by their followers (or the need to preserve the adherence of followers). Both Destradi and Nabers underline the fact that regional leadership encompasses both leaders and followers. Regional orders are the result of interaction between the states that aspire to regional leadership and the other states in the corresponding region. Nabers emphasises that leadership must be conceptualised as an activity (including leaders and followers) in an institutionalised context. Leadership also has a normative dimension because it depends on the ability of a regional power (or its leaders) to present its own particular worldview as being compatible with the aims of the regional followers. Leadership is conceptualised by Nabers as discursive hegemony. Ultimately, however, discourses produce and are reflected in specific practices and institutions. Therefore, an interesting field for future empirical research may be to compare the content of discourses about regional leadership with the structure of regional institutions and the strategies of regional powers (the topic of Destradi's article). Nabers illustrates his conceptual reflections with a short analysis of China's and Japan's roles (leadership) in East Asian regionalism. While Nabers does not take the same path as Destradi, his approach seems to be adaptable to her concept of follower-initiated leadership. The description of East Asian regionalism in his article gives some hints that it may be at least partially follower initiated.[82] In further research and theoretical reflections it may be interesting to analyse whether discourses about regional hegemony can be influenced or (de)constructed from below (by minor states/followers).

[81] See Emanuel Adler and Patricia Greve, 'When security community meets balance of power: overlapping regional mechanisms of security governance', *Review of International Studies*, 35:S1 (2009), pp. 59–84; Tussie, 'Latin America'.
[82] See Goh, 'Great Powers'.

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In IR theory there has been a bifurcation between the economic region – the central topic of studies on regionalism and regions – and the security-related region. Today there seems to be a growing interest in linking/bridging both dimensions of 'regioness' and in analysing the possible patterns of interaction. Moreover, these basic features of a region cannot be totally separated because economic cooperation presupposes a low level of conflict or at least the management of security-related conflicts in the region. What is more, most regions posses both security-related institutions as well as institutions that manage economic issues, and there may be a two-way influence from economic interactions on security interactions and from security interactions on economic interactions.[83]

In a recent article, Philip Nel and Matthew Stephen[84] analyse the foreign economic policies of three regional powers – India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) – both within their regions and with regard to the global order. They highlight the contribution that emerging regional powers can make to the revision of the norms, practices, and outcomes of global governance. These regional powers are revisionist states with regard to the global order, integrating with the global economic system while at the same time trying to revise at least some of its fundamental features. India, Brazil and South Africa are committed to securing a *redistribution* of power, wealth, and privilege in the global economy. As a component of this endeavour they have formed the IBSA 'trilateral development initiative' with the explicit goal of realigning power and resources in world politics to secure more favourable outcomes for developing countries than have been achieved during recent decades.

In his contribution to this section Philip Nel further develops this argument, claiming that the leaders of India, Brazil and South Africa in particular struggle not only for their own advantage but also for the recognition of developing countries as full and equal partners in the society of states. This struggle for recognition focuses on inclusive multilateralism and making the development needs of the Global South more visible. The concept of recognition is very interesting and promising. It refers to the communicative dimension of international politics, through which states mutually acknowledge the status and social esteem of other states. However, it may be necessary to differentiate between asking for recognition for oneself (the IBSA countries) or asking for recognition in representation of others (the Global South). There may be tension between the recognition of the IBSA countries as new global players by other major countries and the recognition of the interests of the rest of the South. This raises the question of whether the IBSA states are really interested in changing the hierarchical norms and practices of international society, or whether they are merely interested in joining the hierarchical top.

With the worldwide economic crisis and the looming reconfiguration of the global governance institutions,[85] India, Brazil and South Africa are a step closer to

[83] Vinod K. Aggarwal and Min Gyo Koo (eds), *Asia's New Institutional Architecture. Evolving Structures for Managing Trade, Financial, and Security Relations* (Berlin / Heidelberg: Springer, 2008).

[84] Nel and Stephen, 'Agents of Change?'

[85] Cooper and Antkiewicz, 'Emerging Powers'; Germain, 'Financial order'; Paola Subacchi, 'New power centres and new power brokers: are they shaping a new economic order?', *International Affairs*, 84:3 (2008), pp. 485–98; Paola Subacchi and Eric Helleiner, 'From London to L'Aquila. Building a Bridge between the G20 and the G8', Chatham/CIGI Briefing paper, Waterloo (June 2009).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021051000135X Published online by Cambridge University Press

realising their revisionist objectives with regard to the global economic order. At the same time, their rising status in the global power hierarchy may cause problems with regard to their regional status. As Nel and Stephen[86] point out, there may be a contradiction between the dual role of a regional leadership based on a hierarchical relationship within the region and a revisionist position with regard to the global power hierarchy. Regional powers are like actors that have to play rather different roles in two plays that are exhibited in the same theatre: On one stage they are defending their privileges in the prevailing regional power hierarchy. On a second stage they are challenging the current global order. From time to time, the combination of both roles may create problems of credibility and coherence, both for the spectators and the actors, while other – minor and major – actors are trying to modify the script and reassign the roles of the play.

[86] See Philip Nel and Matthew Stephen, 'Agents of Change'.

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