

# New World



News and comment on the UN & UNA-UK

BRICS Special Issue Winter 2012 // £3.00



*With a growing share of the global workforce and economy, are the BRICS poised to become the world's pre-eminent power bloc?*

**WITH** [David Bosco](#) on the BRICS / [Alexander Yakovenko](#) on Russia and the UN / [Gyan Chandra Acharya](#) on climate change and LDCs / [David Hannay](#) on Britain's quest for a role / [Natalie Samarasinghe](#) on Brazil / UN Day 2012 pull-out

**Employees make rice  
dumplings at a food factory  
in Binzhou, China**  
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© Farooq Naeem/AFP/Getty Images

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## Scene setter



### David Bosco introduces this special issue of New World on Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

In theory, the BRICS countries should have a decisive impact on diplomacy at the United Nations. Their ranks include two veto-wielding permanent Security Council members and three powerful states who are regularly elected to the Council's rotating seats. In the General Assembly too, the aggregated economic and diplomatic weight of these states should make them a formidable bloc.

Russia may no longer be a superpower, but it remains a geopolitical and economic force with vast energy resources. China is an emerging economic superpower with a growing set of interests throughout the world. India is growing nearly as fast and has historically been a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, which includes nearly two-thirds of the total UN membership. Brazil is Latin America's leading economy and a growing world diplomatic presence. South Africa, the newest member of the group, is Africa's leading power and a critical player in regional diplomacy. Through regular BRICS summits, these states have developed mechanisms for sharing their concerns and coordinating diplomatic and economic strategy.

In practice, however, the BRICS have only infrequently become a decisive factor in UN diplomacy. The acronym has become ubiquitous as a shorthand for the phenomenon of emerging, non-Western powers, but it often suggests a greater alignment of interests than exists. The BRICS are geographically dispersed and ideologically diverse. In many respects, they lack a common set of economic interests or a coherent geopolitical vision. The General Assembly vote in August to condemn the Syrian regime's abuses highlighted the limits of BRICS diplomacy. Russia and China opposed the resolution, while Brazil and South Africa supported it. India abstained.

To the extent the BRICS share a vision, it is a reactive one. They are united in a suspicion of Western interventionism and a conviction that the world's governing architecture is tilted in the West's favor. That shared concern was on display during the Libya operation last year.

Russia, China, India and Brazil abstained on the vote authorising military force to protect civilians; only South Africa voted in favor. As the military operation developed, all BRICS members criticised NATO for exceeding the Security Council's narrow authorisation and they signaled that they would be reluctant to authorise any further such operations. Brazil even advanced a corollary to the 'responsibility to protect' doctrine: responsibility while protecting (see *New World*, Autumn 2012, pages 16–17).

These concerns are widely shared in the UN membership, and the BRICS could potentially serve as powerful advocates for a reformed international system. In the context of UN diplomacy, however, they have a common disadvantage. They are all large states operating in an organisation numerically dominated by small and mid-size states. The BRICS may see themselves agitating for a more equitable international architecture, but many UN members view them more cynically: as major powers seeking to acquire the (unfair) privileges that other powers have secured. For many UN members, the ambitions of Brazil, India and South Africa for permanent Security Council seats are evidence not of a reformist impulse, but of a desire to join the big-power club.

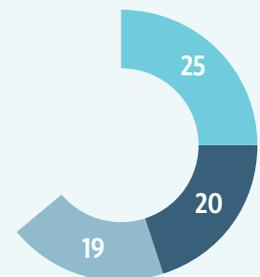
Taken together, the limited set of common interests and the suspicion that the emerging-power bloc creates has limited the BRICS impact at the United Nations. The emergence of the BRICS is an important sign that the world has become more multipolar. That multipolarity will have important implications for UN diplomacy, whether or not the BRICS ever emerge as a diplomatic force. ●

*David Bosco is Assistant Professor of International Politics at American University, Washington DC, and Contributing Editor at Foreign Policy magazine. He is author of Five to Rule Them All (Oxford University Press, 2009), a history of the UN Security Council*

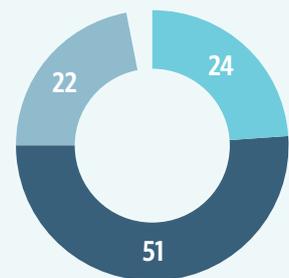
“ The BRICS already have a bigger share of world trade than the US. China, probably the world's biggest goods exporter last year, has been supplemented by India's software and back-office exports, Russia's oil and gas and the domination of a number of agricultural commodity markets by Brazil's super-competitive farmers”

*Alan Beattie, International Economy Editor, Financial Times, 17 January 2010*

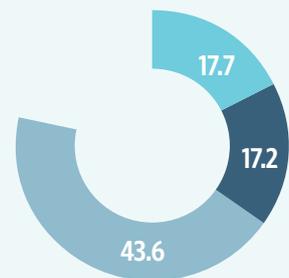
#### % OF WORLD GDP



#### % OF GLOBAL AID SPENDING



#### % OF GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING



● BRICS ● EU ● US



## THE BRICS COUNTRIES

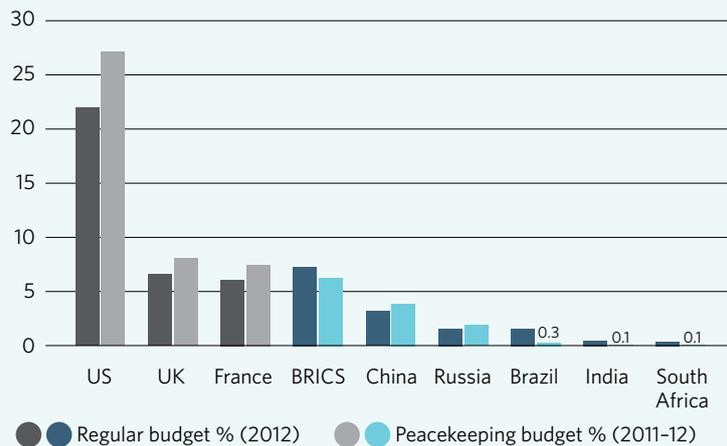
# 46%

Global population and global workforce

**Page 4 / Sources:** OECD, World Bank, Global Humanitarian Assistance and Global Peace Index. **Note:** Estimates for BRICS aid spending range from 2% to 24%, as these countries classify development assistance differently to OECD donors. The upper estimate is given to demonstrate the extent of BRICS investment in areas such as infrastructure and natural resource extraction.

**Page 5 / Sources:** [www.un.org/peacekeeping](http://www.un.org/peacekeeping), [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org), [treaties.un.org](http://treaties.un.org)

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN



## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTIONS

	BRAZIL	RUSSIA	INDIA	CHINA	SOUTH AFRICA
Civil and political	Yes	No	No	No	No
Economic, social and cultural	Yes	No	No	No	No
Racial discrimination	Yes	No	No	No	No
Women	Yes	No	No	No	No
Torture	Yes	No	No	No	No
Children	Yes	No	No	No	No
Persons with disabilities	Yes	No	No	No	No
Migrant workers	Yes	No	No	No	No
International Criminal Court	Yes	No	No	No	No

Ratification: ● Yes ● No

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**W** Web content is flagged up throughout the magazine with this symbol.

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# BRICS in focus: **Brazil**



Ribeirão das Lajes reservoir  
© Antonio Scorza/AFP/Getty Images

**Brazil** is Latin America's largest country in terms of population, area, economy and clout. Its president is routinely listed alongside Germany's Angela Merkel and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as one of the most powerful women in the world.

Over the past decade, Brazil has experienced remarkable growth which, coupled with effective social policies, has helped to lift over 40 million people out of poverty. Although growth has slowed, it emerged relatively unscathed from the global financial downturn and continues to hold promise as its potential is limited at present by inadequate infrastructure, patchy services and a poor business climate. It continues, though, to confront very serious challenges at home. In the cities, there are widespread reports of violent crime, police brutality, torture and extrajudicial killings by law enforcement 'death squads'. In rural areas, land disputes have led to forced evictions for development projects and the killing of activists.

At the international level, Brazil has supported progressive measures on gender, sustainable development and human rights. It has committed to reducing emissions by at least 36% by 2020 and is also playing a larger role in

development. Brazil has more people of African descent than any other country outside the continent, and is building on these ties through aid projects (such as an anti-retroviral plant in Mozambique), development loans and investment. Trade with the continent has increased seven-fold since 2002.

One of the most influential democracies, Brazil sees its strength as a bridge-builder between developed and developing countries. The country has a positive record in peacekeeping – it is one of the biggest troop contributors, with 27,000 men and women participating in 33 missions – and has recently asserted itself more in international security priorities. In 2010, it worked with Turkey to conclude a nuclear fuel deal with Iran. It has long been touted as one of the prime candidates for a permanent seat in an expanded UN Security Council. At the Council though, Brazil's record is varied. It often prefers to abstain from key votes or side with inaction. Last year, it abstained from votes on Libya and Syria. Its proposal, made in the aftermath of the 2011 Libya intervention, on setting guidelines for implementing the responsibility to protect (called the 'responsibility while protecting') is typical of its 'middle-way' approach.



*"The world clamours for food instead of weapons, for the billion men, women and children who suffer from the cruelest punishment inflicted on humanity: hunger"*

Dilma Rousseff, UN General Assembly 2012

**President** / Dilma Rousseff

**Government** / Federal republic

**Population** / 203m (world rank: 5)

**GDP** / \$2.2trn (world rank: 6)

**Living under national poverty line** / 21.4%

**Living on less than \$1.25/day** / 6.14%



Top-ranked BRICS for:

**Environmental protection\***

Brazil	30
Russia	106
China	116
India	125
South Africa	128

\*Environmental Performance Index 2012, based on: pollution; access to sanitation and clean drinking water; biodiversity; fisheries; forests; agriculture; pesticide use; energy sources; and carbon emissions. epi.yale.edu/



Graffiti in the Eldorado favela depicts the military police and asks whether they are 'heroes'  
© AMJ Walker

# Spotlight on Brazil: lessons from the favela

*Natalie Samarasinghe on the lessons Brazil holds for poverty alleviation and social transformation*

**T**HE choice of Brazil as the venue of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development was a natural one. After all, the country had hosted the landmark UN 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro 20 years previously. But the world's fifth largest state also reflects the developmental and environmental challenges facing the world and offers plenty of lessons on how to tackle them.

In many ways, Brazil is a good marker for where we are as a planet. Travel through Brazil and the country switches back and forth from 'developed' to 'developing'. Brazil's wealthiest city, São Paulo, has a bigger GDP than Ireland while residents of Eldorado, a favela on the outskirts of the conurbation, have lower average incomes than people in Côte d'Ivoire. The richest 1% of Brazil's population owns as much as the poorest half of the country – a similar distribution to that of the world. And the proportion of Brazilians living below the national poverty line (about a fifth) is roughly the same as the proportion of people worldwide living below the global poverty line of \$1.25 a day.

While Brazil continues to struggle with inequality, it has, uniquely among the BRICS countries, managed to narrow the gap through growth. According to the Fundação Getulio Vargas, a higher education institute, the incomes of the poorest 50% have increased almost six times as quickly as those of the top 10% over the

past decade. Between 1980 and 2011, life expectancy increased by 11 years and mean years of schooling by 4.6 years. Hunger has been cut by more than a third. José Graziano da Silva who ran Brazil's Fome Zero (zero hunger) campaign now hopes to replicate this success globally as head of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.

## Getting it right nationally

Brazil recently became the world's sixth largest economy. It is not a poor country but it has a lot of poor people. Images of deprived favelas, with high levels of disease and crime, are intimately associated with the country. But although the term 'favela' is used interchangeably with 'slum' and 'shanty town', for the most part, they bear little resemblance to the sprawls of tin dwellings and mud huts found in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. For such scenes, one has to seek out Brazil's rural poor.

After decades of neglect, life has improved in many favelas. Recent Brazilian governments have switched their policy from favela clearance to favela integration. In 2001, the federally-enacted City Statute affirmed the right to housing and the principle of urban development having social functions. It enabled municipalities to play a greater role in favela transformation through formal recognition of the settlements, and through the >>



*Natalie Samarasinghe is UNA-UK Deputy Director (Policy & Communications) and Editor of New World magazine*



Rio de Janeiro  
© AMJ Walker

>> creation of 'special social interest zones' targeted for development. According to the 2012 census, nearly all favelas now have electricity and over 95% have refuse collections. More than 90% of residents are literate and just under that figure have access to water. (The proportion is still much lower for sanitation – see page 11 in *New World*, Autumn 2012.)

The statute also paved the way for formal land tenure by favelistas – a move with the potential to give millions of Brazilians a secure hold on what is often their most valuable asset. And security isn't the only benefit. Those granted titles are able to use their address for a range of life-changing purposes, from opening a bank account to applying for jobs. They can get higher loans, and higher returns, on their property. Most importantly, they are recognised by and connected to their city. This year, Rio has issued some 10,000 land titles. It plans to issue another 40,000 over the next four years.

And then there is the Bolsa Familia, Brazil's most celebrated social programme. The largest of its kind in the world, the 'Bolsa Familia' is a system of cash transfers that are conditional on education and health requirements. Poor households are given money in exchange for ensuring their children attend school and receive vaccinations, for example. A 2011 World Bank study showed that the programme has boosted vaccination rates by 12-15% and increased prenatal visits. Overall, seven- to 15-year-olds whose families receive the transfer are roughly 4% more likely to go to school and the figure is much higher among older pupils. A 15-year-old girl is 21% more likely to be in school if her family receives the Bolsa Familia.

These statistics have impressed policy-makers and development economists around the world. Itself a copy

of Mexico's 'Progresas' programme, the Bolsa Familia has been replicated in some 20 countries, including Chile, Indonesia and South Africa. Even rich countries are applying the concept. New York City's 'Opportunity NYC' programme offers cash rewards for test scores and school attendance, including parents' attendance at parent-teacher meetings. Until recently, the UK provided 'Education Maintenance Allowances' – payments of up to £30 a week – to encourage low-income 16- to 19-year-olds to stay in education (the payments were stopped under the country's fiscal tightening programme). Speaking at the opening of the UN General Assembly this year, President Dilma Rousseff presented Brazil as a case study for how to solve the global economic crisis without resorting to budget cuts. She called the choice between austerity and economic growth "a false dilemma".

But while Brazil's progress does indeed offer lessons on how to get it right, it also offers plenty of lessons on how to do it better.

First, the potential side effects of policies need to be explored and, if necessary, mitigated. Favela improvements have led to gentrification. There has been an influx of lower-middle class residents keen to take advantage of the services and escape soaring real estate prices elsewhere. Tourists and investors are also increasingly drawn to the open vistas and possibilities of hillside favelas. For some residents, this has been a positive development. Those who are better off have been able to sell their properties and move on. But many now find themselves unable to afford to live in their own community.

Second, the means of delivery should be sustainable. Since 2008 police and military troops have been deployed to favelas in Rio to tackle the drug trade and violent crime. Special forces normally take control of an area, after



which dedicated police ‘pacification units’ move in. These units are supposed to foster good relations with residents and embed themselves in community life. In many areas, the results have been astounding. But the programme puts a heavy strain on both human and financial resources, causing many to speculate how long it can continue. And in several favelas, it is an uneasy peace that prevails, one predicated on force and the impunity of the military.

Third, beneficiaries must be kept firmly in mind. As Brazil prepares for its turn in the limelight – in 2014 it will host the football World Cup, two years later the Olympic & Paralympic Games come to Rio – favela projects have been scaled up massively and, to some extent, residents’ wellbeing has been de-prioritised. Several favelas are being cleared for infrastructure projects. The government says these projects will benefit the communities and that residents will be rehoused in improved facilities. However, many favelistas have been left homeless as demolition began before their houses were completed. Some who have refused to relocate have reportedly been forced from their homes.

Fourth, national programmes must be adapted to local contexts. The Bolsa Familia has had a far greater impact in rural areas, where malnutrition has tumbled and the proportion of children in primary education has caught up with that of city children. In urban areas and favelas, where the value of the cash transfers is lower, the picture is more mixed. Some families earn more by sending their children to work and the programme has done little to reduce child labour rates. Others feel they are now worse off as the Bolsa Familia subsumed an array of existing benefits.

Jonathan Hannay, secretary-general of the Association for the Support of Children at Risk (ACER) in Eldorado, notes that under the old system households used to be able to get the equivalent of twice the minimum wage for a family of six. The average Bolsa Familia payment is roughly a fifth of minimum wage. There is also a wider issue: the programme targets only specific needs. School enrolment and attendance are prized above completion and achievement. Many children endlessly repeat years before dropping out. Just 42% complete high school. Those who do can find themselves with few job opportunities. Moreover, these needs may not represent the main barriers to development in a particular area where, say, violence might be the primary impediment.

### Getting it right locally

The involvement of communities is crucial to addressing all of the above. Indeed, Brazil’s change in favela policy from clearance to conversion owes much to the efforts of favelistas, who began themselves the process of upgrading their communities whilst campaigning for support.

ACER exemplifies this approach. The organisation was set up in 1993 to support vulnerable young people. After working with street children, ACER set up a community centre in Eldorado, one of the most violent and deprived areas of São Paulo, to prevent them from ending up on the streets in the first place. The philosophy is one of participation and empowerment: children and young people can succeed if they are given meaningful opportunities and the support that they (and their families) need. Moreover, they can become effective agents of social change, educating and inspiring their peers and communities.

The centre now works with over 150 families and 500 children through four core programmes: education and culture, social work, community development and supporting teenagers. It includes a computer room, a library (replete with Ruth, the librarian, who is keen to expand the centre’s reading group) and various spaces where children take part in sports, arts and music activities. Particular emphasis is placed on celebrating the African heritage that most of the centre’s children share, including capoeira, a martial art with music and dance elements that instructor Alexandre describes as an essential part of the Brazilian soul.

One of the key functions of the centre is supporting school attendance. Like in other deprived areas of the country, schools in the area run three separate shifts of pupils a day – the last ending late at night – to get the most out of the teachers, the buildings and materials. For many young children, this can result in being left alone for most of the day. For older children, going to school on a Friday night is not always the most attractive option. ACER provides care during the day as well as a range of programmes that encourage teenagers to go to school and make plans for the future. It also provides snacks. This is especially important during holiday periods, when children miss out on the full meal they receive at school.

Many of the teachers and support staff are drawn from the local area – some benefitted from the centre >>

**Left to right:** Librarian Ruth with Amanda and Miri Helem, two of ACER’s local school volunteers; social workers Luiz Cesar Madueira and Rafael Pelvini; Alexandre do Carmo, capoeira instructor  
All photos © AMJ Walker

>> (or from ACER's previous work) when they were at school. "ACER is my life", one simply said. A raft of current pupils volunteer at the centre, providing them with valuable work experience that is hard to find in Eldorado. They are given careers support and help with applications. They clearly love what they do and come to work to hang out with friends.

Others have come from outside. Luiz and Rafael, two social workers from more affluent areas of São Paulo, came to ACER out of a compulsion to help those who, by pure chance, were born in the wrong part of town. But they believe things are – slowly – getting better, not least due to the centre. While they do not dismiss the impact of the Bolsa Familia, they think it is inadequate, describing their ongoing struggle to change attitudes towards child labour. They feel ACER's approach of immersion into the local community has had more of an effect in this regard. The centre's work has also been credited with contributing to the reduction in violence in recent years. (The only time your correspondent felt even slightly apprehensive in Eldorado was during a somewhat chaotic car journey with one of ACER's volunteers, a 19-year-old boy racer from France.)

But ACER's success demonstrates that however proactive they are, communities need assistance and not always the assistance that decision-makers prioritise. In Eldorado, like elsewhere, there is much excitement at the thought of Brazil winning the World Cup at home. But there is also great scepticism as to whether the proposed regeneration and infrastructure projects will make a difference. "A few weeks of fun and then back to reality", said Alexandre, before returning to happier football reveries.

What really did make a difference in Eldorado was the opening of its first bank. In 2009, Bradesco, one of Brazil's largest banks, set up a branch. "It took 17 years", Hannay said in an interview with *The Economist*. "We got 5,000 petitions to open the branch, and 75 businesses promised to keep their money in the bank." In the past, residents had to travel to neighbouring Diadema to pay their bills or transfer money. After the bank came shops and restaurants. Commerce had arrived.

### Getting it right globally

Perhaps the key lesson, then, is the importance of fully consulting and integrating communities into the design and delivery of programmes. This is not just a lesson for Brazil but for the international community which is currently working on setting global sustainable development goals and figuring out what should follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the UN's anti-poverty initiative which is due to expire in 2015.

Like Brazil's Bolsa Familia, the MDGs have facilitated great successes in tackling extreme poverty but progress has been uneven. Like the Bolsa, they have been criticised for putting quantitative outcomes ahead of qualitative ones, and for neglecting important issues (e.g. focusing on infectious but not other diseases, which kill more people). And like the Bolsa, many have questioned the largely top-down methods of conceiving and implementing the MDGs.

Whilst there is great merit in devising broad, simple goals that are easy to communicate, the priorities within them must be set at the local level. At the Rio+20 summit, NGO and community leaders stood up time and again to say that the single most important factor for development, sustainable or otherwise, was partnership-working, not just with developing-country

governments but at the community level, with those who know what the biggest obstacles are to progress and how to remove them.

This is deceptively simple. Brazil, which has comparatively progressive laws about consultations, attracted some unwanted attention during the summit when thousands took to the streets to protest the construction of the Belo Monte dam. The dam is the world's biggest new hydro-electric project and an important part of Brazil's strategy to reduce its dependency on fossil fuels and lower its emissions by 36% by 2020 – a far more ambitious target than the EU's. Brazil's population should, on the face of it, support the project. According to a survey carried out by Pew in 2010, a full 95% of Brazilians said that climate change is a serious problem, with 85% believing it to be 'very serious' (the figure for India was 62%, for Russia 43%, for China 41% and for the US, 37%). However, the construction will flood an area of around 500 km<sup>2</sup>, destroying forests and forcing at least 16,000 people, if not significantly more, to relocate. Indigenous groups claim their way of life is being destroyed. In August 2012, a federal appeals court halted construction, urging proper consultation.

Balancing competing interests will not be easy, whether they are between sustainable and economic development, or between national governments and local communities. The UN's decision to facilitate (and, crucially, to fund) inclusive national consultations on the post-MDGs framework in 50 developing countries is a good start. But a much more creative and flexible approach will be needed to ensure that whatever goals are agreed, they can be moulded into the right ones for vulnerable communities around the world.

Can it be done? Again, we can look to the Brazilians for a lesson, this time in optimism. A recent poll by the International Trade Union Confederation found that 69% of Brazilians believe they are heading in the right direction – the highest percentage in the world. ●

*In June 2012, Natalie Samarasinghe represented UNA-UK at the 'Rio+20' conference on sustainable development and took the opportunity to explore the country more widely. She would like to express her gratitude to the staff and volunteers at ACER who hosted her and gave so generously of their time and their views.*

The Children at Risk Foundation, known by the acronym ACER in Brazil, was founded in 1993 to offer an alternative way of life to vulnerable children and young people living on the streets of São Paulo.

In 2003, ACER established a community centre in Eldorado, one of the city's most violent suburbs, to promote education and culture, social work and community development. Since then, the centre has worked with hundreds of local children and youths, and the area's crime rate has decreased significantly, thanks in large part to its work.

To find out more about the project and how to support it, visit [www.carf-uk.org](http://www.carf-uk.org)





*H.E. Dr Alexander Yakovenko has been Ambassador of the Russian Federation to London since January 2011. Prior to this, he served as Russia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in charge of multilateral diplomacy and the United Nations. He began his diplomatic career in 1976, with postings including New York and Vienna*

**What are your top priorities for the 67th session of the UN General Assembly?**

Today, multilateral diplomacy, with the United Nations at the heart of the rule-based international system, has no alternative. Russia will stress the need for strict compliance with the UN Charter, and for further efforts to strengthen the legal framework of international relations. This includes uniform interpretation and application of treaties and UN decisions, including those made by the Security Council, the principal body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. The very first resolution adopted at the current session, namely the Declaration on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, is a major achievement in this regard.

As far as particular issues are concerned, we will, of course, address the situation in the Middle East. Russia fully supports the aspirations of peoples to freedom and social development. At the same time, we are worried by attempts to solve domestic disputes by force. All international actors should use their influence in the Arab world to promote peace and dialogue rather than violence and terrorism. Other priorities include: preventing nuclear terrorism, promoting a comprehensive nuclear test ban, prohibiting chemical weapons, and promoting transparency and confidence building in outer space. On the humanitarian front, we will focus on human trafficking, dialogue between civilisations and combating modern forms of racism and xenophobia – particularly relevant for an institution born out of the defeat of an ideology of hatred.

# Russia and the United Nations

*New World interviews H.E. Ambassador Dr Alexander Yakovenko of the Embassy of the Russian Federation to London*

**Is there one UN body or initiative that deserves more funding?**

Frankly speaking, given the effects of the world financial crisis, our efforts, just like those by many other states, are focused on savings. We believe a lot can be achieved in terms of financial efficiency. What matters is the proper organisation of work and political attention to the most important issues. Of course, we have priorities, which we support, where possible, through voluntary contributions, for example, peacebuilding activities or those of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**What has been your country's greatest achievement at the UN?**

I think that the most important achievement, not only for Russia, but for the whole world, was the preservation and strengthening of the UN after the end of the Cold War. At that time, many thought that the organisation was only fit for deterring a major conflict between the two opposing blocs and that it would be a nuisance at the time of a new global empire, as envisaged, for example, by Karl Jaspers. But the other option prevailed, that of a world order.

And that had a logic of its own. The UN was created for our world. The Cold War confrontation distorted the picture of the world. Now things have drastically changed for the better. Despite what many sceptics say, the UN has become more efficient: one need only compare the number of Security Council resolutions adopted before and after 1991. Human rights, anti-terrorist and peacekeeping activities have flourished. And most importantly, the UN's unique legitimacy has been strengthened.

**"Reform of the Security Council is the single most important factor in improving the UN's performance." Do you agree?**

Security Council reform is of crucial importance but I disagree that the UN underperforms because it has not taken place. Both the Council and the UN more widely are broadly efficient. To judge the performance of the whole organisation by occasional disagreements at the Security Council is irresponsible. Consider the successes of peacekeeping missions in Africa, international aid and development assistance, or the everyday work of the plethora of specialised agencies, such as the World Health Organisation and International Civil Aviation Organisation. >>

>>> That said, I firmly believe that the UN can perform better. We see UN reform as a broad process that should include streamlining the competences of various bodies and improving management practices. In the human rights field, there is a need to better delineate the responsibilities of the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the treaty-based bodies. Russia also proposes to revive the UN Military Staff Committee, which will enhance peacekeeping activities and the Security Council's military expertise. The UN Peacebuilding Commission could be entrusted with more coordination and consultation functions. And we need to overcome the stagnation of the UN's disarmament structures. The work of the General Assembly itself should be revitalised and made more efficient.

## *We are not against anything, we are in favour of pretty tangible things – we are a positive actor in international relations*

As for the Security Council, the main objective should be to make it more representative without reducing its efficiency. It is necessary to continue searching for a compromise model that would enjoy the general support of UN member states. Rushing to decisions that do not enjoy such support could result in the Council losing rather than gaining authority. The focus has got to be on the regions not represented or under-represented, i.e. the South, and the position of the current permanent members should remain intact, including the veto right, or, as the Charter puts it, the principle of “concurring votes of the permanent members”. The principle is often criticised, but when the US proposed its inclusion, it did so for a reason. The idea was (and still is) that in order for Council decisions to be effective they needed the support of the world's major states. This encourages them to seek agreement rather than take hasty, unilateral decisions. We are convinced that, on the whole, the principle contributes not only to the efficiency, but also to the authority and legitimacy of the Council.

*Could the UN have done more to prevent the financial crisis?*  
Given that the current crisis surprised many experts, let alone politicians, it is difficult to say whether the UN could have prevented it. However, the crisis has definitely highlighted the need to reconsider the organisation's role within the global economic governance system. Russia is interested in continuing a broad discussion on this issue. We propose focusing on building efficient relationships between the UN, the international financial and trade institutions, and informal groups such as G20. Linking the G20's work with UN social and economic priorities will be an important task for the Russian G20 Presidency in 2013. But those countries in which the crisis originated must first put their houses in order, however painful the correcting measures might be. Further procrastination will be disastrous for all.

*How can the UN become more effective in preventing mass atrocities?*

Mass atrocities, and internal conflicts in general, are a relatively new area of international cooperation, and greater UN involvement in these situations is a matter under discussion. However, a lot has been done to establish a framework for bringing those responsible for crimes

against humanity to justice. Despite many shortcomings, Russia positively assesses the experience of international tribunals and is looking at the activities of the International Criminal Court with much interest. We fully subscribe to the relevant provisions of the Rule of Law Declaration (GA Resolution 67/1) whereby UN member states committed “to ensuring that impunity is not tolerated”. We also share the focus on raising national capacities in the prevention of, and accountability for, mass atrocities.

*Soon, the BRICS are predicted to have a larger share of global GDP than the US or EU. By some calculations, they already have. Should the bloc prepare to become the biggest UN and aid contributor?*

In 2011, BRICS accounted for 45% of the global population, but only a quarter of global GDP. Modernisation of the economy, and of societies as a whole, is a major challenge for us and this is what we are currently focusing on. The BRICS see their contribution in terms of reforming the world financial system and promoting sustainable and balanced growth. Of course we will cooperate with the UN's development assistance programmes. We also support a fair scale of contributions to the UN system. However, we expect developed countries to continue to live up to their economic status. This is not a matter of competition or prestige, but an issue of our joint commitment to the UN. Ideally, international development should be integrated into national development strategies.

*What is the future of the BRICS countries as a grouping within the UN?*

Cooperation within BRICS is a major long-term track in Russia's foreign policy. We envisage this will grow into a genuinely strategic partnership on a wide range of global economic and political issues. We believe BRICS to be a new model of global collaboration, transcending the old patterns of East-West or North-South barriers. It is no bloc or strategic alliance of the past – that level of mutual commitment is out of place in today's world.

Within the UN, the group has already accumulated valuable experience of coordination, including at the Security Council, of which all the five BRICS countries were members in 2011. We take joint or very similar positions on many situations, such as Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, and Somalia, and on the structure of the international order, including the inadmissibility of abusing the Security Council in order to impose one-sided solutions to crises. As such, we will continue to coordinate our positions in various forums. However, we don't want BRICS to be perceived as a particular grouping in opposition to others. We are not against anything; we are in favour of pretty tangible things; we are a positive actor in international relations. We strive for unity of the international community – something that requires a break with the outdated bloc thinking.

*Finally, on a lighter note, would the UN be better off if its headquarters were in Russia?*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, I cannot imagine that any city of my country, devastated as it was after the Nazi invasion, would have been able to host the UN headquarters. Today, it is a different matter, although frankly, relocating the UN headquarters would hardly be a cost-efficient exercise! However, in the long term, it is not unthinkable to see it moving to the Asia-Pacific region, following the present eastward shift in the global economy and world affairs overall. ●

***I SUPPORT***  
***A STRONG***

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***CREDIBLE***

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***EFFECTIVE***

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***UNITED***  
***NATIONS***



UNA-UK

# UN DAY 2012

Celebrated each year on 24 October, United Nations Day marks the entry into force of the UN Charter in 1945.

Events in 2012 have demonstrated the enduring relevance of the UN, with the world body facilitating transition in Yemen, launching new initiatives on energy and oceans, and maintaining steady progress towards the eradication of polio and guinea worm. But it continues to face grave challenges, from Syria to food insecurity to tackling climate change.

UN Day 2012 is an opportunity for us to celebrate the UN's achievements, reflect on the challenges it faces and show our support for this indispensable Organisation. Only by doing this can we encourage our governments to work together for a strong, credible and effective United Nations.

To mark UN Day this month, we are asking you to show that you care about the Organisation.

## **1. Sign our petition**

Visit [www.una.org.uk/UN-Day-2012](http://www.una.org.uk/UN-Day-2012) to sign our support petition (or complete the form opposite), and help us to publicise it widely, including through Facebook and Twitter. The petition will be transmitted to the UK government and the UN in New York.

## **2. Show your support**

Display our UN Day 2012 posters in your office, university, school and community to show your support for the UN and UNA-UK. Two sample posters are included on pages 13 and 16, and more are available from [www.una.org.uk/UN-Day-2012](http://www.una.org.uk/UN-Day-2012)

## **3. Get others involved**

Encourage your friends and colleagues to become supporters of UNA-UK by giving them one of the enclosed postcards or directing them to [www.una.org.uk/interest](http://www.una.org.uk/interest). Signing up is completely free and supporters will receive information about the UN and UNA-UK, as well as opportunities to get more involved with our work.

[www.una.org.uk/UN-Day-2012](http://www.una.org.uk/UN-Day-2012)



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*I SUPPORT*



**UNA-UK**

[www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk)

# BRICS in focus: **Russia**



Helicopters above  
St Basil's cathedral  
© Natalia Kolesnikova/  
AFP/Getty Images

**Russia** has undergone massive changes over the past 20 years, redefining its political and economic relations with its neighbours and the wider world. It remains a crucial international player due to its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, energy resources and firepower. It has the world's largest nuclear arsenal (although fewer operational weapons than the US) and fourth-largest army. It is the world's biggest oil producer and second-biggest exporter. And it has moved up global GDP rankings since the global downturn, due to high oil prices and fiscal stimulus.

Yet its dependency on oil and gas (which now make up two thirds of its exports) is risky and the country will need to diversify its economy to continue to grow. Its recent accession to the World Trade Organisation should help. An upper middle-income country, Russia's GDP per capita has more than doubled since 2005, to \$16,700. Although an equivalent rise in social progress or spending has not occurred, life expectancy, employment, education and health indicators have all improved, though these developments differ greatly from region to region.

The country's declining and ageing population remains a challenge, as do

concerns over human rights violations, electoral fraud and corruption. There are widespread reports of attacks on human rights defenders and journalists, and the environment remains hostile for civil society organisations, minorities, and whistleblowers. A culture of impunity persists, particularly in disputed areas such as Chechnya, preventing investigation of extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

At the international level, Russia has supported UN peacekeeping with troops and equipment, but its Security Council veto has often been used controversially, most recently over Syria. But it has shown itself willing to act on a number of issues, including some that are important to its national interests, like Georgia and Iran.

Generally cautious of new norms, it has been sluggish on the environmental front and was recently listed as a country of concern in the Environmental Performance Index, due to overfishing, forest losses and worsening pollution. On the development side, though, the country is re-emerging. A large proportion of its aid is multilateral but it is increasingly seeking to rebuild bilateral aid, trade and investment links in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region.



*"Our actions should rely on the UN Charter, where nothing provides for the right to change regimes. It is unacceptable to impose a political system of a country on its people"*

*Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister, at the UN General Assembly 2012*

**President** / Vladimir Putin

**Government** / Federation of 83 federal subjects, including 21 republics

**Population** / 143m (world rank: 9)

**GDP** / \$1.8trn (world rank: 10)

**Living under national poverty line** / 11%

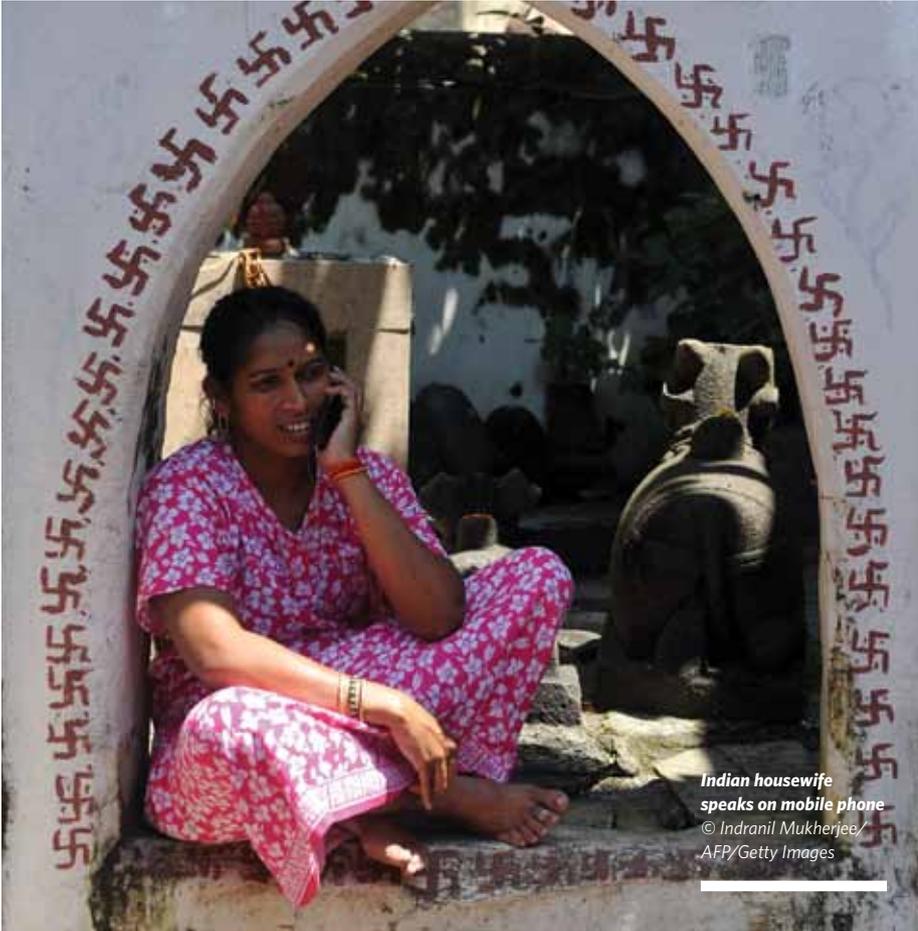
**Living on less than \$1.25/day** / 0%



Top-ranked BRICS for: **Human development\***

<b>Russia</b>	<b>66</b>
Brazil	84
China	101
South Africa	123
India	134

\*Based on the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index 2012



*Indian housewife speaks on mobile phone*  
© Indranil Mukherjee/  
AFP/Getty Images

**India**, the world's largest democracy, has made huge economic and development strides over the past decade. Despite the global downturn – which has hit investment, trade and remittances – poverty has continued to decline sharply with the help of government programmes in education, health care and insurance, infrastructure and rural connectivity.

However, the country still faces enormous challenges. It is still home to a third of the world's population living on less than \$1.25 a day and just eight Indian states have more poor people than the 26 poorest nations in Africa combined. The investment gap required to meet India's resource needs, including those arising from mass urbanisation, is estimated to be \$1trn. In order to stay competitive, India will need to reform its agricultural sector, to meet domestic and export needs, and provide security for the 75% of Indian families who are dependent on rural incomes. It will also need to invest in secondary education and in building the skills of its young, burgeoning workforce – arguably its biggest asset.

Despite a vibrant media and civil society, the country also has significant human rights challenges. In 2011, Human Rights Watch documented custodial

killings, police abuses (including torture) and discrimination against minorities. Anti-corruption activists and those protesting against resource exploitation and forced displacement have been attacked. And the security forces enjoy impunity, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir (home to a UN peacekeeping mission since 1948) and in areas with Maoist insurgents.

On the international stage, India has long sought a more prominent role, especially since the waning of the Non-Aligned Movement of which it was a leading member. While it received \$2.8bn in aid, it also gave \$676m. It has the third-largest army in the world and is the third-biggest contributor to UN peacekeeping, with over 100,000 troops having served in 43 missions. Although not one of the five recognised nuclear powers, India has between 80 and 100 nuclear weapons, which are now generally accepted by the international community. Often touted as a candidate for permanent membership of the Security Council, it has been reluctant to take action in such forums on situations ranging from Syria to Sri Lanka to Sudan. It has also consistently fought against the acceptance of binding emissions curbs on developing countries, citing their right to development.



**PROMOTING PLURALISM**  
– one of India's priorities for the 67th General Assembly session

**President** / Pratibha Patil – head of state, although in practice most powers are held by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh

**Government** / Federal, parliamentary republic

**Population** / 1.2bn (world rank: 2)

**GDP** / \$1.8trn (world rank: 9)

**Living under national poverty line** / 37.2%

**Living on less than \$1.25/day** / 32.7%

*“[The proposed UN Sustainable Development Goals must] in no way restrict the already limited policy space developing countries have to pursue socio-economic advancement”*

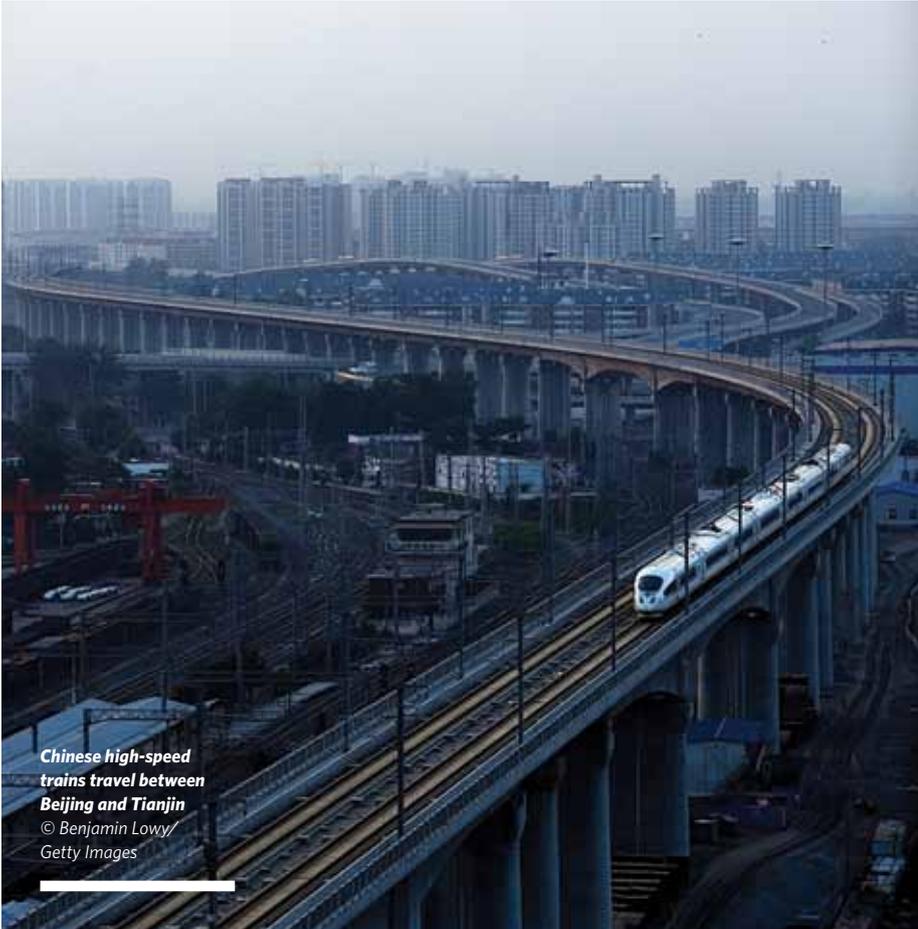
*Mira Mehrishi, Indian Ministry of Environment, on a draft of the Rio+20 outcome document, January 2012*

Top-ranked BRICS for: **Equality\***

<b>India</b>	<b>57</b>
China	91
Russia	94
Brazil	140
South Africa	151

\*Rankings using World Bank data on the Gini coefficient, which measures how far distribution of income deviates from perfect equal distribution

# BRICS in focus: **China**



Chinese high-speed trains travel between Beijing and Tianjin  
© Benjamin Lowy/Getty Images



**“China does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries or impose its will on others, and China does not allow outside forces to interfere in its internal affairs”**

*Yang Jiechi, Chinese Foreign Minister, at the UN General Assembly 2012*

**China's** 'big power' status would, in previous decades, likely have been explained in terms of its permanent membership of the UN Security Council, its nuclear weapons and increasing military might. It now has the world's largest army and is investing heavily in modernising it. Today, though, most would cite China's remarkable economic growth.

For some 30 years, the country averaged annual growth of nearly 10%, becoming the world's second-largest economy in 2010. It has remained strong during the recent economic crisis as a result of stimulus. Earlier this year, the World Bank announced that Millennium Development Goal 1 – halving global poverty levels in 1990 by 2015 – had probably been reached in 2010. About half of this decline is attributable to China, according to *The Economist*.

Growth has presented its own challenges: urbanisation, environmental degradation, internal migration and high inequality – a sixth of its population still lives below the international poverty line. Its development gains and demographic policies have also created a crisis in terms of care for older people. However, recent sustainability programmes and the realignment of spending to green projects indicate that China is still capable of rapid change.

This is an advantage of its one-party system. There are also many drawbacks: censorship, surveillance, corruption, forced evictions, disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, and the suppression of human rights defenders and ethnic and religious minorities, particularly in disputed territories. The country is also the world's most secretive and prolific executioner, with thousands killed last year.

On the international stage, China has continued to be cautious. Its abstention in the Security Council vote to authorise the protection of civilians and enforcement of a no-fly zone in Libya, and its affirmative vote on referring the Gaddafi regime to the International Criminal Court, were exceptions to its usual policy of non-interference, although it has supported such action in the past and regularly contributes to peacekeeping missions. In development terms, its engagement has increased massively. From oil in Angola to hospitals in the Democratic Republic of Congo, China's relationship with the continent links aid, trade and investment. Last year, China's trade with Africa reached a record \$166bn and, at a summit in Beijing this year, President Hu pledged \$20bn in credit to some 50 African leaders present.

**President** / Hu Jintao – expected to step down as General Secretary of the Communist Party in late 2012

**Government** / Single-party state

**Population** / 1.3bn (world rank: 1)

**GDP** / \$7.3trn (world rank: 2)

**Living under national poverty line** / 2.8% (2004)

**Living on less than \$1.25/day** / 13.6% (2008)



Top-ranked BRICS for: **GDP**

<b>China</b>	<b>7.3trn</b>
Brazil	2.2trn
India	1.8trn
Russia	1.7trn
South Africa	555bn



Worker on the site of the Tongon gold mine in Côte d'Ivoire, which is operated by South African mining company Randgold Resources  
© Issouf Sanogo/AFP/Getty Images

**South Africa's** transformation from apartheid to democracy is one of the most important developments of our time. The World Bank has described it as “a powerful demonstration of the proposition that a peaceful, negotiated path from conflict and injustice to cooperation and reconciliation is possible”. Elections are generally fair and the press and opposition parties free. The economy is well-managed and performing well, bolstered by plentiful natural resources, relatively good infrastructure and modern institutions.

Levels of poverty and unemployment remain high, however, and inequality is severe. For the poor and marginalised, basic services are patchy, especially in education, sanitation and health. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS remains a huge challenge. Although the country scores best among the BRICS for press freedom and anti-corruption, maladministration, nepotism and fraud are perceived as widespread – a consequence of the political dominance of the African National Congress, which, unsurprisingly, has won all four elections since 1994. NGOs have expressed concern at the weakening of state institutions, interference with the media and the suppression of dissidents with violence.

On the positive side, South Africa has championed progressive values internationally, pushing, for example, for the adoption of the first-ever UN Human Rights Council resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity. It has also recently moved to a tougher stance on Zimbabwe. At the Security Council, its record is mixed. It stalled progress on tackling the 2010 crisis in the Côte d'Ivoire and, after voting in favour of resolutions on Libya, has not backed action on Syria.

Key events – from the 2010 football World Cup to the 2011 Durban climate conference – have burnished its claim of being Africa's foremost state. (Nigeria, amongst others, tends to disagree.) But many continue to argue that South Africa is too small for BRICS status. Its population is just 51 million and it lacks both the economic and military might of the other four. It is neither a permanent member of the Security Council nor a clear-cut candidate for a seat. Moreover, there are other states – such as Indonesia – that seem to have more potential. Yet its position makes sense if one sees South Africa as a gateway to Africa, which all the other BRICS countries have been courting for investment and natural resources.



**WESTERN SAHARA**  
– one of South Africa's priorities for the 67th General Assembly session

**President** / Jacob Zuma

**Government** / Parliamentary republic

**Population** / 51m (world rank: 24)

**GDP** / \$555bn (world rank: 25)

**Living under national poverty line** / 23%

**Living on less than \$1.25/day** / 13.77%

*“The UN should never be dragged to side with any party in a conflict under the guise of civilian protection”*

President Zuma at the UN General Assembly 2012

Top-ranked BRICS for: **Corruption\***

South Africa	4.1
Brazil	3.8
China	3.6
India	3.1
Russia	2.4

\*Transparency International 2011 index

BRICS ... who's next? Goldman Sachs has listed the following (the 'Next 11') as markets with the potential to play significant roles in the global economy: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, South Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey and Vietnam.

# Climate change

*Gyan Chandra Acharya: climate change affects us all, but it does not affect us equally*



*Man walks in front of dying coconut trees on Abaiang, one of the Kiribati Islands. The island village of Tebunginako has had to relocate because of rising seas and sand erosion. The fresh water lagoon is now inundated with sea water, which has killed the trees and the milk fish, an important part of the local diet © Justin Mcmanus/The AGE/Fairfax Media via Getty Images*



*Ambassador Gyan Chandra Acharya is UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States*

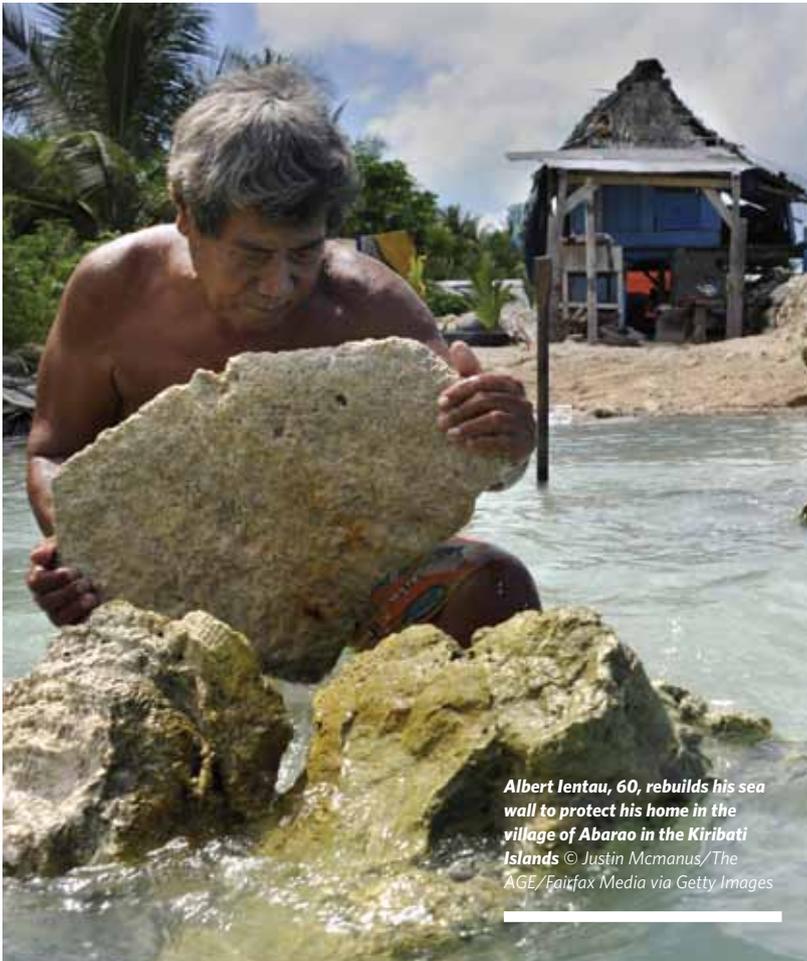
**T**HERE is no doubt that climate change is one of the major international challenges of our times. But while the phenomenon affects us all, it does not affect us equally, nor do we possess the same capacity to respond to these challenges. This June, the Rio+20 conference drew attention once again to the glaring reality that those least responsible for climate change are in fact those most affected by its adverse consequences. What we need now is a higher level of global understanding, and quicker and more comprehensive action on the ground.

In the 48 least developed countries (LDCs), 31 landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and 52 small island developing states (SIDS) – all of which continue to battle myriad challenges related to poverty and under-development – climate change has already made a visible dent in economic growth, social indicators, water

availability, food production and fragile ecosystems. Above all, it has become a livelihood issue.

Research has shown that the negative effects of altered weather patterns on crop production are especially pronounced in LDCs, where the agricultural sector accounts for a large share of GDP, export earnings and employment. The majority of the poor resides in rural areas; they depend on agriculture and other natural resources for their livelihoods. Similarly, desertification, coastal erosion, submersion of land due to the sea level rise, ocean acidification and melting of glaciers are going to accelerate the scale and intensity of disasters.

From an economic development perspective, it is clear that adaptation is vital if these countries are to maintain the pace of progress achieved over the past decade. The reality, however, is that for all of the LDCs, and small islands in particular, their current low >>



*Albert Ientau, 60, rebuilds his sea wall to protect his home in the village of Abarao in the Kiribati Islands © Justin Mcmanus/The AGE/Fairfax Media via Getty Images*

We also need to inject more urgency and coherency into international climate negotiations. A new global deal, to be finalised by 2015 and in force by 2020, will require all nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emission and strengthen adaptation. All should make efforts to ensure an effective and ambitious agreement based on the fundamental principles of justice and equity.

It is equally important that landlocked developing countries are not left behind. Concerns over land degradation, desertification, deforestation, and destruction of transport infrastructure have been magnified as a result of climate change. These challenges come on top of others – from commodity price volatility to rising food and energy prices – that are preventing these states from achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

*We look for an enhanced and strengthened global partnership based on equity but also on solidarity and a common humanity with those who are least capable*

Finally, we must pursue a global ‘green economy’ – a core theme at the Rio+20 conference. This will entail moving away from the prevailing ecologically destabilising patterns of development to modes of development based on poverty alleviation and environmental protection. These two pillars need to reinforce each other. For these vulnerable countries, many of which have not experienced carbon intensive and heavy industrialisation, consumption and production, the notion of a ‘green economy’ offers and opens up many prospects. In this regard, two major achievements at Rio+20 offer hope: the concept of ‘GDP plus’, so-called ‘green accounting’ which looks at environmental assets and costs, and agreement on developing a set of sustainable development goals. Both herald better prospects for the future.

In my view, a transition to a ‘green economy’ will require certain adjustments, as well as a mix of policies and measures tailored to the needs and preferences of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. We should, however, recognise that these countries are among the poorest and that they are already facing severe structural challenges as they attempt to arrest deepening poverty. The vulnerability of these countries is multi-layered and multifaceted and while climate change is indeed a major concern, they remain equally vulnerable to a variety of external shocks, such as spikes in oil and food prices. Therefore, we look for an enhanced and strengthened global partnership based on equity but also on solidarity and a common humanity with those who are least capable.

There is no doubt that the national leadership in these countries and the right policy instruments are critical to achieving these objectives. But given the meagre resources for their own domestic development, I encourage development partners to step up to the plate and provide adequate financial, technical and technological resources to vulnerable countries in order to enable them to leapfrog into green, environmentally sustainable development paths. This would enable some of the world’s poorest people to benefit from the ‘green industrialisation’, ‘green technology’ and ‘green jobs’ dividends that we all aspire to achieve. ●

>> adaptive capacity makes them extremely vulnerable to the deleterious impact of climate change. Fundamental constraints limit their choice of options and their scope of implementation: inadequate data or information and technical capacity for timely and effective adaptation planning, weak institutional capacity, access to technology and its adaptation, and limited financial resources.

It is also important to highlight that these countries are already initiating various programmes with the support of United Nations bodies, development partners and mechanisms arising from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Agriculture, forestry, coastal management, renewable energy, policy and institutional reforms and human resources management – these are some of the key areas where substantial efforts are being made. But there remains a big gap between the requirements and the expected scope of activities.

A major stumbling block for these vulnerable countries is, of course, access to finance and technology. We need to strengthen access to, and the management of, climate funds in order to meet their adaptation and mitigation costs. These funds represent an alternative source of finance that can shield their development efforts from the recurring impact of disasters without further denting scarce national budgets or the dwindling levels of aid as a result of the international financial crisis.

Climate funds set up through the UNFCCC mechanisms – such as Global Environment Facility, the Adaptation Fund and LDC Fund – need to be enhanced substantially, disbursed quickly and made equitably accessible. They should also be able to catalyse access to alternative sources of financing and be effectively managed to deliver their intended impacts.

# Britain's quest for a role

*50 years ago US Secretary of State Dean Acheson said: "Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role." Few people are better placed than David Hannay to assess whether it has found one. In this wide-ranging interview, the former UNA-UK Chairman speaks about his memoirs (see page 27) and gives New World's editor, Natalie Samarasinghe, a masterclass in international relations*



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Lord Hannay of Chiswick joined the British diplomatic service in 1959. Dispatched to Tehran – where he met his wife – and Kabul to learn Persian, he later became the ‘go-to’ man for multilateral postings. He was involved in the negotiations that led to the UK’s entry into the European Communities and served as British Ambassador to the UN from 1990 and 1995, a period encompassing the first Gulf War, the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the massacres in Rwanda and Srebrenica.

His retirement upon leaving New York was short-lived. He spent the next seven years as UK Special Representative for Cyprus and then served on the UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which proposed far-reaching reforms to the Organisation in 2004. From 2006–11 he was Chairman of UNA-UK. Now, he is Chair of the UN All-Party Parliamentary Group, co-chair of the APPG on global security and non-proliferation, and a member of the EU Select Committee and of the Top Level Group of Parliamentarians for Multilateral Disarmament & Non-proliferation.

His latest book, *Britain’s Quest for a Role*, provides fascinating insights into British, European and international politics over five decades, peppered with anecdotes about the people and places that have shaped this story.

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**H**AS Britain found a role? My conclusion is obviously a work in progress because British foreign policy evolves the whole time, as does Britain’s place in the world. I think in some respects it has. The way that Britain has handled its role in the UN Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation – in these big multilateral institutions – has been quite effective and about right for a country of our size, which has both worldwide interests and worldwide responsibilities. It has been less successful in defining a stable and proper relationship with the United States, and it has fallen victim to political infighting and uncertainty of purpose where the absolutely key relationship for this country is concerned: the European Union.

The European dimension is fundamental – I do not think we will get a proper balance to our relationship with the US if we are not playing a full role in the EU. If the US perspective is that our influence at the European level is diminishing, then our ability to have an effective relationship with the US will diminish too. The same goes for the councils of the big multilateral institutions. If we are not able to influence the formation of European policy on the environment or development, or on pressing peace and security issues, such as Syria, our quest for a role will be undermined.

One area in which Britain has an opportunity to make an impact is through the Prime Minister’s role as co-chair of the UN panel that is working on what should follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is, of course, early days yet. We are talking about the world after 2015. But there is a need, a really serious need, to make the MDGs a more effective tool for development policy than they have been in their first 15 years. For one, we need better monitoring of the commitments made by developing countries, some of which have been unable or unwilling to deliver on their promises, and of those made by donor countries.

But what’s really crucial in my view is that the MDGs after 2015 focus on what has been called the ‘bottom

billion’, the people at the bottom of the heap in countries who, for various reasons – conflict, corrupt governments – are not making progress. We must achieve a much sharper focus on those countries. Other countries that have made huge progress during the first 15 years, countries like China, India and Brazil, have reached a point now where, one hopes, most of their development will be self-sustaining. Indeed, they are going to become one of the motors of the developed world, which is changing during this period and ceasing to be purely Western-dominated.

Should these emerging powers contribute more to aid? Well, I’m not sure we should be thinking in terms of money necessarily. These countries still have enormous demands on their budgets in terms of providing support for their own poor. The belief that somehow China or India no longer have any problems is fanciful. So we need to allow for the fact that they are not likely to become massive financial aid donors. But what they do have, and what I think they will become increasingly willing to put at the disposal of others, is experience and skill and people who know about what these countries have done to bring their people out of poverty.

Take Brazil. The family support measures that former president Lula introduced have been a great success, broadly speaking, and the Brazilians have acquired a huge amount of knowledge about how to make those programmes work and they’ve got a lot of educated people. So we shouldn’t be looking so much for money but for experience and how best UK and EU aid programmes can work together with these emerging countries.

We should also remember that Britain is in single figures in any league table of world power, in terms of its trade, wealth, military capability and also in what is often called ‘soft power’ – our universities, our expertise in various sectors. On any kind of computation we are still a country that counts and therefore a country that has responsibilities, that is to say, a country that can afford and be expected to help others. That is as true of Britain now during the height of austerity as it was when we were more comfortably placed. Our ability to do so may have been affected but that is recognised in the UN’s benchmark of committing 0.7% of GNP to aid. If our GNP doesn’t increase or shrinks, then the amount of aid we give will shrink too. To cut back in any aggressive way on the programmes we have would greatly reduce Britain’s influence in the world and would, I think, fall very short of what we should be seeking to achieve.

I must confess I am a little worried about developments at the moment. The economic crisis is resulting, as it did in the 1930s and, to a lesser extent, the 1970s, in countries turning away from their international responsibilities and looking inwards. The attitude seems to be that global issues will have to be dealt with later, they can’t afford to deal with them now. That, I think, is a disastrous conclusion. The world needs multilateral institutions even more during a period of financial turmoil.

When I went to the UN in 1990, we were in a remarkably benign period in which the five permanent members of the Security Council worked very closely together. At that time, there was a very brief opening for putting the UN closer to the centre of multilateral security. This opportunity was blown, mainly due to inadvertence. Everyone handed themselves huge peace dividends with the end of the Cold War instead of diverting a small portion of those funds towards making the UN a more effective operator. And now, the dynamics of the Council are very



**Photo from Britain’s Quest for a Role:** David Hannay crossing a tributary of the Oxus River at the foot of the Wakhan corridor where Russia, China and Pakistan meet, during his time in Afghanistan in the early 1960s. “The local chief of police was not pleased to be photographed in such an undignified pose; but he did not want to get his feet wet”



different. The handling of Syria has been lamentable and I do not believe that the Russian and Chinese vetoes were in any way justified. But we must not react by returning to the Cold War paradigm whereby one veto leads to another and another. That would be appalling.

This is, potentially, a period of great risk. The power relationships in the world are shifting quite fundamentally. The US has seen its (brief) status as the only superpower diminish. China, India and other developing countries are becoming much more influential and have greater regional, and perhaps global, significance. We need to think about how to incorporate them into a genuinely egalitarian and rules-based order.

It was precisely those sort of shifts in late 19th century Europe which led to the first and second world wars. I'm not saying that's the direction we're going in now, but I think anyone who fails to recognise what has been going on in the South China Sea as distant rolls of thunder which could presage much worse is deluding themselves. I find it aberrant that none of the players ever mention the desirability of referring these disputes to either the International Court of Justice or the tribunal set up under the Law of the Sea Treaty, both of which offer a way in which these disputes could be resolved peacefully. Instead, the Chinese are determined to negotiate bilaterally as they, of course, are stronger and more influential than the other countries involved. The Americans >>

### —Hannay on Afghanistan

The story of Afghanistan is one of international neglect and foreign meddling. When I was there in the 1960s, it was simply not on the world diplomatic map. That happened only when the Soviet Union intervened in 1979 and it became part of the Cold War. It was a mistake, in my view, to have neglected the country, in particular after the Soviet withdrawal. We failed to provide the Afghans with a path from authoritarian rule to some form of participation, education, development and stability. Instead, there was a bloody civil war that led to the Taliban rule, the harbouring of bin Laden and the rest of that dreadful story.

### —Hannay on Iran

History books will record the Iranian revolution as being every bit as important as the French revolution, but neither the Iranians nor the rest of the world have found a way of accommodating themselves to the need for Iran to play a positive role in the region, instead of a destabilising one. I think that we must be persistent with a diplomatic approach to the problems posed by Iran's nuclear programme. I find it very hard to believe that nuclear weapons are not part of the Iranian government's thinking. The government has been involved in terrorism and in attempts to destabilise its neighbours. Of course, it would reply that its neighbours have tried to do the same, and that is correct. We've got to get away from that. We must not focus only on telling Iran what it mustn't do. We also need to focus on trying to find together with Iran a way in which it can work for regional peace and security, perhaps through a regional or sub-regional organisation in which all states around the Gulf can play a role in determining mutually beneficial policies.

### —Hannay on careers

If you want an international career, I think the most important thing is to try to acquire a bit of work experience in countries outside what you might call most normal Britons' comfort zone, difficult countries, countries about which we know very little. If you can find a way of doing so that will add hugely to your value, whether you apply to the Foreign Office, a UN agency or a business. Languages too. One of the worst things that is going on in this country at the moment is the decline in knowledge of foreign languages. We cannot hope to understand the cultures, societies and politics of other countries, often very important players around the world, if we don't even take the trouble to learn a few words of their language.

### Extract from Britain's Quest for a Role

"I had arrived in Iran a bachelor but we left for Kabul a married couple, which I am delighted to say we still are some 50 years later. My future wife, Gillian, had been working in the embassy for a year before I arrived. She was due to return to Britain in May 1961 and I to go in the opposite direction to Kabul. Instead, we were married on a glorious early summer day in Tehran; and, after a honeymoon in East Jerusalem (still then under Jordanian control) and Beirut, we set off by road for Afghanistan. I did make one serious mistake on my wedding day; it was not that I got married, but that I took the last paper of the Foreign Office's High Persian exam on the same day. This piece of hubris was duly punished."

>> are giving the impression that they want to have a role in this, which simply upsets the Chinese. Far better if everyone would agree to settle this objectively and equitably. So I really think we must re-commit to making the UN more effective and more central to our actions.

In 2004, the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, of which I was a member, proposed a range of reforms intended to do just that. Of these, the 'responsibility to protect' was perhaps the most far-reaching, although I believe the Human Rights Council has, on balance, done better than its admittedly utterly discredited predecessor, and I hope that over time the Peacebuilding Commission will be put to better use. The problem with R2P is not about finding new verbal formulae for expressing it but rather its implementation – applying it in certain circumstances.

I happen to think that in Libya the intervention was broadly correctly carried out. It was justified, proportionate and it brought results which have been, on balance, beneficial to Libyan citizens. This should tell us that it can be done. Just as the intervention in Côte d'Ivoire, also a case for R2P, resulted in an elected government being put in place. Now, we are witnessing a situation in Syria where things are not being done. R2P would not have been adopted unanimously at the World Summit in 2005 had the massacres of Srebrenica and Rwanda not taken place – they must not be allowed to happen again.

I'm very clear in my mind that over Rwanda, over Somalia and Bosnia we collectively – the Security Council, the UN Secretariat – bear an extremely heavy responsibility, and for me it was a terrible experience to be involved in such far-ranging failures. Could they have been avoided? Some could. I'm not sure all of them could, though they could have been mitigated perhaps. We need to learn from that. We need to find a way of 'operationalising' R2P, to use that terrible phrase. This cannot be simply a ticket to military intervention. We must do more in conflict prevention too.

What about the Security Council? I'm afraid that reform of the Council, of its membership in particular, is a little bit like a mirage: it is always out there, you can see what it ought to be, but it seems very difficult to get there. And like mirages, I think it is unwise to become too narrowly focused on just achieving that, to the detriment of things that could be done here and now. I think it is quite right that Britain has said it supports enlargement, but we should not kid ourselves that this would solve all the problems. A larger Council with more developing-

country members and other permanent members would not have found it easier to find a solution to the Syria crisis. If you believe that would have been the case, I'm afraid it is an illusion.

Security Council reform is not some magic bullet to be pursued at the expense of everything else. Nor should we think that if it does not happen the Council has no legitimacy. The Council has very great legitimacy. It's set out in the UN Charter. It's in the 2000-plus resolutions the Council has adopted. It's reflected in the enormous successes in peacekeeping in places like Namibia, Cambodia and Mozambique, El Salvador, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Yes, we must work for a better Council but we should not undermine that legitimacy.

In the meantime, it is really important that the P5 cooperate and find ways of reconciling their differences. We also need to find ways of improving the 'command and control' of UN peacekeeping operations. That is to say, the crucial link between the Council which gives the mandate, the Secretary-General and Secretariat which carry it out, and those in the field who often get the impression that neither their bosses in the Secretariat nor their masters on the Council have a clue as to what life on the ground is actually like.

And we, especially those of us who are members of UNA-UK, should seek to explain to the public that the Security Council is not the only part of the UN which matters. Every day of every week of every year, huge amounts of absolutely invaluable work is being done by the Refugee Agency, the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the International Atomic Energy Agency and so on. All this represents a massive shift from the pre-1945 period when there were practically no activities of this sort, as well as a collective assumption of responsibility by the international community.

I also think UNA-UK has a role to play where the UK Parliament is concerned. For MPs, their work in Parliament is about domestic issues and politics, and who should criticise them for that? Not me, certainly. That is their job, to be stuck into health, education, welfare and so on. But Britain is a country that matters in the world and our politicians need to pay attention to that too. We need to get more interest in, knowledge of and involvement with UN issues in Parliament. I think there is great potential for Parliament to provide real input into the shaping of British foreign policy.

"What next for David Hannay?" Well, I've just celebrated my 77th birthday so I shan't, in all likelihood, be quite as active as I have been in the last 15 years since I notionally retired! But I'll still be a member of the House of Lords, I shall still follow UN and EU issues very closely. And when issues come up, such as the ban on cluster munitions or loopholes in our genocide legislation, I shall work hard on them. I will, for example, continue to raise the weaknesses, in my view, of the government's immigration policy in its impact on student visas, which is putting at risk not only one of our key invisible exports but also a crucial part of our 'soft power'. I'm sure I will not lack for things to do. ●

*"A larger Council with more developing-country members and other permanent members would not have found it easier to find a solution to the Syria crisis. If you believe that would have been the case, I'm afraid it is an illusion"*



**Photo from Britain's Quest for a Role: David Hannay with George H W Bush, whom he describes as the US President with the greatest sympathy for and knowledge of the UN. "The US wore its unipolar mantle with grace"**

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The Children at Risk Foundation, known by the acronym ACER in Brazil, was founded in 1993 to offer an alternative way of life to vulnerable children and young people living on the streets of São Paulo.

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