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## Reframing the rising powers debate: state transformation and foreign policy

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### ABSTRACT

The volume that we introduce breaks with the prevalent tendency in International Relations (IR) scholarship to treat rising powers (such as China, Russia, India and Brazil) as unitary actors in international politics. Although a neat demarcation of the domestic and international domains, on which the notion of unitary agency is premised, has always been a myth, these states' uneven integration into the global political economy has eroded this perspective's empirical purchase considerably. Instead, this collection advances the concept of 'state transformation' as a useful lens through which to examine rising power states' foreign policymaking and implementation. State transformation refers to the pluralisation of cross-border state agency via contested and uneven processes of fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation of state apparatuses. The volume demonstrates the significance of state transformation processes for explaining some of these states' most important foreign policy agendas, and outlines the implications for the wider field in IR.

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Over recent decades, the economic and strategic weight of several large developing states, such as the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, has grown dramatically. To be sure, North America and Europe still collectively account for roughly half of global output, and many commodity-exporting economies, including Brazil, Russia and South Africa, have been hit hard by the end of the commodities boom in 2014. Nonetheless, since 1990, the BRICS' share of global GDP alone doubled to 22.2%.<sup>1</sup> China, in particular, became the world's second-biggest economy in nominal terms in 2011, and by some estimates it is now the world's largest in purchasing power parity terms. Rising powers are also the main drivers of global economic growth. China is the highest contributor with 27.2%, India is second with 12.9% and Indonesia is in fourth place with 3.3%. By comparison, the US' share is 12.3% and Germany's is 2.2%, and rising powers' share is expected to grow further.<sup>2</sup> The emergence of the G-20 after the global financial crisis as a major multilateral platform for negotiating global economic governance, at the expense of the more narrowly constituted G-7, reflects this trend.

While it is clear that economic gravity has partly shifted away from the North Atlantic, the political implications of the 'rise' of states from other parts of the world are more contested. So far, the debate has focused primarily on the impact on the US-led 'liberal international order' and its associated global governance institutions. Two main positions have emerged: one argues that rising powers, especially China, seek to undermine and ultimately replace the current Western-led order;<sup>3</sup> the other argues that these states have benefited from the status quo and are therefore keen to retain it.<sup>4</sup> The availability of evidence supporting both 'revisionist' and 'status-quo' perspectives means neither is falsifiable. Hence, the debate, as currently structured, is irresolvable. For example, the establishment of the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was widely viewed as a challenge to the US-dominated World Bank and Asian Development Bank, but the AIIB's rules and operating procedures closely mirror those of other multilateral development banks.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, under the leadership of the populist Narendra Modi, notwithstanding anti-elitist and nationalist rhetoric and the diplomatic bureaucracy's creeping marginalisation, there has been no apparent shift in India's foreign policy against multilateralism or global governance institutions, unlike in other cases of populist foreign policy, such as the US under President Donald Trump.<sup>6</sup>

Because the evidence is mixed, the debate has become highly speculative, reflecting not what rising powers currently do, but observers' beliefs about what they will do in the future,<sup>7</sup> which ultimately stem from their preferred theoretical models. 'Revisionists', who are often realists, explain status-quo behaviour as only a temporary accommodation in that they are merely 'biding their time' until they become stronger.<sup>8</sup> 'Status-quoists', who are often liberals, argue that apparent revisionism is largely manoeuvring designed to improve rising powers' position within the existing order.<sup>9</sup> Much of this work mirrors the debate between realists and liberals over the so-called 'unipolar moment'.<sup>10</sup> Some of it arguably indicates an element of ethno-centrism in which the 'rise' of the Other can only be understood as a threat to the Self.<sup>11</sup> Debates about 'rising powers' and their challenge to the system thus begin and end in these self-referential terms. As E. H. Carr observed, in words which retain a great deal of truth, the study of international relations in English-speaking countries is simply a study of 'how to run the world from positions of strength'.<sup>12</sup>

The difficulty stems from the fact that scholars on both sides of this debate treat rising-power states as *unitary* actors in international politics. Scholars are therefore concerned to divine the true intentions of, say, 'China' or 'India'; but, because the evidence is mixed, they ultimately cherry-pick or interpret evidence in ways that reinforce their theoretical proclivities. There is little attempt to explain *why* discrepant evidence persists, or to amend contending paradigms to account for apparently contradictory behaviours by supposedly unitary states. This ontological premise is common in International Relations (IR) theory in general, not just in the case of rising powers.<sup>13</sup>

Over the past 30 years, however, a large literature in IR has emerged to discuss the *transformation of statehood*, and the concomitant expansion of the range of state, international and non-state actors involved in international relations and global governance.<sup>14</sup> Yet, even among those cognisant of this shift who do take account of the effects of globalisation on states, the consensus appears to be that these processes have largely bypassed contemporary rising powers. They are seen as Westphalian, concerned above all with national sovereignty, and hence unwilling to pool competencies and devise transnational governance arrangements – the hallmark of the liberal order. Flesher thus argues that the 'way [is] being paved back to Westphalia ... by rising powers such as China, India and Brazil, who are staunch

guardians of the principle of national sovereignty'.<sup>15</sup> The BRICS are said to 'share a neo-Westphalian commitment to state sovereignty and non-intervention'.<sup>16</sup> They are a 'coalition of sovereign state defenders', united by the desire to 'erode western hegemonic claims by protecting the principle which these claims are deemed to most threaten, namely the political sovereignty of states ... Thus, the BRICS – even the democratic ones – fundamentally diverge from the liberal vision of Western countries'.<sup>17</sup> Even in International Political Economy (IPE), scholars have identified an 'unacknowledged transition from the globalisation debate of the 1990s, in which transnational economic processes were alleged to have made the state a less relevant actor, to a more state-centric framework'.<sup>18</sup>

However, new theoretical perspectives on rising powers are emerging, backed by mounting empirical evidence, that challenge dominant perceptions. Scholars are drawing attention to the emergence of post-Westphalian forms of statehood and modes of governance beyond the developed West – including in today's rising powers. Theoretically, perspectives from anthropology, geography and political economy have been especially useful in offering fresh insights that challenge the terms of the sterile 'revisionist versus status quo' debate. These approaches have often disaggregated the state and examined the precise complexion of socio-political power relations and conflicts that shape how state power is deployed. This allows for seeing states' international activities as not necessarily emanating from the same source: a strong central executive that supposedly resolves all questions and contestations into a single, authoritative foreign policy.

Empirically, growing evidence shows that rising-power states have been transformed over the last few decades. They have become more: *fragmented*, as formerly powerful central agencies disperse power and resources to multiple agencies – public and private – and retreat to a 'regulatory state' model. State power has become more *decentralised*, as control over policy and resources is devolved to regions, provinces and urban centres. State apparatuses have *internationalised*, as formerly purely domestic agencies acquire an international role, and join, form or promote different, rescaled forms of transnational governance and regulation. In short, contrary to prevalent assumptions, rising power states are not necessarily unitary actors in international politics, nor is state power in these countries neatly demarcated by national borders. However, these processes of fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation invariably affect how power and wealth are distributed among groups in state and society. They are therefore contested and uneven, manifesting differently across countries and issue-areas, depending on the particular social, economic, political and institutional context.<sup>19</sup>

In a 'proof of concept' article, Hameiri and Jones show that state transformation conditions the foreign and security policies of China, arguably the most significant rising power.<sup>20</sup> Similar trends are visible elsewhere, albeit with considerable variation, which demands detailed exploration and explanation. In Russia, for example, decentralisation under Yeltsin fostered a boom of 'paradiplomacy' by regional governments, before recentralisation reversed this process,<sup>21</sup> though the Ukraine crisis can also be seen as a clash between Russian and EU transnational regulatory projects.<sup>22</sup> In India, paradiplomacy is also observable, though curiously the foreign policy role of local governments seems less prominent than in China, despite India's formally federal, democratic constitution.<sup>23</sup> Local states have also assumed a growing international role in Brazil, engaging in global environmental governance processes,<sup>24</sup> while non-state actors have become involved in foreign policymaking and implementation networks since the 1990s.<sup>25</sup>

Research publications on state transformation in rising powers have typically been authored by area specialists, often working in mutual isolation.<sup>26</sup> For that reason and due to IR's typical ontological and methodological biases, they have failed to make the necessary theoretical impact on IR. The current impasse in the important debate on rising powers suggests that it is no longer possible to ignore their insights. This volume is the first ever devoted to taking stock of these developments comparatively, by examining the nature and impacts of state transformation dynamics across several major rising power states – China, Russia, India, Brazil, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Although an exhaustive assessment is impossible, given the vast scope of the subject matter, the contributions in this volume all clearly show the value of applying a state transformation lens to the study of rising powers. For each state, our contributions demonstrate that state transformation processes, always contested and uneven, have had a major impact on key areas of foreign and security policymaking and implementation, and explain precisely how and why. Given the collection's breadth and depth, it should be clear enough that models that treat these states as unitary actors in international politics are inadequate.

Below, we briefly discuss the concept of state transformation, followed by a short introduction of the volume's contributions. In the conclusion, we outline some possible future research agendas on state transformation in international politics stemming from this collection.

## State transformation and rising powers

State transformation is a concept that broadly refers to the political, legal and institutional reconfiguration of state power and apparatuses. This involves changes to the authority of, and relations between, different agencies and actors, often across the public–private and domestic–international divides. In this process, existing agencies, functions and forms of authority are weakened or completely destroyed, while new ones are created or strengthened. Although broad enough to encompass earlier or future state transformations, over recent decades the term has especially been used to refer to the shift from Weberian, hierarchical, 'command and control' systems to more fluid, overlapping patterns of rule, involving the continuous negotiation of authority between a wide variety of actors at different scales.<sup>27</sup> The range of contemporary governance phenomena encompassed under the term 'state transformation' is very wide, including: the redistribution of powers across state agencies; the outsourcing of state authority to quasi-autonomous or private actors; decentralisation to subnational governments or delegation upwards to supranational bodies; the effective capture of state apparatuses by non-state and even criminal factions; the performance of state discourse by multiple actors – public and private, local and global; or, as is often the case, several of these processes simultaneously.<sup>28</sup>

Noting this wide diversity, Hameiri and Jones identify three main dimensions of state transformation – fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation.<sup>29</sup> Fragmentation refers to the dispersion of policymaking and implementation authority among a wide range of agencies, often with overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions. This may also involve the inclusion of non-state actors within public governance processes. Decentralisation refers to the reallocation of authority and resources to subnational governments, such that these come to operate quasi-autonomously from the central government. Decentralisation may

be *de jure* – enshrined in federal constitutional arrangements and supporting legislation, as in India, Brazil and Indonesia, or *de facto*, the result of piecemeal reform and practices, as in China – or some combination thereof. Internationalisation refers to the increasing propensity of agencies with an ostensibly domestic remit to operate across borders, often by networking with peers in other countries, and with international organisations. This process reflects the blurring of the distinction between domestic and foreign policy domains associated with growing, real or perceived, cross-border interconnectedness under globalisation. For instance, perceived vulnerability to threats of infectious pathogens rapidly spreading around the world has meant that domestic health authorities are no longer merely focused on managing (sub)national health systems but often interact closely with health authorities in other countries, and in some cases even intervene across borders to improve disease surveillance and/or response.<sup>30</sup> These three dimensions of state transformation often coincide, manifesting in different ways and to varying extents across countries and issue-areas. Crucially, the coincidence of fragmentation and/or decentralisation with internationalisation in given issue-areas may produce uncoordinated and incoherent, even contradictory, foreign and security policies from the various state apparatuses now making and implementing international policies in any given country.

While the state transformation concept has initially emerged in political science and governance studies to describe shifts in developed Western states from the late 1970s, it has since found some purchase in IR and IPE due to the intensification and deepening of economic globalisation. In the 1980s and 1990s, the debate over the effects of globalisation on the state tended to veer between two extreme positions: hyperglobalists posited that globalisation would vastly erode state powers or even end nation-statehood altogether; and statist institutionalists argued that states with high ‘capacity’ could maintain and even increase their strength under globalisation. For some, however, such ‘zero-sum’ positions, which understand globalisation’s effects on the state in absolute terms, were unhelpful. More nuanced arguments began to emerge, focusing on the particular ways in which states were changing in a more globalised context. Cerny, for example, argued that the social welfare states of the postwar era were becoming ‘competition states’, geared towards promoting national competitiveness in a global economy.<sup>31</sup> Slaughter described emergent transgovernmental networks, linking functional agencies across borders in the management of shared problems, as ‘the real new world order’.<sup>32</sup> Rosenau observed that state fragmentation often happened simultaneously with new forms of integration, generating new modes of cross-border governance.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Sassen and Ong and Collier identified ‘global assemblages’ forming among state apparatuses and non-state actors.<sup>34</sup>

Noting that not all states were manifesting similar changes, Sørensen argued that ‘state transformation’ better described globalisation’s effects on statehood.<sup>35</sup> Though the concept usefully moves away from ‘zero-sum’ assessments, it also opens up a new set of important questions regarding how to best describe and explain the wide variety of observable forms of state transformation. Foreshadowing many of the misconceptions that persist in the debate on rising powers, Sørensen opted to provide ideal-typical categorisations of states as either ‘pre-modern’, ‘modern’ or ‘post-modern’, terms that closely correspond with post-Westphalian, Westphalian and pre-Westphalian, used by other scholars.<sup>36</sup> Post-modern’ or post-Westphalian states are understood to manifest the most advanced forms of state transformation. Sørensen’s main examples are the member-states of the EU, which have pooled their sovereignty in several issue-areas, producing complex forms of multilevel

governance. 'Modern' or Westphalian states, typified for Sørensen by rising powers like China and India, protect their national sovereignty and continue to focus on building national military and economic power. Finally, pre-modern or pre-Westphalian states are countries, mainly in Africa and the South Pacific, where the central government cannot even control the entire national territory. These categories have been used by foreign policy specialists to suggest that, while the study of Western foreign policy might require some theoretical amendments, rising powers' Westphalian states require no such treatment.<sup>37</sup>

It is highly problematic to categorise entire countries in this way, as this does not account for the considerable variation apparent within particular countries in how different issues are governed. Europe's post-Westphalian states often play 'sovereignty games', resisting transnational governance in some areas,<sup>38</sup> and the post-modern UK is now struggling in a Westphalian echo chamber over Brexit. Meanwhile, as we show in this issue, supposedly staunchly Westphalian authoritarian states, like China, Russia or Saudi Arabia, often manifest significant post-Westphalian transformations. It is consequently crucial to go beyond ideal-typical heuristics to examine concretely the dynamics of transformation as they pertain to particular states and issue-areas – the aim of this volume.

How state transformation is understood is inextricably bound up with state theory, such that every state theoretical tradition produces its own theorisation of state transformation.<sup>39</sup> For instance, historical institutionalists often emphasise institutional dynamics, such as 'path dependence', 'critical junctures', 'feedback loops' and 'layering',<sup>40</sup> while Gramscians focus on struggles between coalitions of social forces, whose composition and relative power are rooted in the political economy.<sup>41</sup> Although the majority of our contributions employ an analytic framework drawing on the latter, our principal aim was not theoretical development, but to show the applicability of the state transformation lens across a wide range of apparently different cases. Each contribution identifies and explains key aspects of the fragmentation, decentralisation and/or internationalisation processes most relevant for its country of focus, and traces the significance for the outcomes of these countries' international engagements.

A particular focus for all of our contributors was analysing the nature of the relationship between the central state – top leaders and central agencies – and the wider range of actors involved in policymaking and implementation within transformed state apparatuses. Reflecting the rejection of 'zero-sum' approaches, deploying a state transformation lens does *not* equate with an assumption of a weak centre. Rather, state transformation emphasises the changing nature of central agencies and elites' authority and its exercise. State transformation entails the 'relativisation' of the national scale, such that it no longer has a taken-for-granted position as the only locus of power and resources.<sup>42</sup> The result is rarely anarchy, however, but usually the emergence of various forms of regulatory statehood.<sup>43</sup> In the regulatory state, the core executive typically shifts from direct intervention towards 'meta-governance' – the steering of other actors via a range of instruments, such as setting broad policy objectives, standards, rules and performance targets.<sup>44</sup> The core executive also often attempts to coordinate the wide range of actors involved in policymaking, usually through 'negative' coordination – delineating respective spheres of authority and coordinating quasi-autonomous actors or networks – rather than 'positive' coordination – the purposeful harnessing of agencies towards a shared goal.<sup>45</sup> The centre often has various tools to induce compliance, such as control over budget allocations and economic opportunities, as well as disciplinary mechanisms, though these also tend to vary from state to state.

In China, for example, the structure of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) reinforces top leaders' efforts to control other actors within a fragmented party-state. Central actors control significant budgets, planning decisions and cadres' promotion prospects. The CCP also has powerful supervision and discipline processes that may be used when officials stray too far off course. But even in China, top leaders' control is far from perfect and other actors, like provincial governments and state-owned enterprises (SOEs), exercise considerable autonomy in practice.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, reflecting state fragmentation, the centre may itself be politically divided. In such cases, different sections of the political elite may align with state apparatuses and societal actors in competition with other similar coalitions. The internationalisation of state apparatuses is often an attempt to intervene in such struggles to strengthen one coalition over others, as we see for example in the case of Saudi Arabia in this volume.

Other actors are not passive but may engage the centre via one or more of the three I's – influencing, interpreting and ignoring.<sup>47</sup> Influencing refers to efforts to use formal and informal means to shape national policy agendas and decisions in ways that support the interests and agendas of other actors. For instance, China's Hainan Province lobbied the central government hard to adopt a maximalist view of Chinese sovereignty over the South China Sea.<sup>48</sup> Interpreting and ignoring refer more directly to actors' degree of autonomy vis-à-vis central dictates. In regulatory states, many central directives are not detailed policy plans but rather broad objectives. This often allows considerable scope for other actors to interpret these in ways that suit their own agendas and interests, and that may even be contrary to central actors' original intentions. In the case of China's BRI, for example, a very loose policy 'envelope' has allowed central ministries, provincial governments, state-owned enterprises and state-owned banks to claim almost all activities are commensurate with the top leadership's aims.<sup>49</sup> Ignoring simply means disregarding the centre's wishes when these are seen to undermine preferred objectives. The extent to which this occurs depends on the nature of the relationship between the centre and other actors, and the centre's capacity to effectively discipline errant behaviour. In the case of Indonesia, for example, the country's deep decentralisation has provided local elites considerable leeway vis-à-vis Jakarta-based elites and central agencies.<sup>50</sup>

## Structure of the volume

Following this introduction, the volume contains nine contributions, covering the majority of the most important rising powers – China, Russia, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. These are evidently very different cases. China and Saudi Arabia are authoritarian states, while the rest are all democracies or semi-authoritarian regimes, though these are merely formal designations which conceal a great deal of variety. Similarities between authoritarian states, like China and Saudi Arabia, or between democracies, like India and Brazil, should not be overstated. Russia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Brazil's economies are heavily dependent on the export of primary commodities, while China and India are net commodity importers. China and Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent Russia, have massive state sectors, while the other countries' economies are dominated by private businesses. Despite these differences, significant state transformation processes have taken place in all of these countries as part of their integration into the global political economy. As we show, however, the precise nature of state transformation and its effects vary greatly, shaped by the relevant social, political, economic and institutional dynamics in each country and issue-area.

We pay particular attention in the volume to China, Russia and India. Debates on rising powers tend to focus heavily on China as the most powerful rising state.<sup>51</sup> However, particularly in Europe, Russia is seen as the main challenge to the liberal order. Furthermore, both countries are very hard test-cases for our thesis. They are seen as *the* quintessential highly centralised, Westphalian states, in which top leaders exercise overwhelming control over the deployment of state power towards attaining national goals. Yet, closer observation reveals a more complex reality. For example, Cooley has contrasted the oft-touted 'Great Game' with the practice of 'local rules' which determine the real nature of competition between Russia, China and other putative great powers in Central Asia.<sup>52</sup> These rules include regime survival rent-seeking via close ties with the private sector, and gatekeeping through the use of brokers and conditions on market access. They are comparable to the fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation that Hameiri and Jones observe as challenging the notion of a centralised state. That state transformation processes are so significant in explaining the foreign and security policies of Russia and China strongly supports our overall claims in this issue. India, meanwhile, as the world's biggest democracy, is often posited as a counterforce to China, notwithstanding the considerable foreclosing of political space under Modi. Perhaps counterintuitively, however, Indian foreign policymaking and implementation have remained largely concentrated in the hands of top leaders and its foreign affairs bureaucracy, notwithstanding the increasing involvement of subnational governments and think tanks. As we show, the state transformation framework can explain these outcomes too.

In the volume's first contribution, Lee Jones and Jinghan Zeng examine what is arguably the signature foreign policy agenda of China's 'strongman' leader, Xi Jinping – the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, also known as One Belt, One Road). Launched in late 2013, the BRI purportedly involves China financing and building dozens of transboundary infrastructure projects – such as railway lines, roads, pipelines and ports – especially in Central and Southeast Asia, to provide better physical connectivity and spur economic growth. Many analysts have depicted BRI as a new, more 'proactive ... grand strategy', designed to produce 'a more multipolar order, in Asia and globally.'<sup>53</sup> It has also been described as a 'well thought-out Chinese grand strategy ... [designed] to reclaim [China's] geopolitical dominance in Asia ... [challenge] US dominance and ... create a Chinese-centered order.'<sup>54</sup> Jones and Zeng find, however, that state transformation processes in China since the late 1970s have made it difficult for Chinese leaders to design and implement 'grand strategy'. Chinese foreign policy is shaped by evolving contestation among fragmented, decentralised and partially internationalised party-state apparatuses and their societal allies. Projects like BRI are in fact loose 'policy envelopes', whose parameters and implementation are shaped by internal struggles for power and resources. They are kept deliberately vague to accommodate these diverse interests, creating wide latitude for them to influence, interpret and even rarely ignore top leaders' wishes. As a result, they argue, BRI is already unfolding in a fragmented, incoherent fashion, departing significantly from both its original design, in 2013, as part of 'periphery diplomacy', and from formal, top-level plans issued in 2015. This may generate outcomes that, far from reshaping the world in China's image, could undermine Chinese foreign policy objectives. Recent suspensions of BRI projects in countries as different as Malaysia and Sierra Leone, plus decisions by other countries, like Myanmar, to scale back BRI projects, appear to support their assessment.

John Heathershaw, Catherine Owen and Alexander Cooley examine Chinese and Russian activities in Central Asia – a region famously described by Mackinder as the ‘geographical pivot of history’ and often seen as of huge strategic importance to both countries. Central Asia features heavily in China’s BRI, while Russia, the region’s post-imperial power, established the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2014 – Central Asia’s first common market. The notion of a ‘New Great Game’ in Central Asia is established, however, on ‘centring’ discourses of China and Russia as unitary and coherent Westphalian actors strategically deploying tools of statecraft on their weaker neighbours. By contrast, the authors emphasise ‘decentring’ practices at the periphery as shaping the actual nature of engagement between China, Russia and Central Asian states and societies. They argue that the primary actors in the region are not unified states pursuing ‘national interests’, but capital-owning elites, foreign and local companies, and labour. Consequently, Russian and Chinese policies towards the region are often incoherent and employed *post hoc* to justify events and behaviours over which national governments had little control. They also contend that power, rather than being produced linearly through inter-state relations, is produced relationally in specific interactions between actors on the ground. The discursive claim to be a ‘rising power’ is produced through local practices of mimicry and *mētis* (everyday practices of local knowledge, knack, agency and subversion). Thus, Russia’s claims to be a rising power in Central Asia depend on various local deals struck to create buy-in for the EAEU and other bilateral deals, while in China’s case, in line with Jones and Zeng’s findings, the BRI provides a cover for Chinese businesses and capital seeking to expand into the region.

Biao Zhang’s contribution extends the discussion on state transformation in China by focusing on China’s National Nuclear Companies’ (NNCs) engagement with Europe. It is hard to think of a more sensitive export industry than civilian nuclear technologies, especially for a nuclear weapon state like China. Indeed, all Chinese NNCs are large centrally owned SOEs, which are often viewed as strategic tools of economic statecraft to advance national foreign policy goals. A close examination reveals that, like other SOEs, China’s NNCs have become largely autonomous actors, pursuing their commercial agendas of expansion into Europe with little coordination and even in some cases in contradiction with the activities and agendas of other foreign policy actors, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, rather than supporting China’s official policies towards Europe, the NNCs have often undermined them. Zhang shows that the dynamics of state transformation in China affect relations, not only with the Global South, but also with European countries, like the UK and Romania. This is important since, arguably, relations with the Global North are geopolitically more important, and the bulk of China’s outbound direct investment has gone there, often causing political alarm. In the UK, China’s NNCs pursued big projects even though the official position was to freeze relations following a visit to the UK by the Dalai Lama. Instead of cooperating, the NNCs competed fiercely, partnering with foreign companies to outbid their Chinese rivals, forcing central agencies to step in. In Romania, on the other hand, the NNCs refused to pursue large projects promised by Beijing, thus undermining the government’s official ‘16 + 1’ engagement policy with Eastern Europe.

Russia’s President Vladimir Putin is often described as a ‘new tsar’ – a powerful leader who dominates policymaking at home and abroad. Putin’s worldview is seen to have driven Russia’s increasing ‘assertiveness’ in its post-Soviet near abroad over the past decade. Daria Isachenko’s contribution challenges this perspective by identifying the actors coordinating Russian foreign policy in Russia’s near abroad, and the mechanisms of control that are used

to manage this assertiveness. Her focus is on 'curators' (*kuratory*), as they are commonly known in Russia – officials tasked with making things 'work', often bypassing or even competing with formal agencies. A curator is a 'political bureaucrat, a project manager authorised by the Kremlin to operate through personal agents', who 'is not publicly responsible for his agents' actions, and the agents follow his instructions only as long as they benefit from doing so'.<sup>55</sup> The reliance on curators stems from the functioning of the domestic system of governance in Russia – the so-called *sistema* – which is characterised by personalised networks of power, with curators playing an informal, 'supervisory' role. In the case of Russia's relations with Abkhazia – Isachenko's main case study – the extensive use of curators has generated confusion and contestation over who is in charge on the Russian side and what they are in charge of, fragmenting a notionally centralised formal structure.

Stuti Bhatnagar and Priya Chacko examine the role that think tanks have played in India's policy towards the contested region of Kashmir. Foreign policy making in India is typically viewed as highly centralised and dominated by the Prime Minister's Office and bureaucracy. In 2004, the Congress-Party-led United Progressive Alliance government launched a Composite Dialogue with Pakistan which included a place for Indian think tanks in the Kashmir dispute. Bhatnagar and Chacko argue that as India liberalised its economy amidst domestic political upheaval, think tanks were given greater access to domestic and foreign funding and adopted new roles in foreign policymaking. In the case of the Kashmir conflict, peacebuilding think tanks were encouraged by the government to engage in cross-border activities that would build constituencies for peace with Pakistan and promote economic cooperation as an incentive for peace. While the government aimed to depoliticise the conflict, these think tanks used this opportunity to draw attention to marginalised perspectives and issues. Peacebuilding think tanks nonetheless faced significant challenges in shaping the peace process because of structural constraints regarding access to resources and lack of autonomy to further their agendas. This reflected resistance within the state to depoliticising a conflict that has long been India's central national security issue.

Madhan Mohan Jaganathan examines the foreign policy role of India's Constituent States. Despite India's democratic and federal constitutional structure, the prevalent view in the literature is that foreign and security policies remain tightly controlled by executive agencies. India's Constituent States are seen to be even less internationally active than China's provinces, even though China's governance structure is formally centralised and hierarchical. Nonetheless, India's economic liberalisation since the 1990s and globalised economy have meant that subnational governments have increasingly become important players in a context of blurring distinctions between domestic and foreign policy domains. Instead of viewing the relationship between Constituent States and national policymakers in 'zero-sum' terms, Jaganathan asks *how far, and in what ways*, subnational actors can shape Indian foreign and security policy or pursue their own agendas in a state transformed by globalisation. Focusing on the case of Tamil Nadu's efforts to shape India's policy towards Sri Lanka and West Bengal's role in India's relationship with Bangladesh, he argues that the nature of the issue in question and coalitional dynamics are crucial. Where central authorities define an issue as a matter of national security, local governments have a weaker capacity to exert influence or act autonomously. And when national governments are dominated by a 'typical national party', such as the Indian National Congress or the Bharatiya Janata Party, there is typically less scope for regional activism, compared with national coalitions led by a regionally based party.

Daniel Cardoso's focus is Brazilian foreign policymaking. This was traditionally dominated by the highly professionalised and autonomous Ministry of External Relations (Itamaraty). However, since the 1990s foreign policymaking has changed through the increasing presidentialisation of the process and its incorporation of some non-state actors. This is within a wider context of a shift from import-substitution to economic liberalisation and globalisation, which involved the state reducing its grip over Brazilian society and economy. Through a case study of Brazil's increasingly important relationship with China, Cardoso's main concern is to understand this more fragmented policy process. Brazilian foreign policymaking increasingly occurs through networks involving both state and non-state actors. Although the Itamaraty initially opposed this transition, it has more recently embraced it, reorienting its focus towards meta-governance, specifically aiming to shape who is included and excluded, the overall direction of the policy process, and coordinating various networks. Thus, foreign policymaking through networks still occurs in the 'shadow of hierarchy'. In the case of Brazil's relations with China, network governance was directed towards providing the government with expertise on China, which was initially lacking, and with helping manage resistance from business groups concerned about losing out from greater Chinese economic engagement, especially in the industrial sector.

Moch Faisal Karim focuses on how state fragmentation and decentralisation in Indonesia, and the centre-local dynamics these processes have fostered, affect cross-border regionalism in Indonesia's periphery. Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous state and by some estimates it will have the world's fifth-biggest economy by 2030.<sup>56</sup> Although Indonesian state power was also radically decentralised as part of its democratisation process in the late 1990s, most scholarship on Indonesian foreign policymaking still focuses exclusively on the role of central agencies and the president. This is within a wider literature on the states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which emphasises their adherence to hard forms of national sovereignty and non-interference.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, Karim shows that Indonesia's regional integration has been considerably influenced by the decentralisation process. State power has long been used in Indonesia to shore up oligarchic interests via a system of patronage that directs economic opportunities to cronies. Under the Suharto regime this was centred on the presidency but, following decentralisation, politico-business networks fragmented, producing in some cases competition over power and resources between national and local elites, which often manifests as a struggle between national and local administrations. Examining the case studies of Batam and West Kalimantan–Sarawak cross-border regionalism, Karim argues that when elites at different scales in Indonesia have conflicting interests and strategies, this can cause policy incoherence, inhibiting the development of cross-border regionalism. Conversely, when they align and intersect with the interests of transnational business, cross-border regionalism can succeed. Ultimately, these struggles within a transformed state are undermining national elites' longstanding ambitions to make Indonesia a dominant regional power.

Finally, Babak Mohammadzadeh examines state transformation and foreign policymaking in Saudi Arabia, whose recent interventions in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen have exemplified its burgeoning power. Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy is often seen as the archetypical 'rentier state', in which the state is autonomous from society and where the king and a handful of princes exercise total control over foreign policymaking. Nonetheless, the increasing integration of Saudi Arabia into the global economy from the 1960s has led to the emergence, for the first time, of modern state bureaucracies and regulatory bodies. For the most

part, these were in fact princely fiefdoms, with overlapping and contested responsibilities. Indeed, while allegiance was developed vertically, it remained underdeveloped horizontally, meaning that, in the absence of top-down directives, state organisations retained considerable leeway and operational autonomy in practice. Mohammadzadeh describes this system of governance as a 'hub-and-spoke patronage system' with long-lasting institutional ties that distort royal patrimonialism. Alongside these, some pockets of technocratic competence emerged under Western guidance, such as the Saudi Arabia Monetary Authority (SAMA). Saudi Arabia's fragmented state was internationalised from the 1980s, as Saudi agencies have attempted to scale up their activities to the Gulf region as a whole, producing an incoherent foreign policy. In some cases, internationalisation was attempted as a way of shaping the outcome of domestic struggles. For example, SAMA took the lead on promoting Gulf monetary union, muscling out other ministries, in a bid to discipline the behaviour of members of the royal family. This effort failed, however, due to resistance from other Gulf states, especially the United Arab Emirates, worried about Saudi domination. SAMA's autonomous streak has upset too many powerful players in Saudi Arabian politics, however, and after the crowning of King Salman in 2015 it was stripped of many of its assets and responsibilities.

## Conclusion

While providing a fascinating set of cases, it is important to restate that the objective of this volume is not to outline a research agenda or analytical framework that applies only to states which are 'rising powers' – i.e. states which are 'the rest' rather than 'the West'. Nor is our framework necessarily confined to large, imperial state forms, like China and India, where centrifugal forces have long competed with centripetal dynamics. The autonomy demonstrated by SAMA is also visible in the actions of central banks in the capitalist West, which are typically freed from executive control and which provided something of a model for Saudi Arabia. The state transformation processes explored here with respect to India and Indonesia are just as visible in Italy and Ireland. The tendency of Chinese 'grand strategy' to conceal a hotchpotch of commercial and political interests, as witnessed by both Jones and Zeng and Heathershaw, Owen and Cooley, is also visible in EU strategy for other regions.<sup>58</sup> Russia's reliance on local 'curators' in its near abroad, as explored by Isachenko, is paralleled by US strategy in Afghanistan<sup>59</sup> and Iraq,<sup>60</sup> though perhaps with less success. A variety of state and non-state actors are present in UK foreign policy making,<sup>61</sup> as they are in the Brazil observed by Cardoso. The scope of state transformation is global, as many social scientists have been arguing for decades.

This volume thus highlights the reductiveness of much analysis and theory of 'rising powers' in contemporary IR. Despite a vast amount of creative work to develop IR theory away from the 'billiard ball' models of the high Cold War, it is notable that in IR's central contemporary debate, on the fate of the US-led world order when confronted by 'rising powers', these models are unjustifiably resilient, or even resurgent. Indeed, the apparent decay of the post-Cold War neoliberal order gives credence to those arguing that we are, with horrible inevitability, going 'back to the future'. Moreover, it is always so much easier to reduce the complex entity of, say, the Russian Federation to 'Moscow' or 'Putin', or China to 'Beijing' or 'Xi', than to properly reflect the processes of fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation taking place in practice. Despite decades of critical enquiry, foreign

policy experts and IR theorists find it all too easy to settle on the default analytical distinction of Inside/Outside, where domestic politics may be plural and complex, yet foreign policy is necessarily univocal. The worry of such scholars seems to be that of too many variables muddying the waters and negating parsimonious models of rise and decline. But to sacrifice fealty to reality for theoretical simplicity is short-sighted, and even hints at laziness in a discipline where empirical research remains weak in comparison to desk-based theorising. It certainly ignores many years of research in fields like international political economy, political geography and political anthropology. Scholars in these fields do not balk at claims that states are not unitary actors, but rather sites of conflict and processes of fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation, pulling state apparatuses in contradictory directions; indeed, most regard it as so elementary that it barely requires stating. Yet, mainstream IR remains mired in the 'territorial trap' identified 25 years ago by Agnew,<sup>62</sup> clinging to an understanding of states as 'containers' of national social, political and economic relations, expressing a coherent 'national interest' and a singular foreign policy. Insofar as this conception ever reflected reality, it did so only during a historically unique period: the first few post-war decades when, as a result of war, social conflict and class compromise, international and domestic governance was all oriented towards the consolidation of national state power. The IR theories developed during this period, which still dominate our discipline today, all bear its mark. But the state has moved on, and IR theory must, too. Should these ideas remain marginal to mainstream debates in IR, however, then one of the most important global transformations in living memory would remain fundamentally misinterpreted by the academic field dedicated to its study. This greatly, and needlessly, increases the risk of misunderstanding and great power conflict.

Finally, our basic insight in this volume, that state transformation processes matter greatly for the foreign policymaking and implementation of nearly all major rising powers, calls for further development. Below we provide some initial and non-exhaustive thoughts. First, scholars could continue to test the applicability of the framework in other contexts and cases. Second, future studies could extend the investigation to established powers, compare them with rising powers and examine how these processes have conditioned established powers' reception to the rise of new powers. Finally, another potential, and important, research direction would be to go beyond merely demonstrating that state transformation matters, our main objective in this volume, to show more precisely when, where and how it matters. This would require crafting more careful research designs, comparing along, for example, issue-areas. Some of the contributions in this collection have taken initial steps in this direction, but the scope for development of this research agenda is considerable.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## Notes

1. Gramer, "Infographic"; Bremmer, "Mixed Fortunes of the BRICS Countries."
2. Reports have estimated that large developing countries' share of global growth will further rise over the coming five years, suggesting greater economic convergence with the traditional economic centres is likely; Tanzi and Lu, "Where Will Global GDP Growth Come From?"
3. Buzan, "China in International Society."
4. Ikenberry, "Future of the Liberal World Order."
5. Wilson, "The Evolution of China's Asian."
6. Plagemann and Destradi, "Populism and Foreign Policy."
7. Breslin, "Understanding China's Regional Rise"; Breslin, "Still Rising or Risen (or Both)?"
8. Schweller, "Emerging Powers in an Age of Disorder"; Serfaty, "Moving into a Post-Western World."
9. Hurrell, "Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order"; Ikenberry, "Future of the Liberal World Order."
10. On the unipolar moment debate see Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment"; Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment Revisited"; Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion"; Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited."
11. Ling, "Worlds Beyond Westphalia," 554–5.
12. Cox, "Introduction," xiii.

13. Agnew, "The Territorial Trap"; Walker, *Inside/Outside*.
14. Cerny, "Paradoxes of the Competition State"; Slaughter, *A New World Order*; Rosenau, *Distant Proximities*.
15. Flemes, "Network Powers," 1016–17.
16. Cooper and Flemes, "Foreign Policy Strategies," 952.
17. Laïdi, "BRICS," 614–15.
18. Gray and Murphy, "Introduction," 185.
19. Gray and Murphy, "Introduction"; Jones, "Theorizing Foreign and Security Policy."
20. *Ibid.*
21. Tkachenko, "Regionalization of Russian Foreign"; Sharafutdinova, "Paradiplomacy in the Russian Regions."
22. Langbein, *Transnationalization and Regulatory Change*.
23. Jenkins, "India's States"; Jenkins "How Federalism Influences"; Sridharan, "Federalism and Foreign Relations"; Dossani and Vijaykumar, "Indian Federalism"; Plagemann and Destradi, "Soft Sovereignty, Rising Powers."
24. Setzer, "How Subnational Governments Are Rescaling."
25. Cardoso, "Network Governance."
26. Ortmann, "Beyond Spheres of Influence"; Zheng, *Globalization and State Transformation*.
27. Hooghe and Marks, "Unraveling the Central State"; Pierre and Peters, *Governing Complex Societies*.
28. Hameiri and Jones, *Governing Borderless Threats*, 58–9; Heathershaw, "Conclusions," 256–7; Heathershaw and Schatz, *Paradox of Power*.
29. Hameiri and Jones, "Rising Powers."
30. Hameiri and Jones, *Governing Borderless Threats*, Chap. 6.
31. Cerny, "Paradoxes of the Competition State."
32. Slaughter, *A New World Order*.
33. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities*.
34. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights*; Ong and Collier, *Global Assemblages*.
35. Sørensen, *The Transformation of the State*.
36. Sperling and Webber, "Security Governance in Europe."
37. Alden and Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Chap. 5; Webber and Smith, *Foreign Policy*; Hill, *Foreign Policy*.
38. Alder-Nissen and Gammeltoft-Hansen, *Sovereignty Games*.
39. vom Hau, "State Theory."
40. Farrell and Newman, "Domestic Institutions beyond the Nation-State."
41. Hameiri and Jones, *Governing Borderless Threats*.
42. Jessop, "Avoiding Traps, Rescaling States," 99; Hameiri and Jones, *Governing Borderless Threats*, 58.
43. Majone, "The Rise of the Regulatory State."
44. Jayasuriya, "The New Regulatory State."
45. Jayasuriya, "Globalisation and the Changing Architecture."
46. Hameiri and Jones, "Rising Powers"; Jones, "Theorizing Foreign and Security Policy."
47. Jones, "Theorizing Foreign and Security Policy."
48. Wong, "More than Peripheral."
49. Jones and Zeng, "Understanding China's 'Belt and Road Initiative'."
50. Karim, "State Transformation and Cross-Border Regionalism in Indonesia's Periphery."
51. Hameiri and Jones, "Rising Powers."
52. Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 21–9.
53. Leverett and Wu, "New Silk Road."
54. Bhattacharya, "Conceptualizing the Silk Road," 310.
55. Pavlovsky, "Russian Politics under Putin."
56. Colson, "These Will Be the 21."
57. For a critical overview, see Jones, *ASEAN, Sovereignty and Intervention*.
58. Berg and Ehin, "What Kind of Border Regime."

59. Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 27–9.
60. Herring and Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments*.
61. Krahmhann, *Multilevel Networks in European Foreign Policy*.
62. Agnew, "The Territorial Trap."

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