

Emerging powers in the international system

Will Bridges evaluates potential emerging powers

PoliticsReviewExtras



Download this poster at
www.hoddereducation.com/politicsreviewextras

There is no consensus about what makes an emerging power. However, generally it is agreed that they are those states that have an increasing role in the international system – ones with growing political, economic and military power to exert.

Argentina

Argentina is overlooked as an emerging power when compared to its neighbour, Brazil. However, it has a large and diverse economy and membership of the G20 group of nations. Argentina is the world's third-largest exporter of lithium, which is a critical mineral as the world turns to greener energy. Lithium is relatively rare, so its reserves give the country significant influence in international markets.

This will support further economic growth. A strong economy is critical for any state in the international system if it is to be considered an emerging power. However, economic power is not enough on its own. Argentina, although strong economically, lacks political power or influence in the international system, despite being a member of the G20 and Mercosur. It is also weak as a military power and thus is unable to take advantage of its strategic position in the South Atlantic.

Poland

Europe is a place that can be overlooked when considering emerging powers. This is in large part down to the emergence of the supranational organisation of the EU as a power in the international system in its own right. However, the war in Ukraine has seen the emergence of an unexpected regional – and potentially global – power: Poland. According to Eurostat, since the final quarter of 2019, Poland has seen economic growth of 10.8% (second only to Ireland in the EU).

This is in part driven by export of electric vehicles: Poland is the world's second-largest exporter by volume. However, it is in its military expenditure and investment that Poland can be seen as a potential emerging power. Poland has increased its defence budget by \$30 billion to 4.25% of GDP, the highest in NATO. This spending has the potential to change the military balance of power in Europe.

China

In many respects, it is convincing to argue that China is no longer an 'emerging power' and is established in the international system as a great power. Through its Belt and Road Initiative and recent diplomatic role in the Middle East, China demonstrates an active foreign policy that is supported by its status as the world's largest exporter of manufactured goods.

However, China lacks significant military influence globally in the way that the UK or France have, in part due to its weakness as a 'blue-water' naval power. Furthermore, China lacks the influence in international institutions still dominated by the USA to be considered a great power, so it may be argued by some that China is indeed still an emerging power, with pretences to be a great power in the future.

India

As with China, some people consider India to have emerged as a great power. The consensus, however – as with China – is that India is an emerging power. India's strength as an emerging power is in its political system. Sharing its political values as a democracy with the hegemon gives India power and influence in the international system in a way that China struggles to do. This is in part because states such as the USA and the EU look to India to provide political leadership in Asia as the world's largest democracy.

This influence is demonstrated by the significant diplomatic effort to ensure India voted to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the United Nations. However, India's abstention in the vote highlights its biggest weakness as an emerging power – its military capability. India is heavily reliant on Russian military hardware, and although deals with Western firms followed the invasion, its relative weakness proves India remains an emerging power.

ACTIVITIES

- 1 Explain what an emerging power is.
- 2 Select two other emerging powers in addition to those included and make similar notes on them.

Will Bridges is an experienced head of politics.