



Failing and rising states in international politics

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The year 2011 will be remembered as one of unprecedented change and difficult economic circumstances. On the one hand, the 'Arab Spring' has become an Arab autumn and is on its way to becoming an Arab winter, with new uprisings continuing to expand to other countries, old autocratic leaders being overthrown and the first democratic elections taking place in best-in-class countries such as Tunisia and Egypt. On the other hand, Europe is taking bold decisions, making political compromises and applying painful but nonetheless necessary measures to address the economic and financial crisis. In the midst of these challenging times, it is crucial to keep an eye on the evolution of geopolitics, which is currently characterised by the emergence of new regional powers and by the inability of other states to self-govern.

International relations must now be understood in the context of globalisation, interdependence and multipolarity. Nation states are no longer self-sufficient, making regional integration necessary in order to tackle common challenges. In this sense, some countries are emerging (or at least have the potential to do so) as new regional powers. Turkey is sometimes regarded as an inspirational case for some, especially post-Arab Spring countries in a new Middle East and North Africa region, and as an example of how to combine tradition with global modernity. In the meantime, the BRIC(S) countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China, with the possible addition of South Africa) are presenting themselves as alternative leading forces given their demographic, territorial and trade potential. Indonesia, too, has emerged as a rising leader in South-East Asia.

In contrast, there are, unfortunately, states that are finding it difficult to perform as prosperous and well-functioning democracies. A state is traditionally defined by three characteristics: territory, population and the presence of

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legitimate power with a monopoly on the use of force. Additionally, from a legal point of view, recognition by the international community is also required. Following this reasoning, whenever one or more of these conditions is not fulfilled, one can speak of a 'failed state'. According to the definition provided by the Fund for Peace, the main characteristics of a failed state are the loss of the physical control of its territory or its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, the erosion of the legitimate authority to make collective decisions and the inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community. In this issue of the *European View*, we look at states, their failures and the potential for a better future in different parts of the world—from Afghanistan to Kosovo. This edition of the *European View* also provides a rather polemic analysis of whether some countries, such as Russia and South Africa, are actually rising or failing.

Europe must pay attention to a constantly and rapidly changing global environment, be well prepared to adapt to the new world order and be ready to take important decisions with a strong, single voice. Europe's voice needs to be heard worldwide, loudly singing the values our family has always stood for—freedom, human rights, solidarity and equality. These are the universal values which must be present at all times and in all places around the world. Without these values, a state can be considered to be failing regardless of whether its economy is on the rise or not.

I wish you an enjoyable and inspiring read!



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