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**FROM THE SECURITY TO  
INSECURITY DILEMMA  
DEVELOPING A THEORY OF  
SECURITY FOR TODAY'S  
EMERGING POWERS**

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**FROM THE SECURITY TO INSECURITY DILEMMA  
DEVELOPING A THEORY OF SECURITY FOR TODAY'S  
EMERGING POWERS**

The West's attempts to isolate Russia during the Ukraine crisis have failed to win the support of the leading states of Global South. China, Brazil, India, and South Africa abstained from the UN resolution to condemn Russia's annexation of Crimea and have spoken out against further sanctions. This response reflects their receptiveness to Russia's claims that events in Kiev constituted a "color revolution" orchestrated by the West -- a narrative that speaks to developing states' own feelings of internal vulnerability and weakness. The paper builds on Mohammed Ayooob's "third world security predicament" modifying this concept to fit an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world where developing states are the biggest new players. We are used to thinking of conflict between states in terms of the *security dilemma*, i.e. where a state's strength has the effect of making it more secure but also increases the insecurity of other states. A state's internal weaknesses can unleash a similar cycle of suspicion and conflict. If a state believes that these weaknesses will be exploited by rival powers it may look for ways to push back. In a world where the emerging powers and potential rivals to US and Western hegemony are also developing states this kind of *insecurity dilemma* may represent the more dangerous threat to peace between great powers.

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## Introduction

The West's attempts to isolate Russia during the Ukraine crisis have failed to win the support of the leading states of the developing world. China, Brazil, India, and South Africa abstained from the UN resolution to condemn Russia's annexation of Crimea and have spoken out against further sanctions. These moves are puzzling as these states face potential separatists movements and therefore staunchly defend the principle of territorial sovereignty. They can partly be ascribed to opportunism, as some developing states (most notably China) look to benefit from Russia's estrangement from the West. But they also reflect their receptiveness to Russia's claims that events in Kiev constituted a "color revolution" orchestrated by the West -- a narrative that speaks to their own feelings of vulnerability and insecurity as developing states. A scathing commentary on the West's role in Ukraine in China's Global Times, a paper with close ties to the communist leadership, captures these sentiments: "Once again, people see another great country torn apart because of a clumsy and selfish West that boasts too many lofty ideals but always comes up short of practical solutions."(Global Times 2014).

Many leaders and intellectuals in the leading developing states believe the West's promotion of human rights and democracy is detrimental to their countries' political and social stability (Rengger 2011). Some even claim Western countries are deliberately using democracy and human rights as tools to prevent the economic and political rise of new challengers from the developing world. A recent international conference in Moscow hosted by the Russian military and attended by prominent representatives of developing world militaries identified the spread of Western-backed "color revolutions" as one of the most acute security threats facing Russia and other developing states (Cordesman 2014). In China, party cadres are instructed to be vigilant against American efforts to overthrow the communist system through "peaceful evolution", i.e. the spread of Western ideas and culture (Page 2013).

The paper examines how these perceived vulnerabilities shape leading developing states' security concerns and make them diverge from those of the developed West. It builds on Mohammed Ayoob's (1995; 2002) theory of *subaltern realism* and his concept of *third world security predicament*. For Ayoob, Western scholarship is overly focused on the experience of developed states, whose primary security concerns are external. We need a theory of security

that recognizes the peculiarities of developing states, which play a subaltern role in the international system and whose security concerns primarily stem from their weakness and internal insecurity. These states are latecomers to the process of nation and state building, a violent process that was completed in developed countries generations ago. As a result, the legitimacy of their political regimes, borders and national identity are weak and contested. They face a fundamental "security predicament": in order to establish their sovereignty and be accepted into international society they must use force against internal dissent. But such behavior goes against international society's emerging norms of human rights and democracy (like Westphalian sovereignty these norms are defined by the dominant states of the developed West) and erodes their legitimacy and standing in international society. In this context the West's promotion of these norms is profoundly destabilizing, constituting a threat to regime and even state survival.

Today's leading developing states have advanced much farther along the process of state and nation building than the weak third world states covered in Ayoob's analysis. They also differ dramatically in terms of their political institutions. China and Russia are autocracies that face serious potential democratic deficits, while India, Brazil and South Africa are established democracies with strong popular legitimacy. Whereas Ayoob's subaltern states are objects to be shaped by the Western dominated international order, today's leading developing states have a growing ability to shape that order -- including the norms and principles that constitute international society. Nevertheless, to one degree or another, these states are still undergoing the process of internal political and economic development and thus face more acute challenges to domestic legitimacy and sovereignty than the developed states of the West.

These internal security challenges give rise to vulnerabilities that can be exploited by outside powers. We are used to thinking of security dynamics between states (and especially between great powers) in terms of the *security dilemma*, i.e. where no state can improve its own security without also threatening the security of others. One state's efforts to improve their security leads other states to respond with similar measures, producing increased tensions that create conflict, even when no side desires it (Jervis 1978). A state's strength thus has the effect of making it more secure but also increases the insecurity of other states. A state's internal weaknesses can have a similar effect. If state leaders believe that their state's weaknesses are being exploited by rival powers they may look for ways to push back using the state's external

capabilities, setting off a cycle of security competition and conflict. In a world where the emerging powers and potential rivals to US and Western hegemony are also developing states that face major internal vulnerabilities this kind of *insecurity dilemma* may represent a more dangerous threat to peace between great powers than the conventional security dilemma.

### **Theory of Third World Insecurity**

Many observers have noted that the dominant paradigms in security studies do not fit the adequately address the security problems of third world states (Azar and Moon 1988; David 1991; Ayooob 1995, 2002; Acharya 2011). Nor do these theories adequately account for the realities of security in the larger world, where military conflicts are exceedingly rare and where by far the vast majority of actual military conflicts are internal conflicts (civil wars, ethnic conflicts) within third world states. Conventional theories take the state as the primary unit of analysis and define the concept of security in external or outwardly directed terms, focusing on the threats that come from outside rather than inside the state. However, for most third world states security threats are internal. They originate from within their boundaries rather than outside them.

Steven David (1991) develops the concept of “omnibalancing” to explain the alignment choices of third world states during the Cold War. For David, conventional realist balance of power theory, which sees alliance behavior as a reaction of unitary states to external threats, do not provide an adequate framework for the Third World, where states are weak and societies divided. In this context the primary unit of analysis are state elites, whose most pressing security concerns come from internal challenges to their rule. Contrary to the expectation of realist theories, they often align with outside powers not because they help them balance against external threats but because these alliances help them balance against internal rivals that threaten the survival of their regimes (and even their own personal safety). David uses this theory to explain two curious alignment changes made by third world states during the Cold War: Ethiopian leader Mengistu Haile Mariam’s decision to ally with the Soviet Union instead of the United States and Egyptian leader Sadat’s choice to switch allegiances from the Soviet Union to the United States. Neither choice can be explained by balancing against external threats nor by ideological affinity with their superpower ally. In both cases, leaders chose to ally with the

superpower whose support they needed in order to survive threats posed to their regime by domestic enemies. According to David, the “most powerful determinant of third world alignment behavior is the rational calculation of Third World leaders as to which outside power is most likely to do what is necessary to keep them in power” (1991: 235).

David develops a parsimonious alternative to balance of power theory for third world alignment choices that provides a more realistic account of the security context that third world decision makers face. Yet his theory does not tell us all that much about the roots of the security problems faced by third world leaders. Mohammed Ayoob offers a much more comprehensive theory of third world security that addresses this and other critical issues. Ayoob (1995, 2002) starts with a broader definition of security that encompasses both internal as well as external dimensions. His point of departure is the standard definition of national security, derived from Lipmann and others, which sees a nation as being secure when it is able to protect its vital national interests and core national values (Lipmann 1943, Wolfers 1962). Vital national values do not have to be limited to traditional security concerns, such as the maintenance of territorial integrity and national independence, but can include concerns about the safety and welfare of individual citizens as well as the maintenance of cultural values such as tolerance and democracy. Most of the literature on security has been written from the perspective of developed Western states. As such it focuses almost exclusively on the threats to national values that come from outside the borders of the state. Ayoob defines security in political terms in relation to threats to state institutions, boundaries, and political regimes. In this context security must also take into account vulnerabilities that have the potential to bring down or seriously weaken state structures and governing regimes. Thus in contrast to externally oriented definitions of security, vulnerabilities are determined not only by the capabilities of a particular state but also by the legitimacy of its internal structures, including the legitimacy of the governing regime (and by extension) its individual representatives. This fits better with the realities of Third World states, where domestic instability poses a much greater threat to vital national interest and values than threats originating from abroad.

“Third World” itself is a contested concept. Many see it as having lost some of its analytical value since the end of the Cold War, when it was initially used to signify those states that were not part of one of the two competing blocs (Acharya 2011). Terms such as global south or developing states may be more appropriate semantically in the post-Cold War era. Moreover,

the states usually lumped under the “third world label” exhibit a dramatic amount of diversity (from rapidly rising economies such as the NICS and rising powers such as India, China and Brazil to failed states such as Afghanistan and Somalia) in terms of the progress they have made in building a functional and legitimate state, their levels of economic and social development, and their colonial legacies. Nevertheless, Ayooob and other theorists developing the concept of third world security argue that, as a group these countries exhibit certain basic characteristics that warrant the retention of “third world” as a fruitful category for analysis: These are 1) lack of internal cohesion due to large economic and social disparities and major ethnic, religious and regional fissures; 2) lack of unconditional legitimacy among the population for state boundaries, state institutions and governing elites; 3) susceptibility to internal and interstate conflict; 4) distorted and dependent economic development; 5) marginalization in the international system of states; and 6) easy permeability by external actors.

For Ayooob these characteristics are the product of two overwhelming factors which are also the causal drivers of his theory. Firstly third world states are in their infancy as states and have just embarked on the process of state and nation building. This is a long and violent process that requires states to eliminate all internal claimants to authority and to build a common sense of identity and loyalty among their populations. This process took centuries to complete in the West and third world states find themselves under pressure to complete this same process in a matter of decades. Secondly third world countries have only (relatively) recently been accepted as full members to the international system of judicially sovereign states (most of them have joined the system of states as a result of their gaining independence in the post-WWII period).<sup>2</sup> These two factors define the fundamental driving forces of the “security predicament” they face. As latecomers to the process of state building they are weak, ineffective states, and vulnerable states. But as newcomers to the state system they are under tremendous outside pressure to demonstrate their juridical sovereignty and at least some minimal level of state capacity. The latter requires that they speed up the former, exacerbating internal insecurity and tensions. In the West state building happened before the era of mass politics and popular mobilization. States were able to consolidate their power with little regard of the interest and demands of the masses. Third world

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<sup>2</sup> The most notable exceptions are the Third World countries of Latina America, which gained their independence and juridical sovereignty from Spain and Portugal in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, according to Ayooob, they failed to embark on the process of modern state building until much later having imported pre-industrial “Iberian” model of political and economic governance and they share many of the same internal problems that other Third World States do – legitimacy of state institutions, societal divisions based on race and ethnicity, and lack of economic development -- due to these colonial legacies.

state builders have to contend with politicized masses that often make demands that they cannot easily deliver on, which makes the process of state building ever so much more difficult to undertake (Ayooob 1995: 82).

The traditional sense of security implies a relationship between a population (viewed as a nation) and its government, state institutions and office holders, all perceived to be legitimate, and the capacity of the state to protect against external threats rising in an anarchical system. Third world states suffer from an acute deficiency of legitimacy in their state institutions. Even in situations where the “hardware” of state capacity is present (i.e. where they have functioning coercive institutions) the “software” (legitimacy of state institutions, the level of societal integration and state capacity to address policy problems) is severely lacking. As a result have to lean on coercive tools in order to extract loyalty and compliance from their population (Azar and Moon 1988). But the use of coercion comes with costs as it only serves to further alienate individuals and groups that already questions the legitimacy of the state (Baldwin 1989). They thus find themselves in a vicious circle or what Robert Rothstein terms a “security trap”. Because of their lack of legitimacy they have to rely on coercion or cooptation to reduce popular unrest. But the use of coercion only serves to further erode the legitimacy of the state – thus necessitating the use of more coercion to maintain their grip on power (Rothstein 1988). In the absence of legitimacy Third World leaders are also prone to invent imagined security threats (internal and external) in order to allow the regime to use repression against internal threats. Paradoxically the consequences of this policy are often the rise of “real” threats to national and regime security (Azar and Moon 1988).

The majority of third world countries are weak states where the different aspects of state legitimacy are contested (often by force). Legitimacy is the characteristic of a society which enables men to disagree vigorously over the policies that government should pursue or the personnel that should occupy the decision making posts, yet to support common notions of the locus of decision making authority (which institutions have power) and the technique by which decisions are to be made, the means by which rulers are empowered, and who is part of the political community that the state governs over (Baldwin 1989). Third world states exhibit deficiencies along the four most important dimensions of state legitimacy:

- 1) The legitimacy of *political regimes* is weak. A political regime is legitimate when wide agreement exists in society that it has a right to hold power. In Third World states political leaders and state institutions lack authority and support within society. Under these circumstances changes in leadership do not proceed in an orderly fashion (as in the developed countries of the West) and can have broader implications for the survival of regimes and even of states themselves.
- 2) Third World States have not developed a clear sense of *political community*. Many Third World States are post-Colonial states whose borders were drawn up by colonial power and have several ethnic groups living with these borders. As a result of these colonial legacies, the question of who constitutes the community that the state should govern over is contested and the subject of violent conflict.
- 3) Conflicting claims about who is part of the political community also erode the Third World state's *territoriality*; i.e. its ability to rule within its recognized boundaries. Conflict between competing ethnic groups gives rise to active political movements calling for separatism. In cases where there are ethnic kin populations in adjacent states (for example Serbs in Bosnia or Hutus in Burundi) the threat of irredentism and loss of territory may also arise.
- 4) These problems are compounded by the fact that the *economic and social system* also lack legitimacy from large parts of the population. Third World states are poor and lag behind the developed world in terms of their economic and social development. There are also great disparities inside these countries in terms of the distribution of wealth and social stratification that creates dissatisfied and disenfranchised groups, further eroding the legitimacy of their state institutions. This exacerbates their internal weaknesses and also complicates the process of state building even more.

Table 1 summarizes the different dimensions of the legitimacy deficit faced by Third World States:

**Table 1: Different Dimensions of the Legitimacy Deficit of Third World States**

<b>Regime</b>	The authority of state leaders and state institutions is highly contested. Legitimacy, when it does exist, is tenuous and based exclusively on the government's performance.
<b>Community</b>	Ethnic, racial, and religious diversity is highly politicized. Who is and who is not a member of the political community is contested.
<b>Territoriality</b>	The very borders of the state are called into questions because of active separatist and irredentist movements.
<b>Economic and Social System</b>	Lack of acceptance by a large part of the population of social and economic hierarchies and the distribution of wealth in society.

Because of these internal weaknesses third world states internal politics are easily influenced by external actors, whose actions can have adverse effects for domestic political order. "A lack of adequate stateness makes these states acutely vulnerable to external pressures – political, military, economic, or technological --- from other and usually more develop states, from international institutions and from transnational actors, including multinational corporations, irredentist groups, and supranational movements."(Ayoob 1995: 8)

Taking a page from English school theorists, Ayoob also reflects on the norms and principles emanating from the established order. Yet, as these have been defined by the developed countries, they can be destabilizing and exacerbate the security predicaments of third world states. In contemporary terms the human rights and democracy agenda can be particularly destructive and complicates their efforts at state building. They also contribute to internal discontent by increasing internal groups' dissatisfaction by creating demands that these weak and vulnerable states cannot hope to fulfill. "Western notions of civilized state behavior, including those pertaining to human rights, often contradict Third World imperatives of state making,

which sanction and frequently require the use of violence against recalcitrant domestic groups and individual citizens...the norm of human rights undermines the political legitimacy of these same states by prescribing standards of political behavior that most third world states, struggling to maintain political order, will not be able to meet for many decades.” (Ayoob 1995: 85) Ayoob acknowledges that third world dictators often use these same arguments to justify the use of violence and human rights abuses that really only serve their own selfish interests. It is up to the analyst then to infer when this kind of behavior is motivated by state building concerns and when it really reflects the interests of predatory state elites. This present a tall order that has significance for the latter theory we will build as well.

### **Adopting the Theory to Present Day Realities**

We can take Ayoob’s theory and adapt it to today’s rising powers of the developing world. In fact, Ayoob and other theorist working on theories of third world security argues that the theory argued that many of the newly independent state of the former Eastern bloc and former Soviet union (including Russia itself) also suffered from the same external weaknesses and that their theories could be applied also to them. Moreover Ayoob includes some of today’s most prominent emerging developing states (which are also the focus of this study) -- China, India and Brazil -- in his categorization of “third world”.

Much has changed since Ayoob first formulated his theories in the late 1990s. These states have made major strides in terms of their economic growth, modernization, and state building. Some of the major tenants of Ayoob’s theory need to be modified to reflect these changes. Nevertheless, the central argument, that these state’s security concerns are different from those of develop Western states, upon whose experience most of IR security theories have bene formulated, still holds. These states still lag behind those of the developed West in term of the legitimacy and capacity of their state institutions and this continues to produce internal vulnerabilities that fundamentally shape the way they define their security.

There is a good deal variation when it comes to the legitimacy of political regimes and their vulnerability to internal threats. After long periods of struggle, India and Brazil have emerged as functioning and robust democracies where legitimacy is conferred to the regime by openly contested elections. The legitimacy of leaders and institutions in Russia and China is

significantly weaker, though they do not face the same kind of internal violent uprisings or insurgencies that threaten to violently overthrow governing regime that exist in the most extreme third world cases cited by Ayoob. Openly contested elections confer a certain degree of legitimacy to elected authorities that even those who oppose them must recognize (Baldwin 1989). Elected officials are often given the benefit of the doubt by the electorate and their right to rule (at least for the period of their mandate) is unchallenged unless they egregiously violate the law.

In authoritarian countries such as China and Russia, where elections are absent or manipulated to such a degree that they are not truly contested, leader's legitimacy is often fragile and tied more directly to their performance in delivering collective goods valued by citizens, such as economic growth or international status.<sup>3</sup> When performance does not meet citizen's expectations they are liable to take to the streets or engage in other kinds of anti-systemic protests, including acts of violence. This creates problems of internal security for both the state and regime. Brazil and India do not face this problem (at least not to the same degree) in that they have established and working system of democratic governance where leaders are chosen in open and contested elections. Nevertheless, large segments of the population in both countries (the urban poor of Brazils; favelas and indigenous populations, rural poor and some ethnic minorities in India) are still disenfranchised from the democratic system and are liable to use extra systemic protest and violent means to voice their dissatisfaction and opposition, rather than turning towards the ballot box.

The constitution of the political community (which groups belong and which do not) is also contested as ethnic and religious fissures continue to divide these states. In most cases the situation is not as dire as it is in many third world states, as the titular ethnic group (be they Han Chinese, Hindi Indians and ethnic Russians) are dominant in terms of their numbers. Yet these countries still have large ethnic and religious minorities, many of which do not accept the legitimacy of existing state structures (Chechen's in Russia, Tibetans and Uighurs in China, Muslims in Kashmir). There is also a danger that ethnic unrest can spread to other minorities who thus far have not actively sought to challenge the legitimacy of the state (Tatars in Russia or

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<sup>3</sup> Liberal democracy is not the only ideology that can confer legitimacy to a regime. The examples of communism, fascism and (in the present day) Islamic fundamentalism have all played a similar legitimizing role for regimes. Nevertheless, neither Russia nor China have thus far been able to develop a coherent ideological alternative to liberal democracy that would command people's loyalty. (Lacquer 2014: Shambaugh 2013)

Mongols and Manchu in China, many groups in India). In Russia, future calls for secession may come from ethnic Russians themselves. The current state structure professes to represent an all-Russian (*rossiskii*) identity that includes many non-ethnic Russian groups. Calls for separatism could arise from nationalists that profess a more exclusive ethnically based definition of Russian identity. These groups may strive to build a more ethnically pure Russian state that excludes minority groups (Akturk 2012).

Ethnic and religious divisions can give rise to separatist and secessionist movements that threaten the survival of these states within their current borders. In some cases ethnic or religious minorities have co-ethnic or co-religionist kin in bordering states (most notably in Kashmir and in the Uighur regions). Thus there is an irredentist component to these conflicts that also threatens to spill over into inter-state conflict. The defense of territorial integrity is a central security concern for any state. But threats to territorial integrity can come from within as well as from outside a country's state's. Moreover governments that face these kinds of threats must also be concerned that failure to defend against secessionist movements can lead to popular protest that could lead to a change of regime. This is particularly true of the Chinese leadership, which must deal with active ethnic separatist movements in Tibet and Xinjiang, as well as the thorny issue of Taiwan, which combines elements of ethnic separatism as well as a direct challenge to the vey principles upon which the PRC is founded on (Chen Weiss 2014).

These problems of legitimacy are exacerbated by the fact that, despite their robust record of development and growth in recent years, these states are still developing countries and face all the negative social, economic and political effects of backwardness and their traditionally peripheral status in the world economy. They still lag behind the West in terms of their overall level of development and welfare of their populations. Even as China overtakes the USA in terms of overall GDP in the next few years, it will still lag behind in GDP per capita for decades to come. This may breed resentment as reality does not meet the expectations created by economic growth. Economic development and improved communication with the outside world gives rise to "demonstrations effects", whereby expectations for the future are defined in comparison to the "good life" in the developed countries of the West rather than by what is actually economically feasible (Janos 1986). These kinds of expectations can be particularly problematic for authoritarian regimes, such as the Chinese, whose legitimacy has come to rest on economic performance (Shirk 2007). They may increase conflict between social classes and

erode the legitimacy of the social and economic system, giving rise to calls for a redistribution of wealth based on social justice. They can also aggravate ethnic tensions as economic and social grievances that are often politicized along ethnic and can give rise to ethnic violence or calls for secession.

Table 2 sorts out the BRICs in terms of their internal vulnerabilities:

**Table2: Degree of Vulnerability along Four Dimensions of State Legitimacy**

	<b>Regime</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Territory</b>	<b>Economic System</b>
Brazil	Low	Low	Low	Medium
India	Low	High	High	Medium
China	Medium	High	High	Medium
Russia	Medium	High	High	High

I have scaled the degree of vulnerability each country faces along these different dimensions of state legitimacy along a continuum from low to medium to high. The degree of vulnerability is judged to be high in situations where deficits of legitimacy give rise to sustained political activity that threatens the continued existence of the regime or state in its present form. This activity can take the form of revolutionary movements aimed at overthrowing the existing political and economic or ethnic political movements pushing for greater autonomy for their perspective groups or for outright secession from the existing state. In some cases, most notably China, these latter kinds of threats can also represent a threat to regime survival. For example, many observers argue that the Chinese Communist Party would face sustained popular protests that would jeopardize its ability to hold on to power in the event that it was unable to prevent (or at least react decisively) to any efforts by Taiwan to gain independence or any manifestations of separatism on the part of China’s Tibetan and Uighur minorities (Chen Weiss 2014). Thus ethnic separatism represents a direct threat to the regime - despite the fact that Han Chinese represent over 90% of the population and majorities even in those territories where ethnic separatist movements are most active.

A medium level of vulnerability exists where legitimacy deficits in these four categories have not engendered sustained political activity that challenges the status-quo, but where, nevertheless, there is the potential for this kind of activity to arise in the future. This can be either because the of non-democratic nature of the political regime, salient but latent ethnic and

religious cleavages or territorial grievances or, in the case of the economic system, poor performance or economic inequalities that raise doubts about the efficacy and justness of the economic and social order but have not yet given rise to sustained political activity. The last concern is common to all of our cases, which should not be surprising considering their status as developing states where per capita incomes are considerably lower than in the developed West (a tempting point of comparison and reference for their populations) and where poverty and income inequality are generally much higher.

A low level of vulnerability corresponds to cases where domestic political regimes are consolidated and well established and face little threat of being overthrown, where ethnic and religious cleavages are not salient or are not politicized to the point where they call the definition of the political community into question, where there is a strong consensus about the state's territorial boundaries, and where the existing social and economic system enjoys the widespread support of the population. The archetype here is the countries of the developed West, where most of these issues have been resolved long ago as these states completed the process of nation and state building.<sup>4</sup>

Of all of our developing emerging powers Brazil is the most secure. Its vulnerability along the dimensions of regime, community and territoriality are low. It is a well-functioning democracy and does not face any significant ethnic separatist movements. Its most salient divisions are along racial lines and not directed at separatism or secession (Rohter 2011: 59-80). Though it is not inconceivable that indigenous groups in the Amazon may begin their own secessionist movement in the future, this threat is still inchoate. As a developing country it still faces many economic challenges, not least of which are the high levels of economic inequality. These have yet to give rise to sustained political movements to overthrow the existing economic order, but they have engendered occasional internal strife and unrest among the population. This was most evident during the violent street demonstrations that swept the country in the lead up to the 2014 World Football Championships. Thus the degree of vulnerability of the economic and social system is deemed to be medium.

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<sup>4</sup> Of course membership in the political community and the legitimacy of territorial borders is still contested in some developed states (for example Canada, Belgium, Spain, and even Great Britain). However these countries are the exception as most developed states have settled these questions decades or even centuries ago.

As is the case with Brazil, regime vulnerability is low as a well-established democratic political process confers a robust legitimacy to India's political leadership and government institutions. However, when it comes to the dimensions of community and territoriality vulnerability is high. Ethnic and religious differences are highly politicized and often lead to incidents of communal violence. Moreover, tensions between Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir and threaten to have a spillover effect and lead to conflict with Pakistan, India's biggest outside external threat. The degree of vulnerability of the economic system is medium. Though there are no sustained political efforts to overturn the existing order, legitimacy of the economic system may be called into question as India's impoverished lower classes become more politicized (Cohen 2002).

The degree of vulnerability of China's political regime is medium. As an authoritarian regime it does not enjoy the legitimacy conferred to democratic regimes by direct popular sovereignty. Though it currently faces no sustained movement to overthrow the regime, this may change if the regime stumbles in its efforts to deliver on the population's expectations of high economic growth or if it fails to safeguard the national and territorial unity of the country (Shirk 2007). Vulnerability of community and territoriality is high. China faces difficulties from secessionist minorities, though these are not as acute as India's and Russia's. China's ethnic secessionists are neither as organized nor as violent as the insurgencies in Kashmir or Russia's Caucasus. However, these movements do present a threat to the legitimacy of the political regime (as has been noted above). The vulnerability of the economic system is medium. Thus far China's economic system has been able to keep pace with the population's expectations, but this may change over time, especially if economic growth slows and demonstration effect increase as Chinese become more aware of the standard of living in the outside world.

Of all of the emerging powers Russia is the most vulnerable to internal weaknesses. As is the case with China, the vulnerability to Russia's authoritarian regime is also medium. Though – unlike in China -- elections are held regularly, it is widely recognized by all segments of society that their outcome is heavily manipulated -- to the point where they confer little real legitimacy to the authorities. Vulnerability at the level of community and territory is also high. While most of Russia's ongoing ethnic insurgencies have been pacified, secessionist and Islamist movements remain active in the Caucasus and threaten to spread to other parts of Russia with large Muslim populations, such as Tatarstan (Hahn 2007). Moreover ethnic Russian nationalism may constitute

the most serious revolutionary threat to the present regime (Parland 2005). These problems are exacerbated by economic resentment. Russians, whom are culturally much closer to the West than the other emerging powers, are particularly susceptible to demonstration effects emanating from the Western world (English 2000). The level of vulnerability of economic system, a product of the wild and turbulent economic reforms and privatization of the 1990s, is high. The system is widely considered to be illegitimate and calls for property redistribution and the complete reversal of the privatization process are popular among the broader public and with some segments of the political elite (Hedlund 2013).

### **External and Internal Vulnerabilities**

As is the case with the weak third world states described by Ayoob, these internal vulnerabilities also give rise to external ones. While emerging developing powers have improved their state capacity and internal legitimacy, the degree and nature of external threats has also changed for the worse. The world is much more interconnected today than it was when Ayoob first formulated his theories, making it more difficult for governments to manage diversity. Political stability and popular protests can spread quickly, as was evident in the Arab Spring, which both Moscow and Beijing saw as a threat worthy of response (Fallows 2011). Relatively small groups that wish to challenge the state can take advantage of new communication technologies and more porous borders to have a much greater impact than their small numbers would suggest or to grow their movements to the point where they can mount a significant challenge to the state. Ideas about human rights and democracy continue to have destabilizing effects, both in mobilizing opposition and in limiting the ongoing state building project and denying it legitimacy.

There is a fear on the part of the leadership in the large emerging powers that the developed states of the West can take advantage of these vulnerabilities to destabilize the internal political situations in their countries. This fear is especially acute on the part of authoritarian leaders in China and Russia. According to Jeanne Wilson, “In this respect, both governments considered that a policy of subversion, which acts to undermine the structural underpinnings of the state, poses in many respects a greater threat to the maintenance of state sovereignty and regime legitimacy than the more straightforward challenges of conventional military intimidation.” (Wilson 2009: 272-273).

The Russian leadership has fully embraced this narrative since the time of the color revolutions, which swept through the post-Soviet region in the early 2000s, bringing pro-Western government in power in Georgia and Ukraine. Moscow saw Washington's hand in these revolutionary events, and took these revolutions both as a serious threat to its geopolitical interests in its former imperial backyard as well as to the very survival of its regime. According to Vladislav Surkov (2006), a close advisor to Putin the greatest threat to Russia is an "oligarchic revanche" – a fringe alliance of marginalized political forces "encouraged by visiting diplomats" linking up with outside countries to engineer "a soft takeover, according to modern-day 'orange techniques,'" that will "subject Russia to the dominance of foreigners eager to exploit the country's resource wealth."

The Kremlin was quick to identify NGOs as the main protagonists in the color revolutions and took steps to bring them and other elements of civil society under tighter control. They even went so far as to organize their own loyalist youth movements which mimicked the style and tactics of the youth movements that were involved in the color revolutions. These groups could take to the streets to support the government in the event that massive anti-regime protests break out (Krickovic and Specter 2008).

Fears of Western meddling were heightened by the Arab Spring and the experience of Western backing of Anti-government rebels in Libya and Syria in the wake of the Arab Spring. At an international conference devoted to the threat of "Color Revolutions" in Moscow in May of 2014, Russian military officers described the phenomenon as a new approach to warfare that focuses on creating internal political instability and fomenting revolutions as a means of achieving geopolitical interests at low cost and with minimal casualties. Color revolutions were seen as posing a potential threat to Russia, China and other states not aligned with the US in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia. (Cordesman 2014)

Most recently, Russian leaders have argued that Western economic sanctions and other measures in response to Russia's policies in Ukraine are designed to foment a change of political regime in Moscow. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, "Public figures in Western countries say there is a need to impose sanctions that will destroy the economy and cause public protests... the West is making it clear it does not want to force Russia to change policy but wants to secure regime change."(Reuters 2014a) These comments echoed earlier

warnings by President Putin that under the present situation Russia must be on guard against the threat of a color revolution (Reuters 2014b). The Russian government's latest official Military Doctrine, released on December of 2014, designates regime change in neighboring countries and the undermining of domestic stability by foreign powers as two of the most dangerous security threats that Russia now faces. "It can be observed that military dangers and threats are moving into the information sphere and the domestic sphere of the Russian Federation"(Voennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii 2014).

The idea that color revolutions are organized from Washington as a way to destabilize its geopolitical rivals has also gained currency in China. In the wake of the 2005 Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan a flurry of internal party memos and newspaper articles appeared warning of the dangers of a color revolution. A widely circulated editorial in the official China People's Daily (2005a) claimed that it was clear that the US was behind the recent wave of revolution – something the US government itself did not deny but rather "showed self-satisfaction". The editorial concluded by stating: "The 'democratic offensive' pursued by the Bush administration shows to the world that in fact it is not the American democracy that is lovable, but the American arbitrariness that is hateful." In May of 2005 President Hu Jintao himself is believed to have issued a report to an internal conference calling for vigilance against American attempts to start a color revolution in China. Chinese intelligence officials were dispatched to Georgia, Ukraine and Kirgizstan to investigate the circumstances around the revolutions in those countries and Chinese academics were sent to the US to determine whether the US was also planning on fomenting a color revolution in China. (Wilson 2009). Taking a cue from Russia, Chinese leaders also moved to clamp down on civil society, NGOs and news media (Krickovic and Specter 2008). China and Russia also issued a joint statement through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization calling on the US to make clear its timetable for withdrawing its forces from Central Asia. The China People's Daily (2005b) interpreted this as a "dazzling signal to the world" that SCO countries would push back against Western democracy promotion efforts, affirming that the "the people of each country have their right to choose their own path of development."

Chinese officials see Western meddling as being behind the recent street protests in Hong Kong. The newspaper China Daily (2014), which is close to the government, argued that like the color revolutions on the post-Soviet space, Hong Kong's "Umbrella Revolution" (as the protests movement had come to be called) was part of a larger US and Western conspiracy to undermine

China's political system. "Color revolutions usually have fancy names - "Rose Revolution" in Georgia, "Orange" in Ukraine and "Tulip" in Kyrgyzstan. More recently, there was the "Jasmine Revolution" in the Middle East and the "Sunflower Movement" in Taiwan. But in reality, these movements were poison laced with honey." (China Daily 2014). According to Yang Chen (2014), professor at East China Normal University and an advisor to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, "The US and Great Britain are clearly trying to destabilize the situation in Hong Kong through their proxies in the so called 'democratic movement'... the goal as always is to put political pressure and destabilize the internal situation in China itself."

Professor Wang Tiejun (2014), an international relations expert at East China Normal University, believes that China's elites feel particularly vulnerable to internal unrest because of the rapid social changes the country is now experiencing. "China's leaders feel a revolutionary threat because this is a crucial time of transition that is full of conflicts and contradictions between the people and the government."(Wang 2014). In the past, US officials such as Robert Zoellick (2005) have prodded China to adopt democratic reforms that would lead to "a peaceful political transition to make its government accountable and responsible to its people." Though they are not as vocal as elites in Russia, China's elites also see ulterior motives behind these calls for democratic change. "From their point of view the imperialists can never give up their intention to transform China 'peacefully', offering the Chinese people liberty, individualism and consumerism and leading to the decay of traditional Chinese virtues and national pride."(Wang 2014)

Moscow and Beijing see Washington's direct hand in the color revolutions, Arab Spring, and other instances of domestic instability on developing countries. While their beliefs in a conscious conspiracy are (for the most part) unfounded their beliefs about the negative effects that Western influence has on internal stability rest on a more solid foundation. Western influence need not come in the form of policies orchestrated at the top level of government. NGOs or smaller interest groups within Western governments also have influence, and promote agendas that are not always in line with their central governments. Moreover, influence need not be coordinated on any level, either governmental or non-state. Demonstration effects and the promotion of democracy and human rights as an ideology and standard of civilized behavior are a serious threat to states that are dealing with legitimacy issues and still struggling with the problems of economic development and state building. These impersonal forces can be just as

(and even more) destabilizing than any hypothetical coup or street protest directly organized by Western intelligence services. In complaining about pernicious Western influence and suggesting that it comes directly from Washington or Brussels, many developing world leaders are giving an anthropomorphic form to forces that are beyond any direct human control.

Authoritarian leaders find it in their interests to portray any form of opposition as being fomented from outside. These kinds of claims are often used to delegitimize home grown opposition that stems from genuine grievances on the part of the domestic population. Authoritarian leaders often equate the security of their regime with the security of the nation in order to serve their more narrow personal interests of staying in power and protecting their position of wealth and privilege. Nevertheless, the record of failed states from Libya to Afghanistan, shows that, in many instances, these claims are not entirely unfounded. Where state institutions lack legitimacy and membership in the political community is severely contested the alternative to authoritarian rule is often more detrimental to the security of citizens than even the most repressive dictatorship. Larger security interests are not always in conflict with the more narrow interests of elites. Just because repressive policies serve authoritarian leader own personal interests does not necessarily preclude the possibility that they are also acting out of what they see to be the genuine national security interest. Admittedly this is not always the case and some authoritarian leaders deliberately manipulate internal security concerns to feed their own lust for wealth and power. Sorting out predatory regimes from those that do have larger national interests in mind (at least to some minimally accepted degree) represents a significant challenge for scholars looking to explore the internal dimensions of security in the developing world.

The view of color revolutions held by China and Russia has not gained official acceptance at the governmental level in either Brazil or India. As democracies, neither of these countries see themselves as targets for a color revolution the same way that Russia or China do. Nevertheless, elites and publics in both countries continue to be suspicious of the West's meddling in the internal affairs of other countries and of the Western democracy and human agenda. Indian commentators have been particularly critical of Western support for regime change in Libya and Syria. They argue that the US has adopted an ill-conceived and potentially disastrous policy of looking to topple secular Arab dictatorships while supporting "jihad bankrolling" Arab monarchies, such as the Saudis. This has led to the spread of radicalism and

instability throughout the Muslim world and it also threatens India's security given its large Muslim population, its tense relations with Pakistan and the ongoing insurgency in Kashmir (Chellaney 2014). Many Indian experts are also skeptical about the Western interpretation of the Ukraine crisis, and believe that the US was behind the toppling of the Yanukovich regime (Malik 2014).

The same holds true for many experts in Brazil. They see the US hand behind color revolutions in post-Soviet space, including the most recent revolution in Kiev (Weissheimer 2014). They also see a connection between these events and recent protests in Venezuela, arguing that NGOs and youth groups are being mobilized by Washington to finally rid the hemisphere of the threat of Chavez style populism. (Viana 2012). Venezuela is a particularly thorny issue in US-Brazilian relations. While Washington has given its tacit support to recent anti-regime protests in Venezuela, Brazil, acting through Mercosur has issued a statement condemning any use of street protests to overthrow legitimately elected governments (Weisbrot 2014). In the aftermath of the mass demonstrations that rocked Brazil in the lead up to the 2014 World Cup, some Brazilian analysts fear that the tactics of color revolution will also be applied in Brazil (Escobar 2014).

This kind of thinking is informed by Indian and Brazilian elites' knowledge of their country's own acute internal vulnerabilities. To a certain degree both regimes are secure and as democracies enjoy a reservoir of legitimacy that autocrats in Beijing or Moscow may envy. Nevertheless, internal security problems abound, whether in the form of separatism and religious fanaticism, in the case of India, or political protests and violence on the part of large disenfranchised segments of society. Both states share a keen appreciation of how profoundly destabilizing external intervention, even in the seemingly benign form of democracy or human rights promotion can be for developing countries. This is one of the main reasons why neither state, despite their normative commitments to democracy at home, has been willing to join US and Western efforts to promote democracy abroad (Stuenkel and Jacob 2010). Brazil has also taken the lead in the UN to push for a set of rules that would govern humanitarian intervention – a “responsibility while protecting” to go along with the “responsibility to protect”. Such guidelines would guard against the misuse and abuse of humanitarian intervention by outside powers and would also assure that intervention does not cause more damage and suffering than it is intended to prevent (Stuenkel 2013).

## **Internal Security and Geopolitical Competition**

Great power war has become almost unthinkable in the nuclear age. According to Sergei Karaganov (2011), “Nuclear fences make good neighbors”. Nuclear deterrence has proven to be robust and has kept the peace between the great powers, even as the international system begins to enter a period of great power transitions. It kept the peace during the Cold War and it is a factor that many analysts believe will help us avoid the kind of hegemonic wars that have often accompanied historical great power transitions such as the one that is currently underway in the international system (Levy 2008). Some even see it as one of the key factors that can limit security competition between great powers in the future (Ikenberry 2014). States need not worry about each other as security threats if they can rely on deterrence to keep each other in check. According to Steve Weber (1990), when nuclear deterrence is robust states achieve self-sufficiency in their security and thereby escape the security dilemma. As long as they maintain the ability to retaliate against an attack with their own nuclear forces they do not have to worry about the gains in power of other states. In such a world security is plentiful and states will be able to devote their attention to other concerns and to even cooperate in pursuing absolute gains and addressing larger global governance problems.

However, the internal security concerns of the emerging powers of the developing world threaten to upset this rosy picture. Particularly if they see their internal vulnerabilities as a target for intervention from other great powers. These kinds of security threats are not easily deterred by military means -- whether conventional or nuclear. Internal interventions aimed at political destabilization are covert. Even when they do occur, it is not readily evident who is doing the intervening or what overall effects it does have on the revolutionary situation. Moreover, nuclear armed regimes may be ready to use any means at their disposal to prevent their downfall. How might nationalist leaders in China or Russia react to a color revolution in their own country if they had tangible evidence that US based NGOs were playing a significant role in pushing these events forward? Would they threaten the US with nuclear escalation in order to force it to cease its support? Security competition of this kind would prove to be particularly destabilizing and could even eventually threaten the tenuous stability that nuclear deterrence has achieved in relations between great powers.

We are used to thinking of security dynamics between states (and especially between great powers) in terms of the *security dilemma*, i.e. where no state can improve its own security without also threatening the security of others. One state’s efforts to improve their security leads other states to respond with similar measures, producing increased tensions that create conflict, even when no side desires it (Jervis 1978). A state’s strength thus has the effect of making it more secure but also increases the insecurity of other states. A state’s internal weaknesses can also set off a similar cycle of suspicion and conflict. We can conceive of an *insecurity dilemma*—whereby the internal weaknesses and vulnerabilities of some states give rise to concerns about foreign interventions and meddling and thereby intensify conflict between itself and the states it believes will take advantage of these weaknesses. In a world where the emerging powers and potential rivals to US and Western hegemony are also developing states that face major internal vulnerabilities this kind of insecurity dilemma may be the bigger threat to peace and stability.

**Figure 1: The Security vs the Insecurity Dilemma**



**The Insecurity Dilemma at Work: Russia’s Reaction to the Color Revolutions and the “New Cold War”**

Russia’s reaction to the color revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kirgizstan (2005), and the fears and concerns that these have provoked in the West, provide an example of the insecurity dilemma at work. As has been noted above, Russian leaders firmly believed that both revolutions were orchestrated by the US, through the international network of democracy promoting NGOs that the US has sponsored over the last few decades. Moreover, they also feared that these revolutions in the post-Soviet republics were a dress rehearsals for regime change in the Kremlin (Tsygankov 2013: 177). For Putin and other Russian leaders the US’ ultimate goal was to undermine Russian state power and make it subservient to the US (Wilson

2009). Anti-regime protesters in Tbilisi and Kiev (though not in Bishkek where the uprising was much less organized) were well integrated into the worldwide democracy promotion network of NGOs that has arisen over the last few decades under US sponsorship and American leaders undoubtedly would have welcomed changes in Moscow that would bring a more cooperative government to power (Mitchell 2012). But there is scant evidence that Washington had a direct hand in these events or that it was planning on bringing regime change to Red Square. Nevertheless this is how these events were perceived in the Kremlin. Russia's internal weaknesses, manifest in the legitimacy deficits of its political institutions which make the regimes' susceptible to revolutionary challenges, gave rise to fears of US meddling that would jeopardize Russia's sovereignty and national security.

The Russian leadership took steps to strengthen its immunity to internal dissent, clamping down on the domestic opposition and NGOs and organizing pro-regime youth groups who could take to the streets to crack heads in the (Krickovic and Specter 2008). They also began to push back externally. Russia took steps to curtail US influence in the Post-Soviet space. It backed Uzbek President Islam Karimov after the massacre of protesters in the Uzbek city of Andijan in May of 2005, encouraging him to close the US airbase in the country in response to US criticism over Human rights. It partnered with China to call for the closure of US bases in the region, which were essential to the US mission in Afghanistan. Outside the immediate post-Soviet regions, Russia stepped up military cooperation with countries which have had contentious relations with the US. Moscow negotiated arms sales and held military exercises with Venezuela, Syria and Iran. It renewed regular patrols by its strategic bombers -- including a surprise trip by a squadron of Tu-160 bombers to Venezuela in 2008. Putin also stepped up his public criticism of US foreign policy. He openly accused the US of being behind the color revolutions in his (now infamous) Munich speech, shocking many Western observers with his defiant language and his open call for a turn away from US dominance and towards a multipolar world order (Putin 2007).

Moscow's reactive moves, in turn, raised fears in Washington and other Western capitals about Russia's true intentions. Rather than seeing Russia's moves as defensive, Western leaders suspected that the true motivation is Russia's revanchist and imperialist ambitions (Lucas 2008). This set Russia-Western relations on a downward trajectory that has culminated in the current Ukraine Crisis. This crisis exhibits many of the elements of the insecurity dilemma. Russia's'

leaders saw the US' hand behind the revolution in Kiev that ousted the pro-Russian Yanukovich government from power and were fearful that similar tactics could eventually be employed to unseat them from power (Karaganov 2014). Russia's reacted to what it saw as a "putsch" in Kiev by annexing Crimea to shore up its strategic assets in the Black Sea and by fomenting an armed insurrection in the country's East to undermine the new Ukrainian authorities. These moves have exacerbated fears in the West about the Russian threat.

Many Western leaders now see Putin's Russia as a revisionist power, determined to reverse the outcome of the Cold War and reestablish Russian hegemony in the post-Soviet space and Eastern Europe (Pifer and Talbott 2015). For their part Russian leaders are convinced that economic sanctions and other policies instituted by the West to isolate and punish Russia are ultimately aimed at regime change in Moscow (Suslov 2014). In pushing back against what it perceived to be US meddling in its internal affairs, Russia has aggravated security concerns in the West. Of course, the color revolutions and the Russian reaction to them are not the only reasons behind the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West. NATO enlargement, ABM, and Russia's growing authoritarianism have also played a role. Yet the fears engendered in Russia's internal insecurities have been an important catalyst to the current conflict and have given rise to security fears by both sides that are driving both sides towards a new Cold War (Trenin 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Ayoob and other scholars working on the security situation in developing and third world states have shown that conventional security theories do not adequately address the actual security predicaments of third world states. They have been developed from the perspective of developed countries that have already finished the process of state and nation building. As such they focus on the external threats faced by states and as a poor fit for states that are still undergoing these very same processes and whose security threats are thus primary internal in nature. The weak legitimacy of regimes and state institutions and contested notions of who should be part of the political community the state represents as well as what its very borders should be creates internal security challenges that take precedents over external threats. Rather than focusing

solely on the security dilemmas that states face from one another, a more comprehensive theory also needs to account for the insecurity dilemmas emanating from inside the state itself.

Ayoob's theories can be adapted to fit today's emerging powers. Though they are much farther along in the process of state and nation building than the weak states Ayoob covers in his studies, they still exhibit many of the same internal weaknesses. Regimes and state institutions lack legitimacy, either because they are not democratic or because democratic institutions are weak and under strain. Ethnic and religious divisions are heavily politicized and as a result who is part of political community and what the borders of the state should be – two questions essential to the very meaning of statehood - are still contested. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that they are still developing countries and face all the negative social, economic and political effects of backwardness and their traditionally peripheral status in the world economy. In many cases the economic and social system itself lacks legitimacy and acceptance by large parts of the population. These internal problems create acute internal security concerns, the threat of revolutionary regime change, ethnic separatism, and other forms of politically destabilizing internal unrest. They also give rise to internal vulnerabilities that which can be exploited by outside powers.

Some Scholars believe that today's emerging powers' internal weaknesses will hinder their ability to project their power externally and that this will help keep the peace -- even as the overall balance of power begins to shift in the international system begins to shift in their favor (Nye 2011). This may not be the case if these states believe that these internal weaknesses are being exploited by other states. These states may have internal weaknesses but they are still great powers. They have the ability to project their state power externally beyond their borders and to threaten the security of other states, including with their nuclear weapons. This can lead to the rise of insecurity dilemmas in their relations with other great powers, exacerbating security competition and creating more instability and conflict in world politics.

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