

Following a Middle Way: How Rising Powers Navigate Sovereignty Debates in Peacebuilding

RESEARCH NOTE

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The role of rising powers in world politics has been growing. However, their influence on the international peace and security architecture is still to be evaluated. This article assesses their potential impact by analyzing how they reconceptualize “sovereignty” in peacebuilding debates. We investigate the extent to which they engage in norm entrepreneurship by analyzing the conceptualizations of sovereignty of three rising powers (Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey) and comparing them to those of the permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Our analysis focuses on the conceptualizations of sovereignty presented in speeches in peace-related meetings at the UNSC and in peace-related resolutions between 1991 and 2020. We show that sovereignty conceptualizations at the UNSC are situated along a spectrum, with the rising powers occupying a middle ground. By disaggregating different dimensions of sovereignty, we demonstrate that the rising powers neither align with post-Westphalian views of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States (P3), where peacebuilding priorities override sovereignty, nor with Westphalian views of China and Russia, which limit international peacebuilding activities to a strict respect of sovereignty. Instead, our results indicate that rising powers distinguish themselves from both extremes by embracing a view on sovereignty that prioritizes national ownership.

El papel de las potencias emergentes en el ámbito de la política mundial ha ido en aumento. Sin embargo, su influencia sobre la arquitectura internacional de la paz y la seguridad aún está por evaluar. Este artículo estudia su impacto potencial a través del análisis de cómo estas potencias emergentes reconceptualizan la «soberanía» en los debates sobre la construcción de paz. Investigamos hasta qué punto estas potencias emergentes se involucran con el emprendimiento normativo analizando las conceptualizaciones de soberanía de tres potencias emergentes (Brasil, Sudáfrica y Turquía) y comparándolas con las de los miembros permanentes (P5) del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas (CSNU). Nuestro análisis se centra en las conceptualizaciones de soberanía que se presentaron en los discursos de las reuniones relacionadas con la paz en el CSNU y en las resoluciones relacionadas con la paz entre 1991 y 2020. Mostramos que las conceptualizaciones de la soberanía presentadas en el CSNU se sitúan a lo largo de un espectro, y que las de las potencias emergentes ocupan un lugar intermedio. Demostramos, al desagregar las diferentes dimensiones de la soberanía, que las potencias emergentes no se alinean con las visiones post-westfalias de Francia, el Reino Unido y los Estados Unidos (P3), donde las prioridades de construcción de la paz prevalecen sobre la soberanía, ni con las visiones westfalias de China y Rusia, que limitan las actividades internacionales de consolidación de la paz a un estricto respeto de la soberanía. Por el contrario, nuestros resultados indican que las potencias emergentes se distinguen de ambos extremos en cuanto estas adoptan una visión de la soberanía que prioriza la propiedad nacional.

Le rôle des pays émergents en politique mondiale va croissant. Toutefois, leur influence sur l'architecture de paix et de sécurité internationale n'a pas encore fait l'objet d'une évaluation. Cet article évalue leur impact potentiel en analysant leur reconceptualisation de la « souveraineté » dans les débats relatifs à la consolidation de la paix. Nous examinons dans quelle mesure ils agissent comme entrepreneurs de normes en analysant comment trois pays émergents (le Brésil, l'Afrique du Sud et la Turquie) conçoivent la souveraineté et en les comparant à celles des membres permanents (P5) du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies (CSNU). Notre analyse se concentre sur les conceptualisations de la souveraineté présentées dans des discours lors de rencontres relatives à la paix au CSNU et dans des résolutions relatives à la paix entre 1991 et 2020. Nous montrons que les conceptualisations de la souveraineté au CSNU se situent sur un spectre avec les pays émergents au milieu. En décomposant différentes dimensions de la souveraineté, nous démontrons que les pays émergents ne s'alignent ni sur les vues post-westphaliennes de la France, du Royaume-Uni et des États-Unis (P3), dans lesquelles les priorités de consolidation de la paix prennent le pas sur la souveraineté, ni sur les vues westphaliennes de la Chine et de la Russie, qui limitent les activités de consolidation de la paix interna-

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Salaymeh, Bilal et al. (2025) Following a Middle Way: How Rising Powers Navigate Sovereignty Debates in Peacebuilding. *International Studies Quarterly*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqaf031>

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tionale au strict respect de la souveraineté. Nos résultats indiquent plutôt que les pays émergents se distinguent des deux extrêmes en adoptant un point de vue sur la souveraineté qui accorde la priorité à l'appropriation nationale.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, regional rising powers like Brazil, South Africa, India, and Turkey have played significant roles in the evolving international order, characterized by emerging multipolarity and competitive geopolitics (Gray and Murphy 2013; Mukherjee 2022). While the growing influence of these rising powers is undisputed, their exact impact on the international peace and security architecture remains debated (Call and de Coning 2017; Fawcett and Jagtiani 2022; Fung 2023). This is particularly relevant within the United Nations (UN) system, where these states may adopt different strategies, such as co-opting, spoiling, or balancing the existing institutional order (Stephen 2012). To enhance their international role, rising powers have introduced new concepts, such as the “responsibility while protecting” (Stefan 2017), emphasizing South–South cooperation (Gray and Gills 2016), and questioning the justice of the current global order (Aral 2019). Meanwhile, they are expanding their economies, increasing their stakes in conflict-affected countries, and participating in peacekeeping and peacebuilding endeavors. However, it remains unclear if rising powers are pushing for a new international order or seeking to increase their influence in the existing one (Stephen 2012). One approach to answer this question is to examine the extent to which rising powers engage in norm entrepreneurship. Norm entrepreneurs are actors who “attempt to convince a critical mass of [actors] to embrace new norms” (Finnemore 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 895) and engage in “purposive efforts of individuals and groups to change social understandings” (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 400). Scholars are divided on the assessment of rising powers’ normative engagements. Some argue that rising powers differ from traditional powers in their conception of international norms and practices (Kahler 2013, Call and de Coning 2017), while others suggest they may not act as “critical states” in shaping the normative content of the world order, but rather demand more access and representation in existing international institutions (Richmond and Tellidis 2014; Newman and Zala 2018).

In this article, we contribute to studies on the impact of rising powers on global norms by examining their conceptualization of sovereignty in peacebuilding debates. The definition of sovereignty and the extent to which states are considered sovereign from “external” interventions are crucial to peacebuilding, as UN peace efforts imply an engagement with a state’s internal affairs. Indeed, how sovereignty is defined determines the balance between the principle of nonintervention and the UN’s responsibility to maintain international peace and security (Hellmüller 2018), influencing decisions regarding deployments, mandates, and the design of peace missions and peacebuilding programs. In this sense, sovereignty is a decisive norm in the peacebuilding order (Jütersonke et al. 2021).

Sovereignty is often framed either in the “Westphalian” sense as a state’s exclusive authority over its territory or in the “post-Westphalian” sense as a state’s responsibility to protect the citizens on its territory (Makinda 1998; Etzioni 2006). The five permanent member states (P5) of the

UN Security Council (UNSC) promote different conceptualizations of sovereignty. China and Russia are generally seen as advocates of a state-centric Westphalian perspective, whereas France, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) (often referred to as the P3) are said to pursue a people-centric post-Westphalian perspective (Von Einsiedel and Malone 2018). In this article, we argue for the need to go beyond this dichotomous conception of sovereignty to gain a more fine-grained understanding of rising powers’ approaches to sovereignty and its implications for peacebuilding.

We propose a spectrum of sovereignty conceptualizations with Westphalian and post-Westphalian definitions at the two extremes but with variations in between. We examine the positioning of rising powers on this spectrum and uncover their normative contributions. Specifically, we question to what extent they act as “norm entrepreneurs” in (re)defining the norm of sovereignty in peacebuilding debates. In other words, do they follow the sovereignty understandings of the P5, or introduce novel understandings?

To answer this question, we conduct a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of speeches delivered by three rising powers, namely Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey at peace-related UNSC meetings. To compare the conceptualizations of the rising powers to the conceptualizations of the P5, we also coded the P5 speeches in the same meetings. Additionally, we consider UNSC resolutions as a reflection of a “consensus view” among its members, allowing us to compare the rising powers’ conceptualizations with those expressed in a sample of peace-related resolutions.

We show that the three rising powers’ sovereignty conceptualizations are positioned in-between the P5 on the sovereignty spectrum. Rising powers refrain from aligning strictly either with China and Russia in their Westphalian understanding or with the P3 in their post-Westphalian one. While for China and Russia, sovereignty restricts peacebuilding priorities, and for the P3, peacebuilding priorities take precedence over sovereignty, the rising powers adopt a “middle way.” They navigate the discussion on sovereignty by emphasizing *national ownership* in peacebuilding. In that sense, they support UN peacebuilding efforts *while* simultaneously upholding sovereignty. Thus, they engage in norm entrepreneurship by promoting a new conceptualization of sovereignty in the context of peacebuilding.

By examining how rising powers frame sovereignty and comparing it to the P5 and the UNSC consensus view, the article makes three contributions. First, it adds to the literature on rising powers by providing a nuanced view of these states’ understanding of sovereignty in peacebuilding debates (Weiss 2016; Call and de Coning 2017; Mukherjee 2022; Fung 2023). Second, it advances our understanding of sovereignty by arguing for a spectrum of states’ conceptualizations beyond the Westphalian versus post-Westphalian dichotomy and by disaggregating sovereignty into several components, allowing for a fine-grained analysis (Biersteker and Weber 1996; Etzioni 2006; Paris 2014). Third, as rising powers play an increasingly important role in the peace and security landscape, it adds to the discussions on (the future of)

peacebuilding in a multipolar world order (Abdenur 2019; Osland and Peter 2021; Badache, Hellmüller, and Salaymeh 2022).

The article unfolds in three parts. First, we present our analytical framework based on the literature on rising powers and sovereignty in the context of peacebuilding. Second, we introduce the methods used to compile and analyze the speeches by the three rising powers and the P5, as well as the UNSC resolutions. Third, we present our findings. Lastly, we conclude with a summary, discuss the limitations of the article, and suggest avenues for future research.

Rising Powers and Sovereignty in the Context of Peacebuilding

Rising Powers, Global Governance, and Peacebuilding

Scholars have highlighted the role of rising powers in the last three decades (Laskaris and Kreutz 2015; Weiss 2016; Abdenur 2016a; Call and de Coning 2017; Jütersonke et al. 2021), arguing their influence is likely to continue (Paris 2014). The economic growth of states like Brazil and India in the early 2000s has boosted their political power and influence (Schweller 2011; Abdenur 2019). Regional powers are also increasing their roles in conflict-affected countries while simultaneously contributing to peacebuilding efforts (Call and de Coning 2017). For instance, following the assertive military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, US withdrawals and reduced engagement created power vacuums, allowing regional actors such as Turkey and Iran to step in (Acharya 2018; Mearsheimer 2019). Within these parameters, we follow Weiss (2016, 9) in defining rising powers as “countries whose policy elites are able to draw on economic and other sources of power to project influence both within and outside their immediate neighbourhoods, and that play a substantial role in the call for global governance reforms.”

Yet, the impact of rising powers and their potential challenge to the global order is questioned, particularly regarding the extent to which they act as norm entrepreneurs. Some authors argue that rising powers will mostly be socialized into the liberal global governance norms (Ikenberry 2011). For example, studies show that they do not challenge the “responsibility to protect” norm but seek clearer regulatory frameworks and stronger UNSC oversight (Laskaris and Kreutz 2015; Jetschke and Abb 2019). In this vein, Richmond and Tellidis (2014) expect that rising powers may not act as “critical states.” Others, however, acknowledge the capacity of rising powers to change UN norms and are interested in understanding their strategies of contestation (Abdenur 2019; Stephen and Zürn 2019), such as in the ongoing UNSC reform debate, where rising powers consistently request institutional adaptation to the shifting power balance in the international system (Jetschke and Abb 2019; Binder and Heupel 2020).

Scholars have also tried to determine whether rising powers adhere to the norms underpinning peacebuilding, but answers remain unclear, as traditional and rising powers differ in their conceptions of peacebuilding (Call and de Coning 2017; De Coning and Peter 2018) and the UN’s role in it (Badache, Hellmüller, and Salaymeh 2022). At the heart of this debate is the question of how rising powers conceptualize sovereignty since their expanding roles in conflict-affected countries often clash with these countries’ sovereignty. While this issue is central to understanding rising powers’ role in peacebuilding, it has yet to be systematically and comparatively studied.

The Concept of Sovereignty and Its Link to Peacebuilding

Sovereignty is widely accepted as one of the founding principles of the modern state system (Thomson 1995). The concept has gradually evolved in the last five centuries and its scope has mirrored world politics (Watson 2009). In today’s system, based on legally equal states, sovereignty and its applications shape interactions between states and international organizations (Etzioni 2006). As such, the conceptualization of sovereignty is crucial for peacebuilding, as it determines the conditions and scope of external interventions into conflict contexts (Richmond 2004; Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin 2010). Milestones such as the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Kellogg–Briand Pact in 1928 played important roles in establishing sovereignty as nonintervention, what came to be referred to as Westphalian understanding.¹ Accordingly, Westphalian sovereignty “refers to political organization based on the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority” (Krasner 1999, 4).² However, this Westphalian conceptualization was only firmly codified in 1945 with the adoption of the UN Charter, which emphasized “the sovereign equality of all its member states” and their “territorial integrity and political independence” (Glanville 2013, 85).³ In this regard, the concept of external sovereignty is pertinent as it entails protecting states from interventions by other states. Distinct from internal sovereignty, which refers to “the existence of some ultimate authority over a particular domain” (Biersteker and Weber 1996, 2), external sovereignty is asserted through an “independence of outside authorities” (Krasner 1999, 47).

This understanding of sovereignty was reflected in early UN peacekeeping operations. The first such missions to be deployed, including the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO, since 1948), the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP, since 1949), and the UN Emergency Force (UNEF, 1956–1967), had limited mandates strictly confined to act as interposition forces to monitor ceasefires and ensure the respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of newly independent states. In other words, early peacekeeping operations were primarily dealing “with problems emerging from decolonization and the globalization of sovereignty and, in this respect, reflected the understanding that juridical sovereignty and territorial integrity further international order” (Barnett 1995, 81).

The end of the Cold War and the prospects of a “New World Order” led to increased scrutiny of the Westphalian understanding of sovereignty as nonintervention. In the early post-Cold War years, post-Westphalian interpretations began to gain prominence in UNSC resolutions, emphasizing “international law, interdependence, free trade, democracy and individual rights and freedoms” (Gill-Tiney 2022, 2). Krasner (1999, 8) noted that “the norm of autonomy, the core of Westphalian sovereignty, has been challenged by alternatives including human rights, minority rights, fiscal

¹This is because the mainstream International Relations (IR) scholarship traces the concept back to the treaties of Westphalia 1648, even though this view is increasingly discredited (Hobson 2009; Piirimäe 2010; Glanville 2013; Paris 2022; Zarakol 2022).

²Krasner (1999) distinguishes four types of sovereignty: international legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty, domestic sovereignty, and interdependence sovereignty.

³Articles 1(2) and 2(4), UN Charter, 1945. Article 2(7) established a generalized principle of domestic jurisdiction, declaring: “Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter, but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.”

responsibility, and the maintenance of international stability.” In particular, the liberal international order broadened and “liberalized” the sovereignty concept to include a state’s duty to guarantee its population’s security, human rights, and freedoms (Deng et al. 1996). This shift manifested itself in the introduction of the concept of “responsibility-to-protect”, as proposed by the *International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (2001), which redefined sovereignty as a state’s responsibility to protect the people on its territory. It proposed that in case a state is unwilling or unable to fulfill this duty, the secondary responsibility of protection falls upon international actors, allowing for certain interventions (Etzioni 2006; Newman, Paris, and Richmond 2009; Glanville 2011).

This post-Westphalian understanding of the sovereignty concept had consequential ramifications for UN peacebuilding. Peacekeeping operations deployed in the 1990s, such as the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH, 1995–2002), the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992–1993), and the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET, 1999–2002), had extensive mandates with a wide range of tasks, including institution-building, empowering civil society, and supporting legal reforms. These missions aimed at bringing about sustainable peace rather than only ending the violence. The degree of intrusiveness reached yet another level as peacekeeping operations evolved from peacebuilding to “stabilization” missions as in the case of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO, since 2010), the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA, since 2014), and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA, 2013–2023). These missions were assigned “peace enforcement” mandates, which not only positioned them “at war” with different armed groups but often complicated their relations with the host state’s sovereignty (Karlsrud 2015).

The liberalization of the concept of sovereignty along with the peacekeeping operations that were deployed are often seen as radical departures from Westphalian conceptualizations of sovereignty (Glanville 2011).⁴ However, these changes have not remained unchallenged. Particularly China and Russia have questioned post-Westphalian conceptualizations showing the “strong attachment of both countries to the principles of state sovereignty” (Von Einsiedel and Malone 2018, 19).⁵

A Nuanced Approach to Rising Powers’ Conceptualizations of Sovereignty in Peacebuilding

The above discussion highlights the evolving interpretations of sovereignty and their impact on UN peacebuilding. The state-centric Westphalian understanding emphasizes nonintervention and territorial integrity and rejects external in-

terference in domestic affairs. This conceptualization is often assigned to China and Russia (Paris 2020; Yuan 2020). In turn, the people-centric post-Westphalian understanding adopts a broader definition that comprises the rule of law, free trade, democracy, and human rights and permits international interference to uphold these principles. This conceptualization is often assigned to the P3 (Jütersonke et al. 2021; Badache, Hellmüller, and Salaymeh 2022).⁶

We argue that this binary conceptualization only emphasizes two extremes, obscuring the nuances in-between. In particular, it overlooks the diversification of global political practices and the emerging role of rising powers as their perceptions of sovereignty are often attributed to either of these two ends, most often to Westphalian sovereignty. For example, it is argued that the rising powers “have consistently defended a traditional conception of sovereignty and professed skepticism regarding armed intervention against incumbent governments” (Kahler 2013, 718). However, we posit that a more compelling inquiry would examine how rising powers navigate the debates surrounding the norm of sovereignty beyond these binary extremes. Specifically, in this article, we ask to what extent they act as norm entrepreneurs in attempting to change the social understanding of sovereignty in peacebuilding debates. Answering this question, we show that rising powers engage in norm entrepreneurship by advancing an understanding of sovereignty as national ownership in the context of peacebuilding. In particular, they stress the development of national capacities and the prioritization of national perspectives in order to further sovereignty while engaging in peacebuilding. By doing so, they follow a middle way by neither subordinating peacebuilding to sovereignty nor prioritizing it over host state sovereignty. Instead, they align peacebuilding efforts and programs with the priorities and interests of the host state, emphasizing the importance of national ownership. In other words, they neither see sovereignty in peacebuilding as a static norm (as China and Russia do) nor as a secondary one (as the P3 do). Rather, they conceptualize it as an interactive norm that serves to adapt peacebuilding efforts according to the host country’s priorities.

Data and Methods

Case Selection: Rising Powers in the UNSC

To study the rising powers’ conceptualizations of sovereignty in peacebuilding debates, we focus on their speeches in the UNSC, the primary decision-making body of the UN with the responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The UNSC shapes the concept of sovereignty through its decisional power and its authority to define threats to international peace. It also plays a key role in redefining state sovereignty when mandating peace missions, as these mandates reflect the underlying sovereignty conceptualization.

Our study focuses on the three decades following the Cold War, a period marked by the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar system, giving rising powers a greater role (Acharya 2018). We have selected Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey as our cases due to their active roles in regional and international politics and their occupancy of

⁴Some scholars would contest the notion of “radical departure” and argue that external sovereignty was never sacred and that traditional sovereignty was always dismissed. For instance, Thompson (2006) claims that the external sovereignty of different states has been rhetorically or practically dismissed by more powerful states, as in the case of the Monroe Doctrine, Woodrow Wilson hinting at the possibility of using force against Latin American states, the Truman doctrine, the Reagan doctrine, and the Soviet Union intervention in Czechoslovakia under Brezhnev.

⁵This may be considered contradictory to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. However, in this case, Russia questioned whether Ukraine had a right to sovereignty, as it, according to Foreign Minister Lavrov, “did not represent the country’s constituent parts” (Reuters n.d.).

⁶Scholars use various terms to describe these semantic variations, including “traditional” versus “liberal” (Gill-Tiney 2022), “state sovereignty” versus “individual sovereignty” (Annan 1999), “Westphalian sovereignty” versus “sovereignty as the responsibility to protect” (Etzioni 2006), and “classical” versus “conditional” sovereignty (Jütersonke et al. 2021).

nonpermanent seats at the UNSC in the years under study.⁷ Brazil helped create the *UN Peacebuilding Commission* in 2005.⁸ Its contributions to peacebuilding were evident in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH, 2004–2017) and MONUSCO. In 2010, it also led the Maritime Task Force of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) (Abdenur 2016b). South Africa is a key architect of the *African Peace and Security Architecture* and the *African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises*. In addition to its active role in the *UN Peacebuilding Commission*, it has also developed its own national *Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development Program* (Nyuykonge and Zondi 2017). It has played significant roles in peace processes in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Somalia, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe (Mutisi 2016). Turkey, instrumental in creating the *UN Alliance of Civilizations* and the *Group of Friends of Mediation*, has expanded its role in mediation, peacekeeping, and security sector reform (Akpınar 2013, 2016a, 2016b; Sazak and Özkan 2016; Sazak and Woods 2017; Yalçinkaya et al. 2018). It has also been active in the conflicts in Libya, Somalia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Syria, among others.

All three states have engaged in norm entrepreneurship, introducing new discourses in global politics such as Brazil's "responsibility while protecting" (Almeida 2014), South Africa's counter-hegemonic regionalism, and Turkey's "world is bigger than five" argument (Aral 2019). Beyond these commonalities, Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey also exemplify the diversity of rising powers, differing in historical backgrounds, regional security roles, and geopolitical contexts. Collectively, the three countries span Latin America, Africa, and Europe/Asia,⁹ regions that are either not represented (Latin America and Africa) or under-represented among the P5 in the UNSC (Asia with China as the only permanent member).

Sample: Peace-Related Speeches and Resolution Dataset

To analyze rising powers' conceptualizations of sovereignty in the UNSC, we focus on their speeches in peace-related meetings, meaning those they have the word "peace" in their topic title. This selection aligns with our interest in exploring sovereignty conceptualizations within the context of peacebuilding debates. Given the centrality of the sovereignty concept in UN peace efforts, member states are expected to address this question in their speeches. We then contrast the sovereignty conceptualizations of rising powers with those of the P5 during the same meetings as well as with peace-related resolutions between 1991 and 2020. The resolutions reflect the UNSC consensus, as they result from internal negotiations and debates among all members of the UNSC.

For the speeches, we use the dataset on peace-related speeches (UNSCPeaS), which includes 521 individual speeches from 108 peace-related meetings (Badache, Hellmüller, and Salayme 2022). For the UNSC resolutions, we selected all thematic peace-related resolutions (for instance, those titled "maintenance of international peace and security" or "United Nations peacekeeping operations"),

Table 1. Disaggregation of the concepts of Westphalian and post-Westphalian sovereignty.

Westphalian conceptualization	Post-Westphalian conceptualization
Principle of noninterference	Responsibility to protect
Primacy of national justice	Transitional justice
National ownership	Human rights
Legal equality between states	Civil society as balance to the state
Emphasis on state sovereignty	Rule of law
Respect of national interest	UN has secondary responsibility of ending security threats
National responsibility	Democracy
State consent	Globalization

totaling 115 resolutions.¹⁰ We coded the 521 speeches and 115 resolutions using NVivo. Initial codes were constructed deductively based on existing literature and were updated inductively throughout the coding process, as documented in the codebook (see Online Appendix 1). To ensure reliability, at least two persons coded each speech and resolution.

Coding Approach: Operationalization of Sovereignty

We conceptualize sovereignty in line with Biersteker and Weber (1996) as a "social construct" and Ashley (1984, 273) as "a product of the actions of powerful agents and the resistances to those actions by those located at the margins of power." To operationalize this, we disaggregate both the Westphalian and the post-Westphalian concepts of sovereignty into eight distinct components (see table 1). Under Westphalian sovereignty, we coded passages recalling the traditional principles of state-centric sovereignty like "noninterference," "legal equality between states," and "state consent" (Paris 2020), along with themes that are closely associated with state authority, like "primacy of national justice," "national ownership," "respect of national interest," and "national responsibility." For post-Westphalian sovereignty, we coded passages emphasizing people-centric themes, such as "human rights," "civil society," the "rule of law," and "democracy." Additionally, we also list themes related to international responsibilities, like the "responsibility to protect," "transitional justice," and "globalization."

Based on these nuanced definitions, we conducted a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of speeches delivered by the representatives of the three specified rising powers (Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey) and the P5 at the UNSC, as well as the UNSC resolutions. For the quantitative analysis, we built a score by assigning a value of -1 to each reference of Westphalian sovereignty, and a value of 1 to each reference of post-Westphalian sovereignty. The higher the score, the closer is a state's conception to post-Westphalian sovereignty.¹¹ We then constructed a spectrum of sovereignty framings through a 100 percent stacked column chart, where the countries were located according to the total value of their sovereignty references. While the quantitative analysis provides a positional overview of the countries on the sovereignty spectrum,

⁷In the concerned period, Brazil was an elected member four times: 1993–1994, 1998–1999, 2004–2005, and 2010–2011; South Africa three times: 2007–2008, 2011–2012, and 2019–2020, and Turkey once: 2009–2010.

⁸See the Peacebuilding Commission webpage. Accessed January 22, 2025. <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/commission>.

⁹Turkey is part of the Western European and Other States Group (WEOG), one of the UN's five regional groups.

¹⁰See UN Security Council Resolutions. Accessed January 22, 2025. <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/resolutions-0>.

¹¹See Online Appendix 2 for the quantitative analysis of the speeches of each concerned state.

the qualitative analysis unpacks how the concerned countries articulate the concept of sovereignty, identifying key components and examining how they are understood and interconnected.

Findings

We present our findings in two stages. First, we outline the results of the quantitative analysis of the rising powers' sovereignty conceptualizations along the spectrum between Westphalian and post-Westphalian sovereignty. We then provide a detailed qualitative content analysis of sovereignty conceptualizations of Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey in peace-related UNSC speeches comparing them to the conceptualizations of China and Russia on the one hand and the P3 on the other.

Quantitative Analysis: Rising Powers in the Middle of the Sovereignty Spectrum

Figure 1 shows a 100 percent stacked column chart of sovereignty references for rising powers and the P5.¹² The columns are arranged on a spectrum from the most to the least overall share of references to Westphalian sovereignty conceptualizations. The chart also includes the UNSC resolutions and the aggregated speeches, which encompass the entire corpus of analyzed speeches. As depicted in figure 1, the consensus view at the UNSC is highly skewed toward Westphalian sovereignty, with over 90 percent of resolution references and more than 80 percent of the overall references in aggregated speeches pertaining to Westphalian sovereignty. This is not surprising, as this is the view enshrined in the UN Charter, emphasizing the legal equality of states and the principle of nonintervention. Moreover, UNSC resolutions are subject to extensive negotiations and their content reflects the least common denominator that states can agree upon. At the same time, the analysis reveals a very salient division among the P5 speeches. China and Russia uphold Westphalian sovereignty (over 95 percent of their references), while the P3 are closer to post-Westphalian sovereignty (over 40 percent of their references).

Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey share similar stances on sovereignty positioning them in the center of the spectrum, between China and Russia on the one hand, and the P3 on the other hand.¹³ However, a closer examination using the median, rather than the average of references, reaffirms findings from previous research, indicating that rising powers tend to be more conservative about sovereignty favoring traditional conceptualizations. Nonetheless, the findings reveal that the rising powers still diverge from Chinese and Russian approaches, following a distinct path.

Beyond the references to either Westphalian or post-Westphalian conceptualizations of sovereignty, the frequency of references to sovereignty overall is another indicator of how the different states engage with the topic at the UNSC. Table 2 shows the percentage of references to sovereignty for each country. China and Russia emphasize sovereignty the most, making up 31.7 percent and 30.7 percent of the overall references, respectively, and with more than 2.5 times on average per speech. France, the United

States, and the United Kingdom mention it less frequently, at 8.8 percent, 6.5 percent, and 6.4 percent of the overall references, respectively, and with less than once on average per speech. This means that China and Russia refer to sovereignty nearly four times as often as France, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Among the rising powers, South Africa stands out for its relatively frequent emphasis on sovereignty with 7.3 percent of overall references, surpassing both the United States and the United Kingdom. This is further highlighted in the average reference to sovereignty per speech for South Africa (1.38), which slightly exceeds the overall mean (1.35), reflecting its emphasis on Westphalian sovereignty to uphold its own and Africa's regional sovereignty, given the continent's experience with international interventions (Kagwanja 2008). Brazil, in contrast, raises sovereignty least often among the rising powers, with only 4.3 percent of the overall references, and with less than once per speech in line with the P3, aligning with figure 1, where Brazil is also closest to the P3. Turkey is in the middle of the rising powers at the same level as Brazil in terms of the share of overall references but mentions it more frequently per speech (1.25).

Qualitative Analysis: Disaggregated Analysis of Sovereignty Conceptualizations

For the qualitative analysis, figure 2 represents a radar chart comparing references to specific sovereignty components by the three groups: the rising powers, China and Russia, and the P3. Accounting for the varying numbers of speeches from each country (see table 2), we calculated the percentage of references to each sovereignty component within the speeches of each group. This illustrates how the narratives of different state groups overlap on certain components of sovereignty and diverge on others. The analysis reveals that rising powers refer saliently to "national ownership" and show a balanced emphasis on "respecting national interest" and "transitional justice." China and Russia prioritize "emphasis on state sovereignty"—which reflects the wording of the UN Charter—and "national responsibility." The P3, while aligning with other states on the importance of national ownership, distinctively emphasize the principles of "responsibility to protect," "rule of law," and the notion that the "UN has a secondary responsibility."

Through a qualitative content analysis of the speeches by rising powers and the P5, we also explore the thematic variations in how states prioritize the different components of sovereignty in peacebuilding debates. In the following, we first present the results for the rising powers showing how they advance and assert the norm of national ownership. We then explore the results of both China and Russia and the P3, illustrating their differences compared to the rising powers in approaching the question of sovereignty in peacebuilding.

Rising Powers: Sovereignty as Guarantor of National Ownership in Peacebuilding

Rising powers connect sovereignty and peacebuilding by advancing the norm of national ownership as the main component of sovereignty in peacebuilding. This means that they neither prioritize sovereignty by limiting peacebuilding to a strict respect of it nor that they prioritize peacebuilding by allowing for a flexible interpretation of sovereignty. On the contrary, they reclaim sovereignty by implicitly underscoring the host state's ownership of peacebuilding initiatives. As de-

¹²We chose to present the data in a 100 percent stacked column chart to show the relative percentage of sovereignty references, given the variation in the number of speeches for each country.

¹³The rising powers are in the center of the spectrum, which reflects the average of references to sovereignty and not the median of the spectrum.

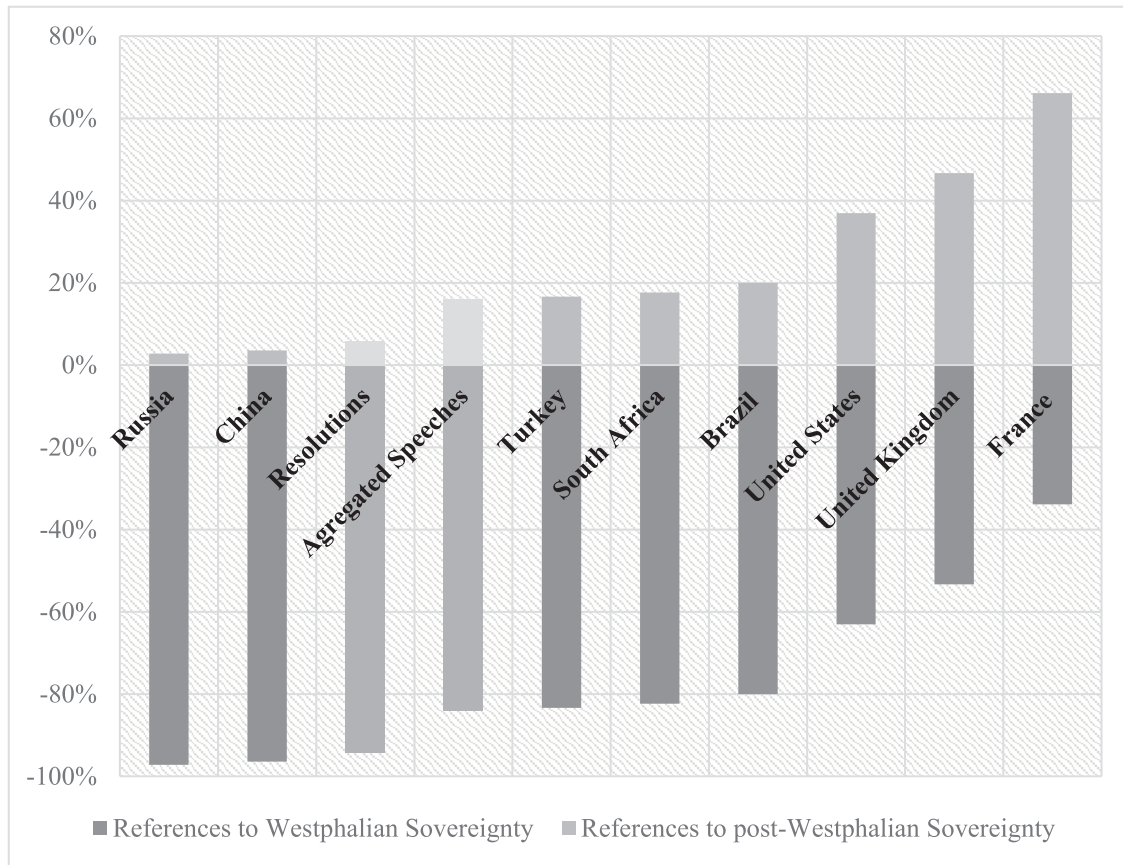


Figure 1. Sovereignty spectrum and the distribution of sovereignty references.

Table 2. Relative weight and contribution to sovereignty references by each state.

Country	Number of speeches	Total references to sovereignty	Percentage of references to sovereignty	Average reference per speech
Brazil	41	30	4.3%	0.73
South Africa	37	51	7.3%	1.38
Turkey	24	30	4.3%	1.25
China	82	223	31.7%	2.72
Russia	86	216	30.7%	2.5
France	84	62	8.8%	0.74
United Kingdom	84	45	6.4%	0.54
United States	83	46	6.5%	0.55
All speeches	521	703	100%	1.35

picted in figure 3, half of their references to sovereignty at the UNSC focus on national ownership. Brazil, for instance, argues, “country ownership [...] should be the *sine qua non* for any strategy for peacebuilding.”¹⁴ The same notion is emphasized by South Africa: “without national ownership of peacebuilding, any intervention will likely be regarded as an imposition. And, as history has taught us, imposed solutions are soon disregarded by their very beneficiaries and are bound to fail dismally.”¹⁵

When evoking national ownership, rising powers avoid framing it as “local ownership” with its emphasis on the role of sub-state actors (Poulligny 2009; Donais 2012). Instead, they specifically frame it in terms of state-level or regional

ownership. This is evidenced by Brazil’s reference to “country ownership,”¹⁶ the South African understanding of national ownership as “aligning peacebuilding activities with the national priorities of the government concerned,”¹⁷ and Turkey’s linking national ownership with building national capacities.¹⁸ In this sense, when defining sovereignty as national ownership, rising powers typically stress two aspects: the development of national capacities and the prioritization of national perspectives.

Regarding the first, rising powers view national ownership as a way to highlight national responsibility, and hence, strengthen national capacities. Turkey states that “bearing

¹⁴UNSC S/PV 6165R1-2009.

¹⁵UNSC S/PV 5895-2008.

¹⁶UNSC S/PV 6165R1-2009.

¹⁷UNSC S/PV 6299R1-2010.

¹⁸UNSC S/PV 6224-2009.

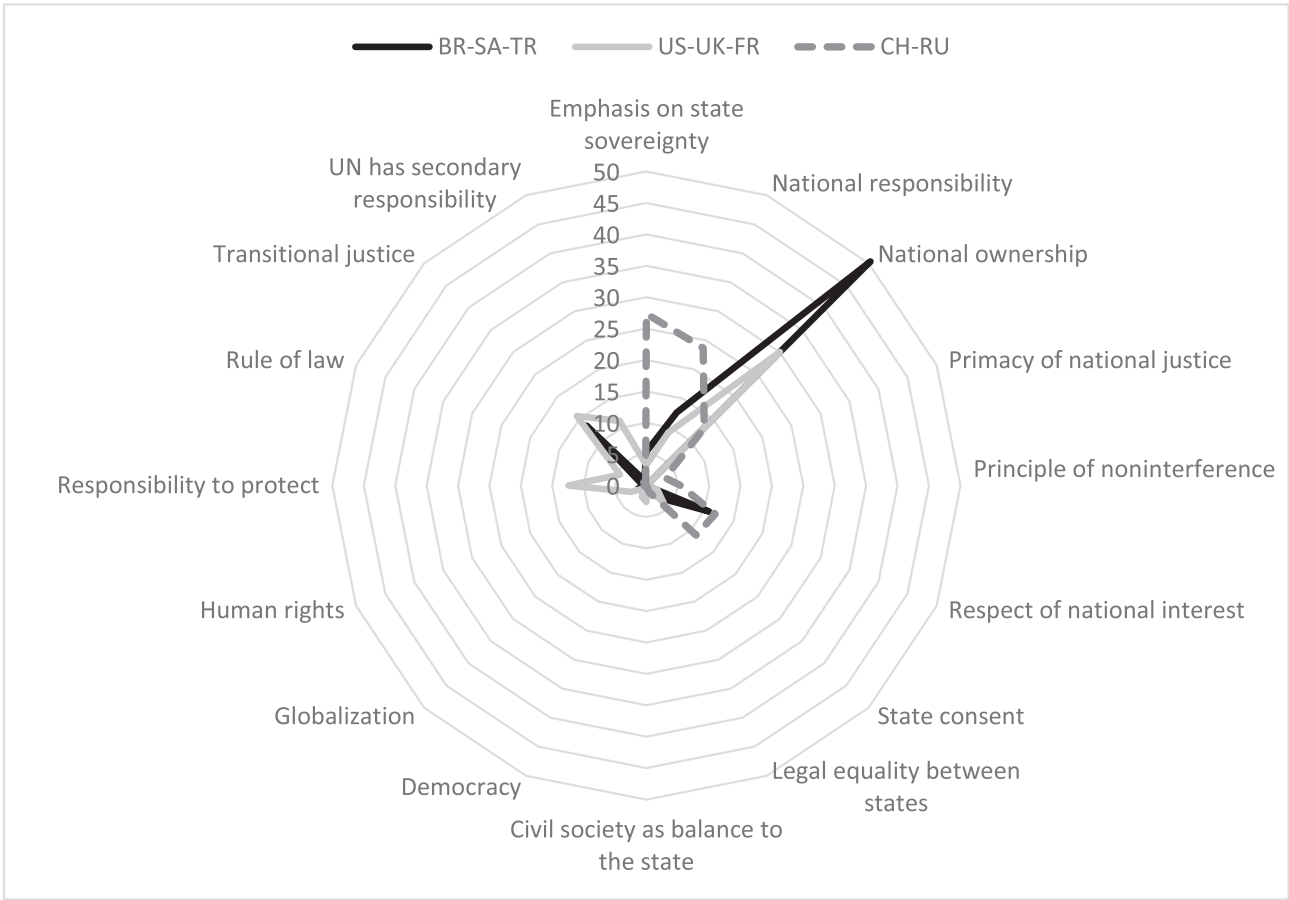


Figure 2. Disaggregated references to sovereignty for rising powers, China and Russia, and the P3.

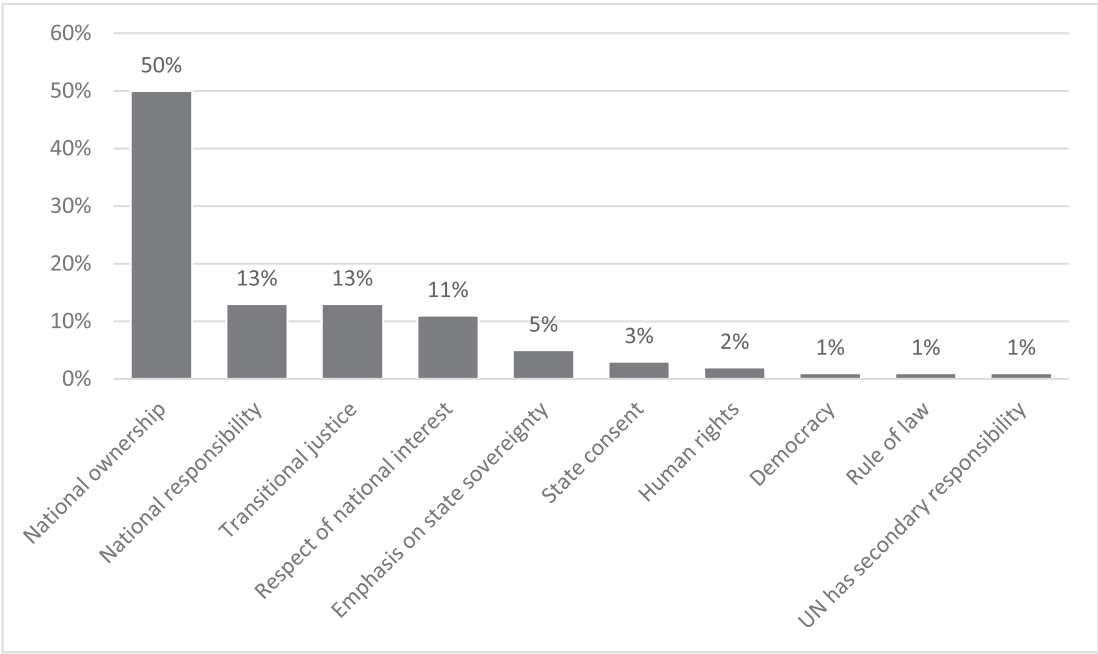


Figure 3. Distribution of references to sovereignty by Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey.

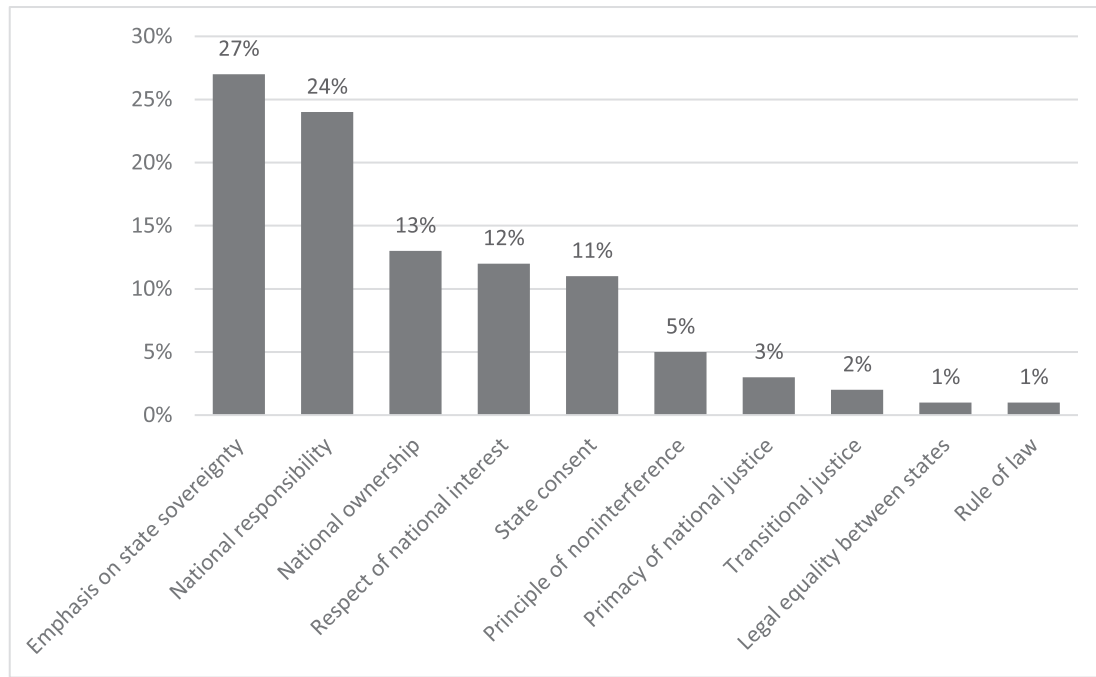


Figure 4. Distribution of references to sovereignty by China and Russia.

in mind the importance of national ownership of the peacebuilding process, priority should be given to the issue of building national capacities¹⁹ and that “actively supporting national authorities in building their capacities is essential, particularly when we take into account the fact that peacebuilding is primarily a national responsibility.”²⁰ Similarly, Brazil links national ownership to building national capacity as a way of emancipation: “we should spare no effort to strengthen local capacity so that the country concerned can tread its own path toward peace and development.”²¹

Secondly, for rising powers, defining sovereignty as national ownership also implies prioritizing national perspectives.²² This stance is particularly evident in the case of transitional justice. South Africa²³ underscores the importance of domestic approaches stating “healing, however, comes from within and cannot be imposed from without. It is therefore important that ownership of transitional justice processes not be appropriated by the international community.”²⁴ Brazil echoes this sentiment, advocating for more nationally based understandings: “there are no universal recipes for transitional justice processes. In order to be effective, transitional justice strategies should not only consider the local context but also be based on widespread consultations among different sectors of societies.”²⁵ Even beyond transitional justice, Brazil underlines the prioritization of national perspectives: “As for national ownership, there is no doubt that the actions that we undertake must be steered by the interests and needs of the affected country.”²⁶

In sum, rising powers conceptualize sovereignty in peacebuilding debates primarily as national ownership. This conceptualization emphasizes reclaiming responsibility of peacebuilding and reaffirming the central role of the host government. It involves strengthening national capacities and prioritizing national perspectives. By aligning sovereignty to national ownership, rising powers engage in norm entrepreneurship as they reshape the norm by underlining that peacebuilding needs to fit the interests of the host countries and by channeling peacebuilding resources to strengthen national capacity. Thus, the rising powers maintain flexibility in defining peacebuilding, leveraging the conceptualization of sovereignty as national ownership to shape and direct peacebuilding efforts to address the specific concerns of host countries. This stands in contrast to the approaches by China and Russia as well as by the P3, to which we will turn now.

CHINA AND RUSSIA: STATE-CENTRIC SOVEREIGNTY AS PRECONDITION FOR PEACEBUILDING

China and Russia promote a state-centric Westphalian understanding of sovereignty as a precondition for peacebuilding, as illustrated in figure 4. They present themselves as the defenders of the UN Charter. Both states continuously reject international intervention without state consent and both—albeit Russia to a lesser extent—frequently recall the corresponding UN Charter articles and related norms.²⁷ This is in line with Fung’s (2020, 193) argument that China “resists co-optation into an evolving ontological order that challenges traditional sovereignty.” For China and Russia, the respect for a state’s sovereignty is a precondition for peacebuilding, making such efforts wholly contingent on the observance of their interpretation of sovereignty.

The difference to rising powers’ conceptualizations is that while the latter emphasize the importance of state

¹⁹UNSC S/PV 6224–2009.

²⁰UNSC S/PV 6903–2013.

²¹UNSC S/PV 6165R1–2009.

²²This view is shared with China and Russia, as we will illustrate further below.

²³South Africa’s emphasis on transitional justice can be explained by its historical experience in the post-Apartheid era.

²⁴UNSC S/PV 8723–2020.

²⁵UNSC S/PV 8723–2020.

²⁶UNSC S/PV 6503–2011.

²⁷They often relate to the principles of “sovereign equality” and “non-intervention in the internal affairs.”

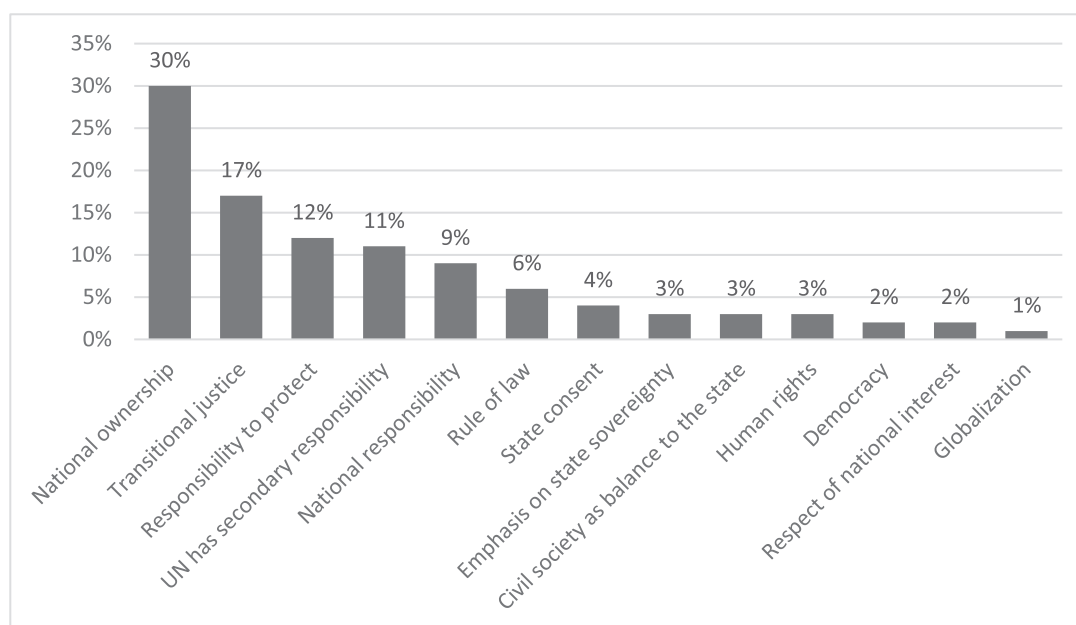


Figure 5. Distribution of references to sovereignty by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

sovereignty *during* the deployment and implementation of peacebuilding by conceptualizing it as national ownership, China and Russia uphold state sovereignty even *before* peacebuilding, namely in the very decision to deploy UN peace missions in the first place. In addition to directly invoking the concept of sovereignty and referencing related UN Charter articles, this prioritization of state sovereignty as a precondition for peacebuilding manifests itself in two main arguments that decisions on peacebuilding are taken by host governments and that national interests should be prioritized in peacebuilding.

Regarding the first, China and Russia underline that the main responsibility for decisions about peacebuilding lies with the host government. Unlike rising powers, who view the host state's responsibility as part of a negotiated process to align international peacebuilding with national priorities,²⁸ China and Russia underscore that host states' consent and request for peacebuilding are preconditions for any international engagement. China argues that "the international community should respect the sovereignty and ownership of the host countries, intervening only at their request and supporting them in accordance with the priorities and road maps formulated by them."²⁹ It also asserts that "post-conflict countries bear the primary responsibility for their own peacebuilding."³⁰ Similarly, Russia mentions that the host state "bears the primary responsibility both for the political process and for addressing the root causes of conflict, as well as for ensuring the security of its population."³¹ Russia also highlights that it is upon each state to identify its peacebuilding priorities³² and that "achieving lasting peace and stability is only possible when every aspect of responsibility and ownership lies with national players."³³

Regarding the second, China and Russia prioritize national interests in peacebuilding, rejecting standardized solutions or approaches. Unlike rising powers, who align peacebuilding with host states' interests to maintain sovereignty, China and Russia assert the supremacy of national priorities over international peacebuilding initiatives. For them, peacebuilding should be shaped solely according to the host state's priorities, effectively excluding any possibility of "universal" priorities that may include promoting human rights or strengthening civil society. In this regard, China argues that the international community "should take into full consideration the priorities set by the country concerned and formulate a corresponding peacebuilding strategy based on the situation on the ground"³⁴ and "not just mechanically copy existing templates."³⁵ Similarly, Russia underscores that "establishing constructive and trust-based relations with the host country and taking their nationally determined priorities into account are extremely important components of effective mandate fulfillment."³⁶

The focus of China and Russia is also shown when discussing principles associated with post-Westphalian sovereignty, such as reconciliation and transitional justice, in that they limit their scope within the bounds of national sovereignty. China states, for instance, that "respect for national sovereignty is the primary prerequisite for reconciliation"³⁷ or that "only by adhering to the principle of sovereignty can transitional justice efforts be justified."³⁸ Both countries also downplay the role of local actors and civil society in peacebuilding, aligning with studies that highlight their state-centric approaches (Yuan 2020; Badache, Hellmüller, and Salaymeh 2022; Lewis 2022).

Overall, China and Russia consistently emphasize the importance of sovereignty in peacebuilding discussions. They place significant emphasis on the principle of noninterfer-

²⁸UNSC S/PV 6299R1-2010.

²⁹UNSC S/PV 7472-2015.

³⁰UNSC S/PV 6903-2013.

³¹UNSC S/PV 8251-2018.

³²UNSC S/PV 6472-2011.

³³UNSC S/PV 6472-2011.

³⁴UNSC S/PV 6299-2010.

³⁵UNSC S/PV 6954-2013.

³⁶UNSC S/PV 3839-2018.

³⁷UNSC S/PV 8668-2020.

³⁸UNSC S/PV 8723-2020.

ence by highlighting national responsibility and interests, while insisting on the imperative of state consent.

THE P3: CONDITIONAL AND PEOPLE-CENTRIC SOVEREIGNTY IN SUPPORT OF PEACEBUILDING

The P3 adopt a conditional definition of sovereignty in support of peacebuilding. They promote a people-centric post-Westphalian view of sovereignty and condition national ownership on the host state's capacities by upholding transitional justice and the responsibility to protect, as illustrated in figure 5.³⁹ In particular, they differ in two main ways from rising powers: first, they view national ownership as a valuable principle but acknowledge that it cannot always be uniformly applied. Second, they emphasize the role of local actors, pointing to an understanding of *local* more than *national* ownership.

Regarding the first point, while the P3 seem to agree with the rising powers on the importance of national ownership in peacebuilding, they condition its application on the host state's capacities to take on responsibility for peacebuilding. In contrast to the understanding of rising powers, national ownership is thus not inherently given but conditional. This view has gained traction in the framework of discourses about state fragility and failure (Bilgin and Morton 2002; Milliken and Krause 2002; Bøås and Jennings 2005). For example, the United Kingdom expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of national ownership in contexts of alleged state fragility, noting: "we need to be realistic about the limits of national ownership in situations of State collapse where political legitimacy remains contested."⁴⁰ Similarly, the United States underscores that "national ownership of the processes of rebuilding and renewal is indispensable, but we still struggle to assist fragile post-conflict governments so they can set and implement their own priorities."⁴¹ Thus, the P3 advocate for a conditional approach to national ownership.

Second, the P3 promote a local rather than national view of national ownership. For example, the United States articulates a broad notion of national ownership that is not limited to "government ownership" but includes various sectors of society. This broad notion can, for instance, be discerned in the way the United States frames transitional justice initiatives, underlining the importance of community actors in these processes: "transitional justice must be tailored to local circumstances, with communities playing a central role in its design and implementation."⁴² Similarly, France adopts a broad definition of "national ownership" by arguing that "in order to sustain national ownership, it must be inclusive and involve all peace actors, underpinned by the strong participation of women."⁴³ The United Kingdom also underlines the role of civil society actors, noting that: "civil society in its broadest sense has an essential role to play in all phases of the conflict cycle, not just peace-building but conflict-

prevention and post-conflict reconstruction as well."⁴⁴ Overall, the P3's interpretation of national ownership is located at the community level and is not limited to national authorities.

Against this backdrop, the P3 place significant emphasis on the responsibility to protect and the UN's secondary responsibility to address security threats when a state is unable to establish its authority. France articulates this clearly: "when prevention fails and the spiral of violence sets in, it is our responsibility to stop the escalation and to intervene."⁴⁵ This view extends the responsibility of the UN and the international community beyond protecting civilians to also restoring justice, which brings back the notion of transitional justice. France further elaborates: "in our view, the Security Council has a special responsibility in the area of the restoration of justice and the rule of law in countries at war or which are striving to emerge from conflict with the assistance of the international community."⁴⁶ This responsibility is invoked not only on the grounds of maintaining international peace and security but also by framing it as a "moral" imperative and responsibility by the United Kingdom⁴⁷ and the United States.⁴⁸ For them, national ownership and responsibility should not prevent the international community, and the UN, from intervening when the host state is unable to establish its authority.

In sum, the P3 do not frequently mention sovereignty, but when they do, they tend to view it as conditional on a state's ability to uphold it as illustrated by the way they frame national ownership. Consequently, they prioritize peacebuilding objectives over sovereignty concerns.

Conclusion

In their bid to increase their weight on the global stage, rising powers seek a more active role within the UN system and broader global governance frameworks. Willing to engage more in conflict-affected countries, they face the delicate question of the sovereignty of host states. These political and practical challenges become thornier as they are advocating for their own sovereignty in their pursuit of more autonomy at the global level. This article furthers our understanding of how rising powers navigate global debates by analyzing the extent to which they act as norm entrepreneurs in shaping the understanding of sovereignty in peacebuilding discussions. Our analysis of UNSC speeches demonstrates that the P5 and the rising powers (Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey) adopt distinct perspectives on the concept of sovereignty. These different approaches are better revealed along a spectrum between Westphalian and post-Westphalian sovereignty rather than a dichotomy. Within this spectrum, the rising powers tend to distinguish their stances by occupying a middle ground.

Rising powers act as norm entrepreneurs by proposing a novel interpretation of sovereignty in peacebuilding. They connect sovereignty and peacebuilding by promoting national ownership as the fundamental aspect of sovereignty in the implementation of peacebuilding programs. While they are not pushing for an entirely new conceptualization of the norm, they provide a new framing of sovereignty in relation to peacebuilding, occupying a middle ground between the P5. Unlike China and Russia, they do not

³⁹While the P3 agree in their upholding of the post-Westphalia sovereignty, their positions show more differences than the almost identical positions of China and Russia, and the very similar positions of the rising powers, as shown in figure 1. The United States and the United Kingdom share closer stands by prioritizing national ownership, responsibility to protect, and transitional justice. The United Kingdom is distinguishably championing the emphasis on the role of civil society in peacebuilding. France joins the United States and the United Kingdom in highlighting national ownership, transitional justice, and responsibility to protect, but also saliently underscores the UN's secondary responsibility which is a distinguishing component of post-Westphalian sovereignty.

⁴⁰UNSC S/PV 7359–2015.

⁴¹UNSC S/PV 6472–2011.

⁴²UNSC S/PV 8723–2020.

⁴³UNSC S/PV 8579–2019.

⁴⁴UNSC S/PV 4993–2004.

⁴⁵UNSC S/PV 8243_2018.

⁴⁶UNSC S/PV 5052_2004.

⁴⁷UNSC S/PV 5379_2008 and 5187_2005.

⁴⁸UNSC S/PV 7196_2014.

insist on strict Westphalian sovereignty, which prioritizes sovereignty over peacebuilding by emphasizing national responsibility and interests, nor do they fully embrace the P3's post-Westphalian notion of sovereignty, which prioritizes international peacebuilding over sovereignty by questioning whether national ownership is always feasible and underlining local more than national ownership. Rather, rising powers redefine sovereignty by upholding national ownership as a means of integrating the host state's interests and ensuring its active involvement and control *during* the peacebuilding process. Thereby, they argue that effective peacebuilding requires the host state's ownership, the prioritization of its national responsibility and capacities, and the alignment with its specific perspectives, without questioning the host state's capacity. This interpretation of sovereignty as national ownership does not supplant the international with the national but aligns it with host state's priorities. Rising powers therefore propose that sovereignty is neither a precondition for peacebuilding nor a subordinate to it, but that the two can be combined. They are thus engaged in adapting and adjusting the sovereignty norm to fit into a nationally owned peacebuilding framework.

These findings nuance Ikenberry's (2011) expectations that rising powers would socialize and subscribe to the international liberal order's norms, and Kahler's (2013) argument that they will defend traditional sovereignty. In contrast, they illustrate how rising powers chart their own path, differentiating their approach from both China and Russia's adherence to Westphalian sovereignty and the P3's endorsement of post-Westphalian sovereignty. However, the analysis does not indicate that the rising powers pose a normative challenge or an entirely novel definition of sovereignty. Nevertheless, given the evolving and mutually constructed nature of sovereignty, the rising powers' role in framing the concept will likely increase, reflecting their growing weight in the global system and regional peacebuilding. Their stance may potentially encourage other states on the receiving end of peacebuilding to become more outspoken regarding their needs and interests.

The article makes three contributions to the existing literature. First, it adds to the literature on rising powers by providing a fine-grained analysis of their views on sovereignty in peacebuilding. Second, it deepens our understanding of sovereignty by arguing for a spectrum of conceptualizations beyond the dichotomy of Westphalian versus post-Westphalian sovereignty and by disaggregating the conceptualization of sovereignty into several components. Third, it sheds light on the potential impact of rising powers on peacebuilding in a multipolar global context. At the same time, our analysis comes with three main limitations that suggest avenues for further research. First, we examine states' conceptualizations of sovereignty in a specific context that is the UNSC. Rising powers' discourses may vary in other institutional venues and before different audiences. Further research could explore sovereignty conceptualizations in other arenas (see, for instance, Paris 2020). Second, our focus on three rising powers limits generalization, as "rising powers" are a heterogeneous group with varying geopolitical contexts, historical backgrounds, and political systems that shape their views on sovereignty (Von Einsiedel and Malone 2018, 1). Existing studies highlight an ambiguous stance and a discourse-practice gap among some rising powers regarding sovereignty-related concepts like nonintervention and the minimum use of force (Duarte Villa and Jenne 2020, 408). In this regard, further research could examine individual components of each state's

sovereignty views and how they differ. Additionally, future research could extend beyond the category of rising powers to explore the relation between the conceptualizations of sovereignty and the regime type, as our findings suggest that autocratic regimes may be more inclined to promote Westphalian sovereignty. Third, while this article focuses on sovereignty conceptualizations in peacebuilding, further research could analyze rising powers' views on sovereignty in other fields, such as development or trade.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the article offers a comprehensive and fine-grained analysis of rising powers' view on sovereignty in peacebuilding debates contributing to a better understanding of the evolving dynamics of peacebuilding in a changing world order.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available in the *International Studies Quarterly* data archive.

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