EMERGING POWERS AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE*

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In recent years, as a result of the diffusion of power within the international arena, emerging powers have assumed a proactive presence in several multilateral contexts aiming at promoting normative and operational changes. While these nations have acted as a propulsion force in the transition towards a multipolar order, they have simultaneously sought to expand their autonomy and recognition within the international system. This has been a gradual, disordered and uneven development in world affairs.

Thereby, India, Brazil and South Africa now represent a renewed source of international pressure, views, and resources. These countries have been dedicating special attention to the rule-making process of global governance agendas and institutions. While broadening and deepening the scope of their responsibilities and commitments to other developing countries, they have been crafting innovative forms of inter-state collaboration, with special mention to the BRICS and the IBSA groupings.

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The IBSA Axis

IBSA has brought together three developing nations that are regional powerhouses, therefore simultaneously opening space for affirmative multilateralism, intra-South political coordination. Since 2003, India, Brazil and South Africa have convened for six ministry meetings and five heads of states summits; with IBSA evolving to an institutional framework based on sixteen working groups, a facility for the Alleviation of Hunger and Poverty (IBSA trust fund) and the implementation of a myriad of other South-South cooperation initiatives.

Furthermore, the IBSA coalition has built on niche diplomacy to deal with pressing realities in the developing world in defense of a non-westernized approach. Special focus has been given to the Palestine-Israeli peace process, the stability and unity of Iraq, a diplomatic solution for the Iranian nuclear program, a re-engagement within the Conference on Disarmament, the peace process in Sudan and the international involvement in the Arab world regime changes.

IBSA more than contesting the structure of world power defends the need to reform the UN framework and the international financial structure. The fifth summit declaration (October 2011) for example, has urged that power distribution in multilateral institutions follow transparent procedures with a special emphasis on the appointment of the next leader of the World Bank in 2012.

Teamwork at the UNSC
The chance to sit together at the UNSC in 2011 as non-permanent members became a major opportunity for IBSA. Also, during this year, this group was able to share and reinforce the values and perspectives on world politics and security\(^1\). All together, these are the pillars of a Southern critical appraisal of the post-cold war liberal peace concepts and prescriptions. The fundamentals involved can be resumed as follows:

- The inevitable link between security and development (Afghanistan, Somalia)
- The inevitable link between peace, sovereignty and sustainable development (recognition of Palestine state)
- The articulation between political liberties, peaceful resolutions, national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Libya, Syria)
- The perils of the SC encroachment on the prerogatives of other UN agencies agendas and responsibilities (eg. Addressing climate change as a security matter)
- The need to be more cautious with coercive methods (use of sanctions) which can signify a first step toward military action (Iran)
- The need to be cautious with the use of the UN charter when addressing local crisis. The prescriptions outlined in Chapter VI and VIII ought not to be ofuscated by the use of chapter VII. (This concern should translate into an

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improvement of the Council’s capacity to monitor and account for the use of force, which it authorizes by way of reports and military information)

- The need to be cautious with use of preventive intervention; the protection of human lives should be carried forward with responsibility. (Arab spring countries)

Whereas certain permanent members of the Council have downplayed the importance of reviewing its methods and procedures, IBSA countries have transmitted their special concern with the flaws of UN bureaucratic coordination, the needs for improvement in the links between SC, the GA and the executive boards of the UN agencies. They stressed the importance of a permanent exchange with the recently created Peace Building Commission (PBC) which should *de facto* function as an advisory body to the SC.

Furthermore, the Security Council encroachment on the prerogatives of other UN bodies, in particular the General Assembly, has been one of the issues addressed by IBSA countries at the SC. Regarding the question of a broader representation, transparency and legitimacy, in addition to the quest for the expansion of permanent seats, IBSA members have underscored the importance of ensuring that non-member countries be given a say at the Council’s meeting where their affairs are at stake, and that when necessary, PK troops and police contributing countries also be heard at the Council too. IBSA countries have also expressed their concern regarding closed door, off-the-record meetings held by the Council, with explicit mention to the annual briefing offered by the President of the International court of Justice to the SC.\(^2\) Thus, a special concern has been highlighted in reference to the 1540 Committee to follow its mandate and not overstretch any prerogatives.

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\(^2\) S/PV/6672
Along 2011 SC meetings, South Africa is certainly the IBSA country which transmits a stronger link between its regional and global agenda. It is important to keep in mind that the African continent is responsible for 70% the SC’s agenda, that which certainly urges Pretoria to have a say and a cautious involvement in each of the cases (Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea, among others). Putting an IBSA seal on cooperation initiatives as has been done with the Poverty Alleviation Fund in North and South Sudan, has contributed to strengthen South Africa regional presence in vulnerable scenarios.

During its presence at the SC, South Africa has made efforts to spotlight dramatic aspects of the African security agenda such as the recruitment of children, small arms traffic and sea piracy. Most important has been the effort to consolidate a close collaboration between the SC and the African Union, particularly its Peace and Security Council. In fact, this regional body has expanded its responsibilities in UN-led conflict resolution processes – as has been seen in the partition of the Sudanese state.

A Spotlight on Brazil

One of Brazil’s major concerns has been the need for a conceptual revision of global governance institutions, particularly the reform of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC). Brazil became especially concerned with the question of legitimacy of the use of force in international intervention as well as the humanitarian impact of military action and the importance of solutions which sought equilibrium between peace, solidarity, sovereignty and sustainable development. One of Brazil’s main concerns has been the promotion of capacity-building and the strengthening of national institutions instead of the use of coercive responses to address local political turmoil.
Next to Japan, Brazil is the country which has most frequently occupied a non-
permanent seat since the creation of the UNSC\(^3\). At present, Brazil is the
11\(^{th}\)largest contributor to UN PKO; it participates in eight peace missions, and
registers the second largest increase in troop contributions in 2010. In addition to
Haiti, where Brazil holds the military command of the MINUSTAH, Brazilian
troops have also been sent to East Timor, Lebanon and Cyprus in recent years.
Brazilian involvement in post-conflict reconstruction has also expanded in Guinea
Bissau; besides assuming the Chair of the Country Specific Configuration at the
Peacebuilding Commission, bilateral cooperation programs are developed in
agriculture, health and police training.

In comparison to its IBSA partners, Brazil neither relies on hard power assets (as
India) or regional leverage (as South Africa); its main plus has been its diplomacy,
a long nourished soft power card which has been instrumental to project this
country as a global player. During its 2010-11 term at the SC, Brazil expanded its
ambitions to influence sensitive matters on the world politics chessboard, with
special mention to the Iranian nuclear program. Together with Turkey (which also
occupied a seat at the Council) Brasilia sought the negotiation of a swap agreement
(may, 2010) which aimed to lock-in the pacific nature of the Iranian program and
undermine the pro-sanctions flag waved by many members sitting at the Council.
Though in the end a lost cause, the Brazilian-Turkish diplomatic moves set a
precedent for emerging powers confidence-building initiatives in contexts where
militaristic zero-sum approaches have proved to be highly unproductive.

When addressing vulnerable realities, Brazil avoids using terms like “failed”,
“fragile”, or “weak states”. Aside being perceived as stigmatizing and prejudicial,

\(^3\) Brazil’s has been elected five times as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in the post-Cold War era: in 1989-90, 1993-94, 1998-99, and 2004-2005 and 2010-2011.
the Brazilian government considers such labels a subtle way used by world powers to cast doubt on the sovereignty of these countries. In this same direction, Brazil has avoided endorsing the concept of responsibility to protect, now a widely accepted shield to legitimize international intervention. According to the Brazilian perspective, the extreme poverty and lack of institutional sources of these countries are often times the consequence of the asymmetrical international intervention. Brazilian diplomatic discourse has justified intervention as the correct course of action with the principle of “non-indifference” as has been the case in Haiti.\(^4\) One of Brazil’s main aims has been to ensure that sustainable development become a main priority within the UN system: “Assistance and cooperation, rather than coercion must be our watchwords”, have been its words at the CS.\(^5\)

**Concluding pinpoints**

What is the ultimate significance of emerging powers presence and pro-activeness for global governance? At the end of the day, what is the purpose of pushing for the participation in the rule-making inner circle instead of accepting back-seat tickets? How far are they willing to go insofar as an in-depth transformation of structures and norms? Many analysts point to the risk of a conservative reconfiguration of institutions which at the end would imply the expansion of voices but not of its contents.

- The configuration of a multipolar order however is not yet a consensual outcome within the international community, and even less so is the idea that IBSA countries ought to become share-holders of a redistribution of power process. In fact, it is more plausible to consider BRICS a motor of

\(^4\) At: [http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/Brazil.pdf](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/Brazil.pdf)

multipolarization than IBSA. While the latter conceals more political coherence it will always have less influence upon the configuration of the international system than the former which adds major powers as China and Russia. IR literature and specialized media has been far more interested in BRICS than in IBSA. This certainly is explained by an undeniable difference regarding to strategic and economic weight of the first compared to the latter. Nevertheless, there is a contrasting political identity between both which ought to be underscored.

The simultaneous presence of IBSA countries at the SC during 2011 had a major impact upon the political agenda of the group, that which can easily be perceived in their 2011 Summit final declaration. Besides crucial matters, as the recognition of the Palestine state, the inclusion of a myriad of world politics issues (Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan, among others) addressed at the Council reveal a step forward in its coordination capacity in global governance bodies. It will be crucial that this process be continued and expanded. One of the arguments commonly to point out an opportunistic motivation behind emerging power coalitions is precisely that once the transitional trajectory of present world order concludes, these groups will tend to dismantle.

Acting together in multilateral forums allows emerging powers to maximize their individual foreign policy stances as they can add weight to the views and values. This process, on its own could contribute to give more form and substance to what should become a multipolar order. For IBSA countries, multilateral institutions have become crucial for the definition of the normative substance of such an order.
As this substance is greatly influenced by soft power requests, such as reformed governance procedures or more inclusive and multidimensional approaches, it would be expected that a multipolar system for the IBSA countries would imply an international order more dominated by institutions than force, more driven by political negotiations than strategic interests. Notwithstanding, the importance of the procedural dimension, this is definitely not the only terrain to give birth to a multipolar order. An endless list of issues and propositions are on or under the table in crucial areas as: climate change, biological weaponry, world trade, just to mention a few.

Regarding the IBSA regional-global connections, South Africa is the country with most progress. In part, the link between regional and global institutionalism has been a consequence of African urgencies in global governance agendas. It is impossible for Pretoria to build-up any sort of global perspective and leave out the myriad of African challenging and dramatic scenarios. This, for good or for bad, does not apply to South America or Southern Asia. As consequence, this leaves out, for now at least, the idea that the group could function as an inter-regional platform conducted by regional powers. Both Brazil and India, though for very different reasons, lack regional leadership to move the group in to such a direction. This reasoning is not exactly good news for IBSA’s stake in favour of a multipolar order, since regional leadership has been one of the entrance fees frequently spelled out by the established world powers. If in the long run this deficit can be compensated by even more effective trilateralism, as has been experimented at the SC during 2011, it remains unclear.
While the five BRICS members include the UN reform as part of their foreign policy portfolio, their stances are not the same regarding the aspects underlined for each case, particularly when the UNSC is addressed. Brazil and India are the BRICS countries with most affinities, as they are they have made explicit their candidacy for permanent seats in an expanded Council. China stands for this expansion and the need to make the Council more representative but does not show sympathy to a new group of permanent members and Russia has made clear the need to preserve the exclusivity of the veto prerogative of the present permanent members. South Africa stands as well for an expanded Council but, for historic and regional reasons, does not ambition a permanent seat. If intra-BRICs would have to assume a clearer perspective on this subject my guess is that Brazil, India and Russia could align on the hypothesis of new permanent seats with no veto power, while China and South Africa would converge on the idea of an expansion of rotative seats for the developing world. This would most certainly find the support of the 2/3rds of the GA which is the necessary step to move ahead with the reform. One last point is the comparison to be made between BRICS and IBSA on this question, since the former does explicitly support the candidacy of its members for a permanent seat.

Regarding the use of force, the intra-BRICS convergence has worked out at recent time in SC votings , with special mention to those related to the Arab spring, though South Africa stepped aside in some occasions. While the use of sanctions as a first step towards the use of force has been condemned by the group, specific situations may lead to intra-BRICs differences, again with special mention to South Africa which perceives the need to coordinate with the African Union.
It seems that G20 has become more functional than G77 for the BRICs countries to put forward stances regarding the economic North-South divide. Two important developments must be observed in the near future; the steps taken forward regarding the creation of a development bank by the BRICs group and the implications for this group of the next presidency of Russia of the G20. It is interesting to notice that the most recent BRICS summit final declaration does make reference to UNCTAD, and to the importance of the recent XIII Conference but does not mention G77 (a major platform for relationship with the developing world for China and Brazil at previous times). While no reference is made either in the 2011 IBSA summit final declaration it is “en passant” mentioned in a list of multilateral groups and institutions that must be supported.

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