

THE GEOPOLITICS OF IBSA: The South African dimension

By Francis Kornegay

Introduction

This paper continues a discourse undertaken last year by the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) in Johannesburg and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to examine the foreign policies of India, Brazil and South Africa within the context of their IBSA trilateral relationship – and independent of that relationship.¹ While it was found that the three countries had aligned themselves as democratic ‘like-minded’ regional powers, sharing common objectives in altering North–South power relations in the global economy and in terms of global governance, their foreign policies reflect different trajectories. Each country’s diplomacy reflects an attempt to adapt to the dynamics of asymmetric globalisation characterised by globally networked interdependencies between states within a set of shifting power relationships wherein existing imbalances between developed and developing countries have been offset by an ongoing “Asian ascendancy” reflected in the rising power status of China and India.²

Within this context, India’s foreign policy was found to be dictated first and foremost by diffuse transnational security considerations, multilateral trading arrangements, the need for United Nations (UN) reform, the changing “global strategic framework” and increasing demands of global governance. They were further mediated by four sets of relationship clusters: South Asia where India is preponderant; ‘great power’ relations with the US, the EU, China, Japan and Russia; the rest of Asia encompassed in Delhi’s ‘Look East’ policy; and Latin America and Africa. India’s dilemma was seen as being one of how to balance its still ‘developing country’ characteristics with its ‘emerging power’ status in an unpredictable environment of changing power configurations.³ Here, India’s pursuit of a bilateral nuclear deal with the U.S. has featured prominently as,

¹ Francis Kornegay. IBSA: The Foreign Policies of India, Brazil & South Africa: Emerging powers in a changing world order. Johannesburg, Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), 7 August 2007. 15pp. Seminar discussion paper (Unpublished).

² “IBSA: The foreign policies of India, Brazil and South Africa: Emerging powers in a changing world order.” Johannesburg, CPS-FES, 2007. Post-seminar summary report highlighting main points of proceedings which took place on 16 October 2007.

³ Umma Salma Bava, “India’s Dilemmas in Foreign Policy Balancing: Challenges of an emerging Asian power,” 2007. 5 pp. CPS-FES seminar presentation. Also see: *New Powers for Global Change? India’s role in the emerging world order*, by U. Salma Bava, Berlin, FES (Briefing paper 4), March 2007.

perhaps, the signature issue determining how India will ultimately align itself within this fluid global environment and what this will mean for its foreign policy identity.

Brazilian foreign policy, on the other hand, was very candidly characterized by an historical continuity and consistency that defined a national identity wherein Brazilians saw themselves, not as “a country of the South,” but as one that was “Western” and democratic. Further, it already enjoys the status of “agricultural superpower.” Within this context, Brazil has always been a “South Atlantic power” and, for the most part of the 20th century, aligned with the West, the U.S. in particular. Offsetting this, Brazil’s emerging power status has tended to motivate an increasing stake in enhancing its autonomy by concentrating efforts on “consolidating South American integration” coupled with a global reform agenda: democratising global governance, collective security reform, trade reform and combating an erosion in the rule of law in international relations.⁴ Most recently, Brazil’s championing of the recently launched Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), accompanied by establishment of a South American Defence Council are indicative of this ongoing autonomy trend, not simply for itself but for South America as a continental region seeking to enhance its regional sovereignty within a hemispheric context traditionally dominated by the United States.

Through IBSA, Brazil was also seen as, in a sense, “rediscovering the route to India” backed up by trilateral naval exercises between the three countries (which took place in May 2008) and in the construction of a trans–continental highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific via Peru. These measures, in turn, would amplify another dimension of Brazil’s foreign relations: leadership within the Lusophone community of nations. This geo–cultural dimension carries with it major African policy implications converging with South Africa’s shared interest in relations with the Portuguese–speaking member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). South Africa’s foreign policy, on the other hand, was depicted as reflecting a more explicit South commitment as an extension of its African agenda.

⁴ Zelia Roelofse-Campbell, “Brazil and the Foreign Policy Dilemmas of a South Atlantic Power,” 2007. 5 pp. CPS-FES seminar presentation.

It's execution, over the past eight years, has involved a complex balancing act aimed at advancing developmental goals embedded in an independent foreign policy. The country's foreign policy elite has sought to weigh national imperatives with regional and continental goals and dynamics, factoring in South-South cooperation considerations while navigating North-South tensions and opportunities. This has entailed exploring a workable partnership between Africa and the industrialized North in particular, North and South in general. One of the major challenges facing South Africa has been balancing issues of principle and morality with unavoidable considerations of *realpolitik*. The Mandela government strove to position the country as a "good" world citizen conducting a principle-driven foreign policy.⁵ This was underscored by commitments to human rights and international law as a "guide" to the relations between nations while promoting Africa's interests; at the same time, linking internal development to growing regional and international cooperation.

While the Mbeki administration has not deviated from the essentials of this policy, it has, nevertheless, had to pursue trade-offs toward advancing Africa's conflict resolution priorities while maintaining its independence vis-à-vis the West in addressing the geopolitical imperatives of such emerging powers as China, India and Russia among others. This, at times, has complicated its balancing act with the industrialised North as has been on display on a number of issues that have made it before the UN Security Council where it has been a non-permanent member over the past two years. Here, Myanmar, Zimbabwe and Iran's nuclear stand-off with the West have featured prominently.

The broader geopolitical terrain impinging on the trilateral relationship and the foreign policy identities of India, Brazil and South Africa comes into sharper relief in their inclusion with China and Mexico as the invited guest of the G8 at their annual summits. This trend has given rise, increasingly to concerns about the continuing relevance of a G8 as an exclusive club of the world's economic directorate of developed countries amid the growing economic weight of emerging powers. In 2007, this trend gave rise to two IBSA options: incorporate into a G8 expansion into a 'G13' or opt for an autonomous 'G5' identity.⁶ While the three did indeed club together with China and Mexico into a G5, the three

⁵ See: Chris Landsberg, *New Powers for Global Change? South Africa's global strategy and status*, Berlin, FES (Briefing Paper 16), November 2006.

⁶ Konegay, Op. Cit. pp. 11-15 (Seminar Discussion Paper), "IBSA and the G8: The 'outreach five' vs. the G5 dimension." More recently: "G8 summit: Rich nations stall dialogue with emerging powers," *Financial Times*, July 3, 2008, p. 5. "'G5' economies kept at bay," while "Fears over growth of China and India."

countries' individual and collective IBSA relationship vis-à-vis the G5 and the G8 remains ambivalent. Meanwhile, the IBSA-G8 relationship is only inadequately suggestive of the new shape of things to come in the unfolding rearranging of power relationships in the global system.

For this paper, South Africa is the focus of a geopolitical analysis of IBSA within this wider global context. Nevertheless, it is instructive to approach the South African dimension from a broader updated look at how the three countries comparatively relate to the changing global political dynamics in determining whether or not a genuinely trilateral IBSA identity can emerge out of their G3 relationship. Exploring this possibility then leads into a more focused look at South Africa's niche within IBSA in relationship to its continental African vocation; one that, in turn, points it toward its relationship with India and their joint prospects for forging a greater interregional sense of Indian Ocean community and, simultaneously toward Brazil and prospects for Brazil's Unasur leadership interacting with South Africa's continental role toward extrapolating into a wider interregional sense of South Atlantic community.

In Search of a Trilateral Identity in a Changing World Order

There are many reasons why IBSA should endure as a trilateral relationship between its three participants. As 'like minded' democratic regional powers of the South, India, Brazil and South Africa have managed to knit together a framework for multi-sectoral cooperation in a number of fields. While uneven in progress, IBSA's several sectoral working groups (SWGs), nevertheless provide a platform for a diversity of initiatives in South-South cooperation, including a development fund that, while modest, can benefit other developing countries as an example of how the larger emerging economies of the South can cooperate together in mobilizing resources to address developmental challenges among LDC economies. Intriguing still, is the possibility or potential for geo-strategic cooperation on the basis of the IBSAMAR naval exercises that the three countries initiated in May hosted by South Africa.⁷ With South Africa at the geographically central pivot between the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, the compelling notion of a 'Gondwanan' axis of southern maritime emerging powers jointly carving out for themselves a security niche within a changing world order raises

⁷ See: "IBSA naval exercise no precursor to treaty – Mukherjee," by Fakir Hassen, *Thaindian News*, May 13, 2008. (<http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/ibsa-naval-exercise-no-precursor-t...2008/07/14>).

a number of questions regarding how each country sees itself relating to the fluid international environment; whether or not their self-perceptions can contribute to a more cohesive trilateral geopolitical identity and, if so, what this might mean for IBSA within the context of a changed global structure of power transcending the North-South divide.

Brazil

Here, the focus of attention points toward a review of the postures of Brazil and India as a lead-in to critically examining South Africa's role in what might be dubbed the geopolitics of IBSA trilateralism. In problematising such a relationship in terms of its potential for forging a cohesive trilateral identity, Brazil presents perhaps the least controversial prospects in terms of its autonomous insertion within the changing hierarchy of global power and in terms of how this insertion might add value to such a trilateral identity. Coming off of a pro-Western frame of reference, Brazil, under its current administration, has clearly positioned itself as a southern player with at least the outward appearance of adding value to a realignment of forces toward a more balance power relationship between North and South; between developed and developing countries. Although its lead United Nations (UN) peacekeeping role in Haiti has been depicted as something of a 'sub-imperial' intervention as a proxy for a U.S. agenda in the Caribbean specifically and in inter-American relations more generally, this has been offset by Brazil's bid to consolidate an autonomous South American geopolitical-economic identity within the western hemisphere.

As a moderately centre-left regime, Brazil seems to have thus far deftly navigated a regional politics fraught by the indigenous Amerindian rooted radical nationalisms of the Andean sub-region spear-headed by Venezuela's 'Bolivarian' bid for geopolitical ascendancy in South America and the Caribbean and more pro-U.S. tendencies; the latter represented most prominently by the newly triumphalist Uribe regime in Colombia against the farce of the FARC in what appears to be their waning power bid in Bogota.⁸ The daring rescue operation of hostages appears to have checked the Bolivarian challenge in strategically shifting the regional balance of forces to the benefit of Brazil as the

⁸ "Uribe ascendant: Defeats for the Farc mark a power shift in Latin America," by Richard Lapper, *Financial Times*, July 7, 2008, p. 11.

arbiter between these tendencies as Brasilia has assumed a lead position in the launch of Unasur and the South American Defence Council (CSD).⁹

The Unasur/CSD configuration replicates the regionalization of the international security system interacting with inexorable trends towards regional economic integration in the South that has been long underway in Africa; a trend that has the potential for convergence via IBSA wherein Brazil and South Africa could jointly forge an interregional trans-South Atlantic economic and security community. Brazil's leadership in the launch of the Unasur/CSD, as an incipient regional economic and security community, reflects a bid to enhance South America's regional autonomy viz-a-viz American hemispheric hegemony at a time of intensified geopolitical competition for resources, reflected by some assessments in Washington's reactivation of the Fourth Fleet alongside a parallel but frustrated bid to install a new U.S. Africa Command.¹⁰ Reinforcing Brazil's bid to consolidate its regional leadership in a potential South Atlantic economic and security community is its recent discovery of major off-shore oil reserves complementing similar hydrocarbon resources in the west African Gulf of Guinea and further along African coastal littoral including Southern African Development Community (SADC) member, Angola, with which Brazil enjoys a close political and economic relationship within the Lusophone community of Portuguese-speaking countries.

Already a leading state actor in the biofuels sector, will Brazil further reinforce its strategic autonomy and, by extension, the regional autonomy of South America by joining Venezuela as a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) which includes sub-Saharan African members Nigeria and Angola? However Brazil's foreign policy evolves in projecting the country's bid for a more assertive great power role, the potential exist for it to cooperatively join with African partners in organizing the South Atlantic into an alternative energy security community as an option for a North Atlantic Euro-American system finding itself increasingly constricted in the ever tightening coils of energy dependence on Russia's oil and natural gas transport-communications grid spanning from Central Eurasia to the southern Mediterranean. In contemplating such options, Brazil enjoys a freedom of

⁹ "Brazil leads creation of South American NATO. US counter attacks," 28 May 2008. The Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), www.coha.org. Analysis prepared by COHA Research Associate, Jared Ritvo.

¹⁰ Ibid. "Fourth fleet, US answer to CSD."

action unencumbered by the geopolitical constraints of a complicated neighbourhood as presents its IBSA partners South Africa and India in their respective regional domains. Hence, Brazil can truly be non-aligned in its bid for great power status in the genuine sense that such a term implies without being a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). As such, Brazil's current posture appears compatible with consolidating an IBSA trilateral identity as an autonomous alignment within a changing North-South power balance. India's position, by comparison, appears much more problematic in this regard.

India

If Brazil has gravitated from a Euro-centrally defined pro-Western posture toward greater non-alignment in its cultivating a southern identity, India is widely perceived as moving in the opposite direction: from a leader of the NAM with a 'positive neutrality' tilt favouring the former Soviet bloc toward a pro-Western 'positive neutrality' emphasizing increasingly close relations with the United States. Indeed, there is an apparent transnational, trilateral U.S.-Israeli-Indian policy faction which would strategically realign India toward the geo-strategic priorities of Washington and Tel-Aviv.¹¹ While the verdict may remain out on whether or not New Delhi is mortgaging its foreign policy independence and strategic autonomy on the alter of a U.S.-India nuclear deal - which has yet to be consummated - India's aspirations for attaining global great power status raises a whole host of questions regarding its status as a southern power with implications for IBSA's trilateral identity.

The complexity of India's geopolitical circumstances in South Asia in its being sandwiched between rival Asian hegemon China on the one hand, and nuclear rival Pakistan on the other, both close allies, accompanied by New Delhi distancing itself from former close ties to Moscow, seems to have informed a new strategic calculus; one wherein India seeks Western sponsorship in general, U.S. sponsorship in particular, in attaining great power status which, in the U.S., if not the Indian, calculus is aimed at effecting a Sino-containment agenda. At the same time, there are convergent U.S.-Indian strategic interests in

¹¹ This is a tendency consistently tracked in Asia Times Online by such Indian analysts as MK Bhadrakumar and Sudha Ramachanran. See for example: the four part analysis, "The door open to Iraq's oil," by MK Bhadrakumar, 2008/02/15 (<http://www.atimes.com/>), section on "India-Israel energy ties".-"Turkey offers oil pipe lifeline to India," by Sudha Ramachandran, 2008/02/26 (<http://www.atimes.com/>).

southwestern Asia with particular focus on the Afghan–Pakistan nexus and the so-called ‘war on terror.’

To be sure this trajectory in Indian foreign policy under the Congress–led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) has always been deeply controversial, leading to the recent rupture in the UPA with the communists opting out and into opposition as a result of New Delhi’s pursuit of the nuclear deal. But apart from the foreign policy identity crisis confronting India, the fact that it seeks Western and/or U.S. endorsement in its great power quest is, in itself a contradiction, alongside an ambivalent relationship with China characterized by China overtaking the U.S. as India’s largest trading partner while India allows Beijing to bully it in their territorial dispute over Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.¹² Beijing obviously has no respect for India’s great power pretensions, Western endorsement or not! Nevertheless, despite this challenge to the credibility of India’s great power aspirations, Washington definitely supports India’s perceived bid to become the “pre–eminent regional power in South Asia.”¹³ In a recent analysis by senior former diplomat, M.K. Bhadrakumar, a recent Pentagon National Defence Strategy document states that “We [the US] look to India to assume greater responsibility as a stakeholder in the international system, commensurate with its growing economic, military and soft power,” while observing that India, for its part, is “working toward establishing formal ties with NATO” with Indian Ocean strategic implications given increasing priority given to this region by Russia as well as China and the U.S.¹⁴

Where this places the strategic potential of IBSAMAR as an alternative nonaligned collaboration within the context of an incipient South Atlantic–Indian Ocean security community is unclear given the strategic autonomy thrust of the Unasur/CSD complemented by the potential for a convergence with South and Southern African security thinking which, thus far, continues to resist Pentagon overtures regarding support for the U.S. Africa Command initiative. Experts at a recent conference on maritime security in Stellenbosch, emphasized the need

¹² Jeff M Smith, “India as a US hedge against China,” *Asia Times Online* (<http://www.atimes.com/>) 2008/08/06, p. 2. “...China has been testing New Delhi this year with a wave of abrupt but underreported incursions into Indian territory...China’s incursions, *some ways routine by now*, have become more numerous (anywhere between 60 and several hundred) *and brazen* (one crossing having driven a kilometer into Indian territory) in the past six months – an unusual provocation, given China’s sensitivity to world opinion ahead of the August Summer Olympic Games in Beijing.” (italics added)

¹³ MK Bhadrakumar, “Battle lines move from Kashmir to Kabul,” *Asia Times Online* (<http://www.atimes.com/>) 2008/08/08, p.4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3.

for a maritime security regime embracing Southern Africa and, indeed, the entire continent as it was noted that only 15 of Africa's 53 states are actually landlock, with half of United Nations peace operations on the continent since 1960 having taken place in coastal states.¹⁵ IBSAMAR could be well-placed to potentially contribute to a southern hemispheric maritime security regime embracing Southern Africa but for the geopolitical implications introduced by renewed post-Cold War great power rivalries. The question is whether or not the national interest contradictions between India, Brazil and South Africa in their strategic and foreign policy outlooks will preclude the development of a coherent IBSA geopolitical identity and security consensus that might hold out the promise of moderating such oceanic rivalries. How and on what domestic political terms India resolves its crisis of identity regarding the thrust of its foreign policy could be particularly germane to the prospects for an IBSA identity apart from the grouping's functionalist cooperation under the low-common denominator of 'like-mindedness.'

At the strategic geoeconomic level, however, India looms large, alongside China, in Africa's developmental prospects and as a key strategic partner for South Africa, as the continent's economic powerhouse, in terms of how it endeavors to navigate the continent's integration into the global economy. Indeed, apart from IBSA, both India and China, in relationship to their African interests, are beginning to be perceived as contributing to a new geopolitical-economic configuration embracing the Indian Ocean; what senior scholar, Martin Walker, at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars calls 'CHIMEA,' for China-India-Middle East-Africa; a geoeconomic space defined by the fact that: "China and India need energy supplies from the Persian Gulf states and oil and raw materials from Africa, and Africa needs the financial resources that the gulf states are accumulating in unprecedented quantities."¹⁶

Further: "...now that India has become a net food importer once again, China and India and the Middle East all have an interest in developing African agriculture as perhaps the last great untapped food resource of a world whose population looks set to grow from today's 6.5 billion to 9.1 billion by 2050" with more than half of the world's population currently residing in CHIMEA countries,

¹⁵ Hopewell Radebe, "China's thirst for oil exposes gap in southern African naval policy," *Business Day*, August 15, 2008, p. 6.

¹⁶ Martin Walker, "Indian Ocean nexus," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2008, pp. 21-22.

while Africa, itself will cross the 1 billion mark by 2050.¹⁷ Thus, IBSA's strategic potential, from an African perspective, needs to be explored in terms of these expansive new projections, further defining the geo-strategic parameters of the global South. This brings us to a consideration of South Africa's role as the pivot between the South Atlantic and the newly emerging CHIMEA configuration in which India is embedded.

South Africa's Role: The Gondwanan pivot or the weak link?

South Africa does not find itself in as explosive a geopolitical predicament as India, but its circumstances are considerably more complex than Brazil's. As far as foreign policy identity is concerned, South Africa's is very clear. Post-apartheid, the country quickly shed its Anglo-Afrikaner pro-Western posture and, while not gravitating toward anti-Western hostility, it began to articulate an Afro-centric foreign policy identity grounded in the international political alliances of the liberation struggle. With Africa as its centerpiece, the global South took priority within the context of the NAM accompanied by a multilateral strategy of balancing North and South. South Africa's convergent – as opposed to identical – interest with other emerging powers such as, principally China, and a resurgent Russia, in re-balancing the international power equation viz-a-viz the West, accompanied by its African diplomacy aimed at stabilizing the continent has, over time, placed its relations with the West, the U.S. in particular, under strain; South Africa's non-permanent UN Security Council tenure being indicative.

SA as 'Anti-Hegemon'

Apart from the questions of foreign policy posture and identity, however, South Africa's predicament is complicated by the reality that, within the IBSA trilateral context, it ranks nowhere near the mega-state, aspiring great power, league with India and Brazil. And, in many ways, it needs IBSA more than either of them. It's comparative advantage within this relationship is its geo-strategic centrality astride the confluence of the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans combined with its economic powerhouse gateway status viz-a-viz the rest of the African continent. Doing business in Africa, makes it virtually inescapable, for any outside actor not to factor South Africa into the equation of engaging

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

the continent. Moreover, given the sophistication of its modern industrial and post-industrial sectors and economic, institutional and social infrastructure, compared to the rest of the continent, South Africa fits naturally into the niche of Africa's default leader given the weaknesses of the fledgling African Union (AU) and its organs and affiliated regional economic communities.

However, with a population of only 46 million and devoid of a first rate military machine (in spite, and maybe because of the controversial arms deal) that should come with its status, South Africa is at a distinct disadvantage as a regional power. Economic hegemon it is, geopolitical hegemon it is not; not that Tshwane-Pretoria aspires to hegemony. Indeed, in psychological reaction-formation to the pax-Afrikanerdom of the apartheid past, the liberation movement regime of the African National Congress (ANC) shuns notions of hegemony to the point that today's South Africa can aptly be depicted as Africa's 'anti-hegemon.' But even South Africa's economic heft may increasingly reflect a shrinking hegemony if the 'beyond BRIC' projections of PricewaterhouseCoopers are anything to go by. By its estimates, Nigeria stands "out as having considerable growth potential, not far behind India in terms of projected annual growth, close to Turkey in terms of projected size by 2050 and overtaking Egypt (itself a strong performer in our growth rankings as can be seen from Table 5) and South Africa to become the largest African economy by that date," with the caveat that: "Nigeria is starting from a very low base per capita, however, and would still be a relatively low income country even by 2050, with GDP per capita of around \$11,700 at constant 2006 prices."¹⁸

Further, "these projections also assume that the growth-friendly policies that have stimulated strong non-oil GDP growth in Nigeria for the past 5 years are sustained in the longer term" which is seen as representing a major challenge; one no doubt intertwined with the country's political stability and national territorial cohesion as a federation.¹⁹ Given these projections, South Africa could still retain its leadership position should it succeed in consensually projecting its economic hegemony through a federated 'regional integration community' within the context of an evolving African Economic Community (AEC). Indeed,

¹⁸ John Hawksworth & Gordon Cookson. *The World in 2050 – Beyond the BRICs: A broader look at emerging market growth prospects*. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, March 2008. p. 19. See: "Extension of the analysis to other emerging economies." Also see: *BRICs and Beyond*, Goldman Sachs, November 2007. 272pp.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

given the demographic projections of several African countries, the nominalization of the territorial nation–state is a predictable part of the future African geopolitical landscape. Hence, the transnational regionalization of the state is inescapable as a precondition for continental peace and stability in overcoming Africa’s colonially inherited fragmentation – the source of the continent’s endemic weakness.

South Africa’s future should be seen within this broader African integration context. Therefore, instead of itself aspiring to great power status, South Africa should be seen as a default leader of its region and continent committed to propelling the continent into an enhanced status within the international system.²⁰ The country’s great power projection would become regionally embedded as a supranational as opposed to a national phenomenon. In short, South Africa remains very much a ‘work in progress’ compared to India and Brazil. Indeed, it can be argued that while Brazil’s gravitation toward a global South non–aligned posture complements South Africa’s Afro–centric non–alignment, South Africa lacks the incipient great power status or potential to balance India’s pro–U.S. tilt in a manner that would sharpen IBSA’s autonomous geopolitical identity within an emerging global South context. And should India consummate a formal relationship with NATO, this will further dilute IBSA’s political potential in global South politics apart from the three countries incorporation into a larger G5 or expanded G8 grouping as the North’s preferred ‘stakeholders’ from the South in a reconfigured global governance framework.

Strengthening the domestic terrain

In the short–to–medium term, South Africa’s enhanced role within IBSA as the grouping’s pivotal state actor joining Brazil’s sphere of influence in the South Atlantic with India’s Indian Ocean security interests, will hinge largely on how South Africa navigates its continuing post–apartheid nation–building political and economic development internally, and regionally in its integration into a larger Southern African political and economic community. Among South

²⁰ FRIDE. *IBSA: An International Actor and Partner for the EU?* Madrid, July 2008. 62 pp. (Working Paper/Documento de trabajo 63). See: “South Africa’s potential for regional leadership: catalyst for Africa’s renaissance?” by Francis Kornegay, pp. 14-17 in Chapter 2: “Power and Status of Brazil, India and South Africa,” including: “India: A global power without regional ambitions?” by Varun Sahni and “Brazil’s role as a middle power: dilemmas of global and regional recognition,” by Maria Regine Soares de Lima. FRIDE-FES Seminar report.

Africa's many challenges, two that stand out for the purposes of this analysis are: 1) the weakness of its national strategic policy planning apparatus at the power centre of government at the national level affecting the interplay between domestic and foreign policy agendas; and 2) the absence of a coherent national 'war on poverty' strategy to reverse a growing trend toward destabilizing unrest and alienation at the grassroots level of poor urban and rural communities.²¹ For South Africa to effectively conceptualise and act on its national interest within the context of a changing Africa, let alone, a changing world order, its current apparatus characterized by the Policy Coordination and Advisory Services Unit (PCAS) within The Presidency would seem to be inadequate to the multi-dimensional demands of policy development, implementation and management across the various clustered sectors of government.²²

Given the pivotal role played by South Africa on the continent and in the developing world, and in light of its serious internal developmental challenges, a successor administration, post-Mbeki, may want to build on PCAS by transforming it into a think tank-like superagency with a scenario planning capacity linked to at least four policy planning units for cluster coordination and management:

- a council of economic advisors
- a social development policy unit
- a safety and security coordinating committee
- a foreign policy, peace and security council

Whether or not the current political jockeying within the ANC and its alliance (with the South African Communist Party and COSATU), in the run-up to next year's national elections will, in the aftermath of those elections, result in sufficient leadership focus to facilitate a redesigning of government's policy apparatus at the centre is another question altogether. There may well be too much political distraction for this to happen in what almost amounts to a second transition that the country is undergoing in the aftermath of the Mandela and Mbeki eras. But the inadequacy of the current policy apparatus is reflected in a number of areas, especially where there is a need to coordinate South

²¹ Francis Kornegay, "The case for a developmental state," *City Press*, 25 May 2008, p. 29

²² See for example: *The Emerging South African Democratic Developmental State and the People's Contract*, Omano Edediji. Johannesburg, Centre for Policy Studies, Research Report 108, March 2007. p. 19 and pp. 17-20.

Africa's national development with its regional integration imperatives within the South African Customs Union (SACU) and within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), both of which are in flux.

The tendency within government and academia to approach regional cooperation and integration from a purely technocratic economic perspective of trade and development without the concurrent need to consider the medium and long-term political governance implications of regionalism for how the country's domestic governing arrangements are configured is indicative. This is reflected in the debate over the future of South Africa's provinces: whether they should be abolished, reduced in number or placed under tighter national government administrative control as opposed to retaining their current decentralized quasi-federal status. The possibility that South Africa's provinces might need to move toward greater rather than less federalism in anticipation of a future federal union of Southern African states is off the scenario 'radar screen.'²³ For example, the federalization of South Africa's provinces from a 'variable speed' developmental perspective wherein those that are more viable than others are afforded greater autonomy as a means of convergence in a regional integration pattern where South Africa and its neighbours federate is an option that should be fleshed out and placed on the governance table.

Such an internal variable geometry in the federalization of South Africa could dovetail with a variable geometric accession process for South Africa and other SACU and SADC members, acceding at their own speed into a regional integration community as envisioned within the framework of the AU's evolution into a continental union government and economic community. This is illustrative of the kind of think-tanking exercise that a beefed up policy apparatus within The Presidency, networked with the Tripartite Alliance and the academic, research and business communities could bring to the debate over future directions in South Africa's ongoing post-apartheid transition.

South Africa's integration prospects regionally must also factor in the country's internal stability linked to the challenge of poverty alleviation; one that, once again, requires strong mobilizing leadership at national level. Like India and Brazil, South Africa suffers from a growing socio-economic divide between rich and poor which, indeed, is a global challenge among most fast-growing

²³ Francis Kornegay, "Federalism: Guiding ourselves by the African stars," *Business Day*, July 23, 2007.

emerging market economies within a globalised world. While South Africa's post-apartheid development has witnessed rapid black middle class expansion, this has been accompanied by an expanding underclass of poverty-stricken urban and rural poor in a process of class polarization that is already showing signs of threatening the country's stability.

Chronic grassroots protest and unrest over 'service delivery,' including this year's ferocious xenophobic-inspired township violence alongside the country's crime epidemic is indicative of this security and stability challenge. South Africa's predicament is that its immediate post-apartheid preoccupation had to give priority to short-term economic stabilization through a self-imposed structural adjustment programme so as to preserve the country's policy sovereignty viz-a-viz the Bretton Woods institutional system. This entailed deferring the pro-poor policy priorities of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, while the new ANC government nurtured South Africa back to economic health.

Even under these constraints, however, the ANC's dismantling of the grassroots infrastructure of the United Democratic Front/Mass Democratic Movement appears to have come back to haunt it in the absence of what might have been and should be a transition to a policy and programmatic focus on devising a nationally mobilisational participatory development paradigm; one, indeed, that would have to have multiparty buy-in and be nonpartisan in nature (which is underlined by the Inkatha Freedom Party's adverse reaction to the ANC's decision to re-activate street committees as an adjunct to law enforcement). This would entail a strategy in which poor urban and rural communities are encouraged to formulate and implement their own anti-poverty initiatives with responsive funding from government rather than government simply delivering services in 'top-down' fashion.

Government, however, does need to ramp up a truly national public works campaign as part of a broader social reconstruction strategy aimed at the youth and unemployed. Incorporating a community development focus, the country's low-profile National Development Agency could be re-crafted to support such a grassroots participatory development anti-poverty initiative, with Community Development Workers (CDWs) as project facilitators. Meanwhile, government's roll-out of its Multi-Purpose Community Centres (or 'Thusong Centres') could serve as mobilizing focal points for youth and unemployed induction into

regimented civilian conservation and public works activities alongside other community programmes. Such an anti-poverty initiative could even be parleyed into a region-wide SACU/SADC programme given the latter's commitment to poverty alleviation in the subcontinent as well as to development cooperation and trade integration.

The above summarizing of South Africa's current circumstances and future prospects is illustrative of aspects of a scenario that could potentially contribute to the medium-to-longer-term emerging of a South African-led supranational integration community; one that might also result in it becoming a more influential actor in continental affairs and in the international politics of an emerging post-Western world order via the CHIMEA dynamic. Moreover, there already exist a SADC economic linkage to South Asia via the Indo-Mauritius Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), while the forthcoming tripartite summit in October 2008 between SADC, the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) aimed at harmonizing regional integration programmes promises to further flesh out such linkages.²⁴ This potential sets the stage for revisiting the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean geopolitical-economic environments that converge in IBSA and in which South Africa is pivotally situated at the juncture of both oceanic regions.

South Africa's Indian Ocean-South Atlantic Potential

From South Africa's vantagepoint, the recent Stellenbosch conference's focus on maritime security in the wake of the IBSAMAR exercise earlier this year, offers a fitting point-of-departure for exploring possibilities for the fashioning of an independently non-aligned security axis among the three countries that could provide IBSA with a clearer geopolitical profile. For South Africa's part, this would require the overcoming of Chief of the South African Navy, Vice-Admiral Johannes Mudimu's observation that "SA still had no comprehensively encompassing maritime policy" that could contribute to "improved mechanisms for the governance of oceans by national governments, regional organizations and international agencies" in the face of growing concern for the health of the world's oceans due to the rise in maritime crime and potential for maritime warfare.²⁵

²⁴ Final Communiqué of the 28th Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government. 17 August 2008, p.4.

²⁵ Hopewell Radebe, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

While IBSAMAR does not appear to have emerged as a focal point of discussion at Stellenbosch, it would appear that this exercise, in what should be an ongoing series, may provide the basis for fashioning the “comprehensively encompassing maritime policy” that Mudimu calls for.²⁶ But this would presuppose the existence or opening up of a trilateral security dialogue between India, Brazil and South Africa. Such a dialogue would take into consideration, as a matter of high priority, coastal Africa’s maritime security interests in both the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. This would need to also be accompanied by a broader inter-African understanding of the role that South Africa might play in enhancing the continent’s maritime interests. The timeliness of such concerns are underlined by CHIMEA projections wherein what Woodrow Wilson’s Walker foresees taking shape around the Indian Ocean is something “far larger than simply Africa’s future, and larger than Asian–African trade,” but the “flowering of a commercial system” likened to a new “triangular trade”: the Middle Eastern countries export oil to Asia, then use the proceeds to export capital to Asia and Africa with Asia sending cash, consumer goods and remittance workers to the Middle East and investment capital, skills and aid to Africa; with Africa, in turn, selling oil and agricultural products to Asia, which in turn, sells oil and agricultural products to Asia, investing some of the proceeds in new industries, from mobile phones to Nigerian Nollywood films.²⁷

The Indian Ocean nexus

From South Africa’s perspective, in its bilateral relationship with India, within the IBSA context, this Indian Ocean dynamism ought to be linked to the need to flesh out the still very low-key New Asia Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP) as well as breath new life into the Indian Ocean Rim–Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR–ARC) as providing a structured geopolitical–economic framework for incorporating a multilateral maritime security strategy. For the other dimension of Martin Walker’s CHIMEA projections is the fact that while “the economic promise of CHIMEA is dazzling,” the geopolitical and strategic implications are described as “sobering.” He concludes by observing: “As the Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Pacific proved in their own periods of surging trade growth, commercial highways can easily become battlegrounds in their turn. And with the CHIMEA nations poised in this century to become the globes center of gravity, the stakes in the Indian Ocean promise to become very high

²⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁷ Martin Walker, Op. Cit., p.28.

indeed.”²⁸ Hence, the compelling case for a joint Indo–South African cooperative security architecture for the Indian Ocean.

However, there are a lot of imponderables affecting such prospects. Within the South Asian strategic realm are increasing concerns that what has been a promising “composite dialogue” between India and Pakistan may become overtaken by renewed tensions between these two nuclear rivals as the Kashmir dispute flares anew; a prospect which would continue ruling out Indian Ocean regional cooperation prospects within the IOR–ARC.²⁹ Interrelated with this would have to be uncertainty over in which direction India’s strategic identity is headed: toward what M.K. Bhadrakumar has described as New Delhi’s new–found “Euro–Atlanticism” with an especially “US–centric approach” which might be reflected in a formal relationship with NATO?³⁰ Or a retention by India of a sufficiently non–aligned posture to contemplate a more independent strategic posture in the Indian Ocean reflecting the spirit and essence of a strategic Afro–Asian partnership? Here, another imponderable is perceived Sino–Indian competition in the Indian Ocean belying their collaboration in the G5. In essence, what this poses is a fundamental question of where India’s priorities reside and/or whether or not it can strike a workable balance between its budding relations with Washington, on the one, and South–South cooperation factoring in South Africa and IBSA on the other.

The South Atlantic nexus

The South Atlantic dimension of a South and Southern Africa–centric IBSA maritime security architecture is much simpler by comparison. On the African side of the South Atlantic, relations between South Africa and Angola have not been the closest for a variety of reasons for which space will allow recapitulation here. On the other hand, bilateral ties between Angola and Brazil are quite close as sister lusophone countries. The prospect of a warming of relations between Angola and a post–Mbeki South African government after the 2009 South African elections should expand options for greater Southern African cooperation within SADC that can, potentially, be parlayed into joint maritime security planning from an African perspective that can feed into South

²⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁹ See: MK Bhadrakumar, “India–Pakistan relations in free fall,” *Asia Times Online* (<http://www.atimes.com/>) 2008/08/14. Two part analysis.

³⁰ Ibid., p. Part 2, p.2.

Africa's bilateral relationship with Brazil within the trilateral IBSA framework. Thus, while the South Atlantic does not have the regional and interregional organizational infrastructures as exist in the Indian Ocean with, for example, the IOR-ARC, the international relations of this oceanic region may be more conducive for the development of a transatlantic maritime security architecture, especially now, with the existence of a fledgling South American Defence Council with Brazil playing a major leading role.

Furthermore, such an architecture need not be limited to Southern Africa but could take in other littoral West African states such as, especially, Nigeria given increasing international preoccupations with the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea. Across the Atlantic, Brazil, on its own, as a newly minted prospective oil exporting (as well as biofuel) power, has its own expanding options, including possibilities of eventually joining OPEC and/or, along with Nigeria, where Russia looks to invest in the development and transportation of its gas reserves, being attracted into a new OPEC-like gas cartel in the unfolding geopolitics of energy security. However these prospects unfold between the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, South and Southern Africa could reap major benefits from emerging as the geo-strategic fulcrum of a 'Gondwanan' maritime security axis grounded in IBSA and its maritime IBSAMAR dimension.

Conclusion: Looking to the Future

The forgoing brings us back to the question of IBSA's identity in relationship to the G8 which, over the past few years, has been preoccupied with its own relevance as the global economic directorate viz-a-viz emerging powers such as China and Mexico as well as the IBSA three. Indeed, the global governance power-structure appears increasingly fluid, what with Euro-Atlantic reactions to Russia's military incursions into Georgia; an occurrence that has raised the prospect of the G8 reverting back to a G7 to the exclusion of Russia. Thus do tensions between Russia and other G8 members add another complicating wrinkle to the future of the G8 and how the IBSA/G3 will relate to it. Apart from these complications, European members of the G8 like Germany, in particular, have begun exploring how an equitable global governance 'stakeholder' relationship can be fashioned with the emerging powers generally, IBSA in particular.³¹

³¹ Over the past few years, the German SPD Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) has held a series international seminars on emerging powers, including IBSA such as the October 2007 joint seminar co-sponsored with

However, the credibility of IBSA's leadership role as a global governance stakeholder would appear contingent on a higher profile collective identity among India, Brazil and South Africa in jointly navigating an independent South-South geopolitical niche in a fluid international political environment. The attractiveness of IBSA within such a context rests on their individual and collective potential as democratic 'middle powers,' for bridging the North-South divide within a reconfigured global governance stakeholder framework. Yet, the recent collapse of the Doha WTO 'development round' trade negotiations is indicative of the intractability of this divide; one in which India, along with China, refused to give ground on in the face of U.S. and European Union resistance to safety-net concessions for developing country farmers. Indeed, it is on the economic front of trade issues where IBSA has mustered the political will to project leadership as a collective along with China and other emerging powers of the South. This dimension of the North-South divide does not diminish their attractiveness as global South interlocuters with the North within the councils of the G8. All three countries are non-threatening as emerging powers. Neither country evokes the potential revisionism that emanates for China's rise and the resurgence of Russia as an assertive energy superpower.

It is on the security front of geopolitical maneuvering where IBSA has the potential to make a difference as a great power 'collective.' Given the likely continuing stalemate on UN Security Council reform and expansion, the only other likely area of IBSA intervention would appear to be in the area of maritime security where the three countries could, indeed, potentially take the initiative in fashioning a southern oceanic security axis linking the Indian and South Atlantic oceans. The question is whether or not there is sufficient collective political will among the three countries to strike out on their own in transforming their fledgling IBSAMAR cooperation into a more elaborate multilateral maritime security strategy as a complementary adjunct to a UN-centric security system. In this regard, India's ambivalent position within the global South, reflecting a tilt toward American strategic priorities, may preclude IBSA fashioning an independent security role that would sharpen the grouping's geopolitical profile – especially if it formalizes a relationship with a NATO that, itself, is facing an uncertain future on such defining issues as its provocative expansion into the

the Spanish Fundacion Para Relaciones Internacionales Y El Dialogo Exterior (FRIDE), including a website publishing occasional papers in a globalization series focusing on emerging powers.

Russian 'near abroad' and the enthusiasm or lack thereof of Europeans in their commitment to the alliance.

South Africa may have the will to jointly fashion an independently aligned maritime-based security system. But it lacks the actual or potential great power status of either India and Brazil to generate the momentum for such an initiative save for the possibility of a mandate from the AU, SADC and especially such key states as Angola (and farther afield, beyond Southern Africa, Nigeria). South Africa, in fact, remains a 'work in progress' within the context of an increasing priority in inter-African affairs being afforded to continental and regional integration. South Africa's regional integration into a larger supranational economic and political community would enhance Southern Africa's role within the IBSA trilateral context, especially if, in the process, South Africa further consolidates its democracy internally and strengthens its post-apartheid national cohesion over next several years - bearing in mind that it must navigate its way through its current political uncertain of transition from Mbeki to a Jacob Zuma or Kagame Motlante administration.

In the final analysis, whatever role ends up being plaid by Brazil and/or India, South and Southern Africa and the continent as a whole would certainly stand to benefit from the emergence of an Indian Ocean-South Atlantic maritime security community. It is not only in Africa's security interests. It would also appear to enhance the international political status of IBSA as a collective security provider in the fashioning of the unfolding post-Western world order.