LÍDERES REGIONAIS

E SEGURANÇA INTERNACIONAL

BRASIL ÁFRICA DO SUL ÍNDIA
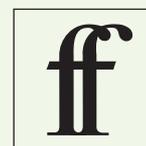
South Africa's security engagement in the region. Lessons for IBSA?

Anne Hammerstad

DOCUMENTO DE TRABALHO Nº 2

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FORD FOUNDATION

Projeto Líderes Regionais e Segurança Internacional

Brasil, África do Sul, Índia

Objetivos do Projeto

O projeto busca estimular amplo debate público sobre os papéis de líderes regionais emergentes - especificamente Brasil, África do Sul e Índia - na promoção da segurança internacional. Almeja também contribuir para a formulação de políticas concernentes à segurança regional e internacional mediante a discussão das condições para o engajamento efetivo dos países mencionados no desenvolvimento e implementação de arranjos cooperativos de segurança.

Os objetivos de pesquisa são os seguintes:

– avaliar, a partir de perspectiva comparada, os papéis dos líderes regionais; – especificamente Brasil África do Sul e Índia – no contexto contemporâneo de segurança internacional, conforme emanados de suas respectivas orientações e prioridades de políticas de segurança e de defesa, e suas iniciativas para a promoção de arranjos cooperativos de segurança nos planos regional e global;

– avaliar os contornos de possíveis padrões de engajamento dos líderes regionais na estruturação e na reforma dos instrumentos coletivos para a promoção da segurança internacional.

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**Documentos de
Trabalhos do
Projeto:**

1. O papel dos middle powers na unipolaridade:
para além do modelo balancing – bandwagon.
Osvaldo Dehon Roque Reis. PUC-MG.

http://www.unb.br/irel/ibsa

Projeto: Segurança e defesa no Brasil e a emergência do fórum trilateral
Brasil, Índia e África do Sul na política internacional.

South Africa's security engagement in the region – lessons for IBSA?

Documento de Trabalho n. 2

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South Africa's security engagement in the region – lessons for IBSA?

IBSA research project with IREL, University of Brasilia, 12 May 2005

By Anne Hammerstad[1]

Introduction

This report forms part of a co-operative research project between Brasilia University, New Delhi University and the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). It is one of two reports produced by SAIIA on, respectively, South Africa's regional security engagement and its activities in the global context, with particular focus on issues and problems that could become items on the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Dialogue Forum's security agenda. Similar reports are written in India and Brazil, where the same questions are asked from the perspectives of South Asia and Latin America.

Through their demographic, economic, political and military strength, the three IBSA partners all play, albeit in different ways, a central role within their own region. This paper looks at South Africa's interaction with its neighbours, and its policies, aims, ambitions and vision for the subregion of Southern Africa as well as the African continent as a whole. A separate paper will focus on South Africa's global ambitions.[2] There are of course important overlaps between the regional and global levels of South Africa's security and foreign policy strategies, not least because the country's pivotal role in regional politics is one of its two main levers for wielding influence in global arenas. The second core lever is the moral leadership role enjoyed by South Africa, a role bestowed on the country due to its peaceful and conciliatory transformation from apartheid to a democratic 'rainbow nation'. Together, South Africa's roles as a regional power and global moral leader provide the country with a significantly more prominent voice in world politics than its economic strength, military might and population size otherwise would warrant.

The contents of the report

This report will, first, define which geographical areas are seen to constitute South Africa's 'region'. It will then discuss the main actual or potential security threats in this region which affect South Africa's foreign and security policies. Moving on to South Africa's status and position in the region, the report asks whether South Africa is a middle power, an emerging power, or even a hegemon. This debate is followed by a review of the foreign and security policies South Africa has pursued in the last decade or so in Africa.

The conclusion draws on South Africa's role in regional security dynamics in Africa in order to bring out some relevant lessons for IBSA security co-operation. The conclusion looks, first, at potential lessons for India and Brazil – that is, lessons they could learn from South Africa's security role in the region. Second, the conclusion discusses lessons for IBSA co-operation as such – that is,

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[2] This other paper is written by Prof Garth Shelton.

it identifies issues of mutual concern, interest or benefit for India, Brazil and South Africa. This latter type of lessons is of the most immediate concern to the IBSA partners, since the best way to ensure that IBSA security co-operation amounts to more than declarations of intention is to make sure that this co-operation takes place in issue areas where all three IBSA partners can agree on common and mutually beneficial goals.

South Africa's regional contexts: SADC and the AU
Dividing Africa into Regions

It is commonplace both among policy-makers and in academia, to denote South Africa as a 'regional power', or even a 'regional hegemon'.[3] But what exactly is South Africa's region, and where do we draw its outer boundaries? It is not particularly easy to determine the borders of Africa's regions. The continent's 53 states are members of a multitude of smaller and larger regional organisations, leading to a somewhat confusing picture of overlapping – and not always complementary – regional co-operation projects. For instance, seven of the 14 member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are also members of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), an organisation that in many ways is a direct competitor to SADC. In the field of security there are also several examples of spill over from conflicts across regional borders – an obvious example being the large refugee flows from the Great Lakes region arriving in the East African country of Tanzania.

Which ever way one tries to compartmentalise the continent, there will always be examples of overlap and overflow between Africa's subregions. The African Union's predecessor, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), discovered this when it divided Africa into five subregions: North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa. While the organisation was able to come to an agreement on this general division, it never managed to agree on exactly which countries belong to which of these subregions. The AU subsequently came up with a grid, but one that included many paradoxes, for instance placing Rwanda in a different subregion (East Africa) to Burundi and the DRC (Central Africa).[4]

Despite such blurred boundaries, and despite the plethora of subregional organisations, some of whose membership composition makes little sense in terms of the member states' (lack of) political, economic or cultural affinity, the AU's division into five subregions is still a good starting point for understanding Africa's regional dynamics. In the context of security, rather than economic integration, there are at the moment only four organisations that have claims to significance, and these organisations all cover a geographical area that more or less corresponds to the AU's division. These are, first and foremost, the continental organisation of the African Union itself, and then the sub-regional organisations of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa, SADC in Southern Africa and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa/East Africa. I have listed the three subregional organisations in the order of how active and effective their security co-operation has been, with ECOWAS on the top of the list. The North African and Central African regional organisations, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), exist almost only on paper, and play no constructive role whatsoever in dealing with security problems in their subregions. In the case of the AMU, the most important North African country, Egypt, is not even a member.

Returning to the question of what is South Africa's regional context, the country slots into two African regional security structures: the subregion of Southern Africa through SADC, and the continental structure of the AU and its Peace and Security Council. The country is a pivotal actor in both subregional and continental politics. It is nevertheless useful to distinguish South Africa's regional security environment into these two levels, because South Africa's security strategies vary depending on whether it is operating in the continental or the sub-regional context.

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[3] See e.g. Adekeye Adebajo and Chris Landsberg, 'South Africa and Nigeria as regional hegemons' in M. Baregu and Chris Landsberg (eds), *From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Challenges* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp.171–204.
[4] See Bjørn Møller, 'The Pros and Cons of Subsidiarity: the Role of African Regional and Sub-regional Organisations in Ensuring Peace and Security in Africa', in Anne Hammerstad, ed., *People, States and Regions: Building Regional Security in Southern Africa* (Johannesburg: SAIIA, *forthcoming 2005*).

Threats and perceptions in the region

South Africa and the regional organisations to which it belongs understand security in a broad sense, to include not only politico-military threats against states and regimes, but also so-called 'human security' threats against populations. Below is a list of perceived threats to security in Southern Africa and on the continent as a whole, as seen from South Africa's perspective. The list is compiled based on central official documents and declarations signed and endorsed by South Africa's president and defence minister, including the Defence Review of 1997, Defence White Paper of 1998, the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security of 2001, and the Constitutive Act of the AU, which came into force in 2002.[5] In other words, these are threats that South Africa has publicly confirmed are on its security agenda. I have divided them below into, first, threats in the politico-military sphere and, second, threats in the broader sphere of economic, environmental and human security:

First, in the politico-military field, perceived threats and potential threats in South Africa's regional environment include inter-state war; internal war; large-scale human rights abuses; war crimes; crimes against humanity; genocide; coups d'état and other forms of illegitimate seizure of (or clinging to) power; poor governance and abuse of power; the dangers of instability accompanying periods of political transition; and attacks on democratic institutions.

Second, broader non-military security threats include: food insecurity and famine; mass movements of refugees; humanitarian and natural disasters; disease (especially HIV/Aids and malaria); poverty and underdevelopment; and ecological degradation.

It should be noted that South Africa does not perceive many of these threats as directed against itself. The exception is poverty, mass influxes of refugees and illegal migrants, and, perhaps, HIV/Aids (the perhaps is added not to belittle the most deadly disease ever to hit South Africa, but because the South African government has been loath to admit the scope of the pandemic in its domestic political discourse). When it comes to the politico-military category of threats, the 1997 Defence Review states that South Africa is not faced by any military threats against its borders, people or regime, and this assurance has been periodically reiterated since.[6] Nevertheless, South Africa's security agenda remains fixed on the continent's wars and political instability. The South African government has repeatedly argued that South Africa cannot enjoy peace, security and prosperity unless the rest of the African continent enjoys the same. This position is a show of solidarity from Africa's richest and most stable country towards the rest of the continent, but it is also a prudent and self-interested policy. The South African government knows that instability, poor governance and underdevelopment in its neighbourhood is hindering South Africa's own economic growth. It frightens away foreign direct investment and provides fewer trading and investment opportunities in the region for South Africa's own business community. Regarding forced migration, South Africa is already host to perhaps as many as three million illegally arrived Zimbabweans. If other countries in the Southern African neighbourhood were to suffer similar political crises and economic collapse, the South African government knows that any mass movement of economic migrants and refugees would head for South Africa – another important reason for stabilising the region. South Africa's officially articulated threat perceptions can therefore be seen as sensible both from the point of view of an ethical foreign policy and from the perspective of self-serving economic interests.

The list of threats above shows that South Africa, like many other progressive states in the post-Cold War period, has abandoned the narrow interpretation of security dominant during the Cold War. Today's comprehensive security agenda, which looks at domestic instability as well as inter-state war, and which focuses also on non-military causes of instability and insecurity, is much more suitable to the African context. The same approach has been adopted by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in dealing with insecurity and instability in the Balkans and the troubled CIS states of the former Soviet Union. It is an approach that takes the root causes of insecurity in weak and underdeveloped states seriously. Inter-state rivalry is only one potential source of conflict, insecurity and instability in such states. Other, and often more important factors include: the lack of state legitimacy and capacity which leaves the country vulnerable to

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[5] Department of Defence (DOD), *White Paper on Defence* (Pretoria: DOD, 1998); SADC, *Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation* (Blantyre: SADC, 14 August 2001); AU, *The Constitutive Act of the African Union* (Lomé: OAU, 11 July 2000).
[6] South Africa has an ongoing border dispute with Swaziland, but this issue is not seen as particularly serious and is low on South Africa's security agenda.

ethnic and geographic splits and strife; poor and undemocratic governance which increases the risk of political struggle taking a violent turn; and the contagion of conflict through the movement of refugees and rebel movements across poorly controlled borders.

Theory versus practice: sovereignty versus comprehensive security

An important question that has arisen from South Africa's adoption of a comprehensive understanding of security is to what degree this new discourse is also reflected in its foreign and security policy practices. It follows logically that a new understanding of security warrants a new approach to dealing with security threats. But South Africa is still sorting out exactly what such a new approach entails. The most difficult dilemma in this context is how to balance the traditional, restrictive norms of national sovereignty and non-interference with the more recently evolved comprehensive security agenda. There is a contradiction between the two, since the comprehensive security agenda is specifically concerned with problems, conflicts and crises taking place within the borders of sovereign states. A comprehensive understanding of security incorporates the right – some would say the obligation – to intervene forcefully in states that are grossly violating universally accepted principles of human rights and humanitarian law.

The discussion still rages – not least in the United Nations Security Council – on whether a comprehensive understanding of security inevitably – or at least logically – leads to a more intrusive foreign and security policy and a more interventionist dispensation (note that intervention does not necessarily mean military intervention, but any form of taking an interest in and 'interfering' with the domestic policies of sovereign states by holding them accountable to regional or international agreements or norms). The world is still in a transitional phase after the end of the Cold War: The restrictive, statist and 'Realist' understanding of security has been complemented by a general acceptance of the desirability of pursuing a comprehensive security agenda to deal with the root causes of conflict; and the norm of sovereignty has been complemented by the norms of human rights and humanitarian law. Today, then, sovereignty and the right to intervene exist side by side as generally accepted international norms. In practice, their co-existence is more fraught. The trend in international law since the end of the Cold War has been to use human rights and humanitarian law to place conditions on sovereignty: the norm of non-interference only applies when the state behaves according to international standards of decency.[7] This interpretation has been strengthened by several Security Council resolutions in the 1990s using humanitarian arguments to sanction military intervention.[8] It has also been strengthened by the activities of regional organisations such as the OSCE, whose comprehensive security agenda includes practices such as election monitoring, a minorities ombudsman and other institutions and offices aimed at strengthening member states' democracy, good governance and human rights.

Despite this global acceptance of the principle that the international community should intervene (with policies ranging from mild criticism to humanitarian military intervention) in cases where governments are unable or unwilling to safeguard their citizens' human rights and personal security, this theoretical consensus seldom translates into agreement on whether and how to intervene in particular cases of abuse. South Africa is an example of a country that adheres strongly to a comprehensive agenda of security in principle, but which is highly reluctant to be seen as meddling in the internal affairs of other countries in order to pursue this agenda in practice. There is as a result a strong tension in South Africa's security policy in Africa: on the one hand, South Africa's vision for the continent is one of creating peace through sound economic governance, human rights and democratic rule. On the other hand, if the culprits who undermine this vision are other African governments – rather than, say, rebel groups or coup makers – South Africa generally interprets the sovereignty rule very strictly, and will not even criticise fellow African governments. A very topical and controversial example is the recent elections in Zimbabwe. South Africa was a driving force behind the adoption of a set of SADC election principles and guidelines in August 2004 – a strong statement in support of a comprehensive security agenda.[9] But in practice, South Africa subsequently abstained from saying anything critical about the run-up to and conduct of the March 2005 election in Zimbabwe, even though this election breached each and every one of these principles.

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[7] See e.g. Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Tim Dunne and Nicholas Wheeler, eds., *Human Rights in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Alan Dowty and Gil Loescher, 'Refugee Flows as Grounds for International Action', *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 1, Summer 1996.
[8] See e.g. UN Security Council Resolution 688 (5 April 1991) on the creation of a safe haven for Kurds in northern Iraq, and UN Security Council Resolution 940 (31 July 1994) authorising humanitarian intervention in Haiti.
[9] SADC, SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections (Gaborone: SADC, August 2004).

South Africa even went as far as to send a compliant observer team whose leader revealed that he was going to endorse the election already when he arrived with his team at Harare airport a few days in advance of polling day.

The South African government's uneasiness over and distaste for acting against the wishes of fellow, sovereign, African governments should be kept in mind when investigating South Africa's position in the region. It is an important factor in determining what political strategies Africa's economic, political, and military giant employs to pursue its regional security interests – never mind that it has formulated those interests in terms of an intrusive comprehensive security agenda for the continent.

South Africa's position in the region

Having mapped out South Africa's understanding of the security threats and challenges facing Africa, as well as brought to the fore the tension between South Africa's radical notion of security and its conservative interpretation of the norm of sovereignty, it is time to turn to the country's status and position in the region. A host of terms have been used to describe developing countries like South Africa, Brazil and India that play a leadership role in their region. Some have transferred the Cold War term of 'middle power' to describe them, others prefer the term 'emerging' power, while yet others talk of 'regional powers' or even 'regional hegemons'. I will go through each of this terms in turn in order to decide which one best suits South Africa's role in Africa.

'Middle power' is a Cold War concept. It refers to countries like Norway, Sweden and Canada, which are small and rich; and which are ardent supporters of multilateralism, the UN, and international norms and obligations, such as human rights and humanitarian principles. During the Cold War these states were seen as honest brokers which could mediate between the superpowers. In the post-Cold War period they tend to be involved in peace negotiations, peacekeeping and peace building initiatives, and are in addition major donors of development aid. Norway, for instance, is the only country in the world to spend over one per cent of its GDP on development and humanitarian aid. Because of their multilateral commitment, their good reputation and their considerable expenditure on international issues, these countries are able to punch above their geo-political weight in international fora. For instance, they tend to fill proportionally more top-level UN positions than other countries and they are often relied on by other states to push particular international good causes or take on complex and expensive mediation efforts. For instance, Canada and Norway – and especially the NGO communities of the two countries – were the driving forces behind the process leading to the prohibition of the use of anti-personnel mines (APMs).[10] We should not exaggerate the impact of middle powers on global politics, however. Such countries tend to commit themselves wholeheartedly to a few select causes, such as the APM ban. Their range of interests and activities does not compare with that of great powers such as the United States, Britain and France.

South Africa is clearly not a middle power. First, the term is too steeped in the Cold War mindset to suit today's conditions in Africa. Second, South Africa is far from rich enough, and has too many internal challenges such as poverty, crime and unemployment, to be a middle power. But it is clear that South Africa does punch above its weight in international fora; it does pursue an ambitious and multilaterally focused foreign policy; it has led international coalitions for good causes such as nuclear non-proliferation and a ban on 'blood diamonds'; and it does have a certain moral authority based on its successful democratic transition, although this authority may have been fraying a bit at the edges in recent years through actions such as the support of Zimbabwe's candidature for a seat on the UN Human Rights Commission – an act that can hardly be said to promote respect for the international human rights regime. A term invented to suit 'up-and-coming' developing countries like South Africa, with strong regional ambitions as well as some more modest global ones, is that of an emerging power. The definition of emerging powers, according to Jack Spence[11], includes three state characteristics:

One, an emerging power must be reasonably secure, with an 'enabling domestic environment'. This means that the government must be viewed as legitimate in the eyes of the governed and that the

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[10] South Africa also played a crucial role in clinching the APM ban, by bringing the developing world into the fold. My appreciation to Neuma Grobbelaar for bringing this to my attention.
[11] Jack Spence, 'South Africa's Foreign Policy: Vision and Reality' in Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, ed., *Apartheid Past, Renaissance Future: South Africa's Foreign Policy 1994-2004* (Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2004), pp 44-48.

country must be ruled according to sound democratic governance principles. South Africa fits this requirement.

Two, the emerging power needs a sizeable economic capability (but does not need to be at the top of the human development index in the way that middle powers are). Again, South Africa fits the bill. Although its economy is small in global terms, and despite huge economic inequality among its citizens, it is an African giant.

Three, the emerging power needs a reasonably hospitable regional environment which allows it to exert its influence and play a decisive and constructive role in the region. In other words, the aspiring emerging power must be able and allowed by its neighbours to play an effective role as a promoter of good governance, democracy, human rights and peace. On this point, Spence is pessimistic on South Africa's behalf:

South Africa is surrounded on its periphery by poor, weak states, and the continent as a whole is plagued by poor political and economic performance. There is also the affliction of failed states and long-drawn-out civil wars.[12]

This general poor quality of political and economic governance in Africa, and the preponderance of weak states on the continent, make it difficult for an aspiring emerging power like South Africa to make a difference through its foreign and security policy. Spence further argues that the task is made even more difficult 'by the need to treat neighbouring states – poor and weak as they are – with "sensitivity and restraint" (Mandela's famous phrase), thereby avoiding accusations of practicing hegemonic power politics.'[13]

Spence has a good point, but it should be noted that there have been improvements in the receptivity of African countries to the promotion of good governance and democracy. The adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) in 2001 and the establishment of the AU in 2002, have given South Africa sturdier tools with which to promote its comprehensive security agenda on the continent. This is especially the case with the AU, an organisation that has shown greater clout and independence than most observers dared to hope, for instance in its reaction to the ethnic cleansing in the Darfur region of Sudan. Now more than ever, then, are the opportunities there for South Africa to assume the role of an African emerging power. The question remains, though, is it willing to fully take on this role?

Finally, could South Africa be described as a regional hegemon? Hegemony is a loaded term, which in today's international climate makes most people think of the US invasion of Iraq without a Security Council mandate in 2003. But this is actually a misuse of the term. A regional hegemon is a country that certainly is considerably more powerful economically and militarily than its neighbours. But it is also a country that is seeking to exert this power in a consensus-building and multilateral manner. A hegemon, in contrast to a bully, is a country that pushes its agenda through persuasion, incentives and consensus-building rather than brute force. The US during the years of the Marshall Plan is a better example of a hegemon than today's Bush administration.

South Africa is not a hegemonic power, neither in Southern Africa nor on the continent. It has the vision for the continent, spelt out in the Nepad programme and in the many Mbeki speeches on an African renaissance and an African century. However, it does not have the will to take on the leadership role necessary to push through this vision. This is partly because of the problem with the lack of a hospitable environment described above. Many African countries are too suspicious of South Africa and resentful of its power to allow it to function as a hegemon. On the continent, Egypt and Nigeria are contending with South Africa for the role of primus inter pares. Nigeria plays more of a hegemonic role in its subregion, West Africa – especially when it comes to its willingness to use military force to resolve violent conflicts – than does South Africa. Egypt, although more focused on Middle East politics, is a regional power in North Africa and the Horn of Africa, while its economic interests stretches across the continent. Although South Africa is economically stronger than either of these two, their dominant position in their subregions make it unfeasible for South Africa to attempt to play the role of an African hegemon. Partnership with the other regional powers of Africa is a less controversial and aggressive, and, as a result, probably more constructive and useful approach.

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[12] Spence, 'South Africa's Foreign Policy', pp. 44-45.
[13] Spence, 'South Africa's Foreign Policy', p. 45.

In the subregion of Southern Africa, on the other hand, the big surprise is that South Africa is not a hegemon. The country accounts for about one third of Africa's GDP[14], and more like 80-90 percent of that of Southern Africa. It is the greatest military power, and the only arms manufacturer, in the region.[15] It has by far the largest population, and its private sector is rapidly acquiring a dominating position in the local markets of its neighbours.[16] Politically, it leads the way in the field of good governance, human rights and democracy – Botswana and Mauritius, both with tiny populations, are the only other SADC countries that can boast a relatively stable and well-functioning democratic system. Despite this, South Africa plays a more, rather than less, subdued role in the security politics of Southern Africa than it does on the continent.

Why is this? The main reason is the intense rivalry between key SADC states taking place within the SADC security organ. Zimbabwe and Angola, usually with the support of Namibia, have on numerous occasions challenged South African leadership in the peace and security field. They both have sizeable armed forces with, unlike South Africa, combat experience. They also espouse a narrow interpretation of security as the military defence of regimes against external and internal attack, and have little time for South Africa's comprehensive security agenda (although they have signed up to the same SADC and AU principles of democratic governance and human rights). The leaders of the two countries, Robert Mugabe and Eduardo dos Santos, are among the longest-serving African heads of state and Mugabe was the undisputed leader of the Frontline States, SADC's predecessor, for numerous years. Harare was the diplomatic centre of Southern Africa, the place where UN bodies and Western states established their main offices and embassies. This role disappeared with South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 and the swearing into office of the iconic figure of Nelson Mandela. Zimbabwe and Angola – and to a lesser degree other SADC countries like Namibia, Malawi and Zambia – resented the propelling of South Africa from the region's pariah to its pivotal state. They have done their utmost to undermine the idea that South Africa should wield hegemonic power to push a comprehensive security agenda in the subregion.

But more importantly, South Africa itself is unwilling to take on a hegemonic role in Southern Africa, preferring to be more quiet and unassuming in its dealings with its SADC peers. Hegemonic leadership is not a role a state asks for, it is a role a state assumes. Unlike some early attempts by Nelson Mandela, South Africa has never tried to assume this status. Of course, the hostility towards South African leadership from Zimbabwe and Angola has made the task more uncomfortable and difficult. The clashes between Nelson Mandela and Robert Mugabe during the SADC Organ's early years (1996-98), and Mugabe's refusal to give up the Organ chairmanship, infuriated the South African leader. But South Africa's size, economic power and political credibility (after all South Africa has, unlike the two other countries, a government that is legitimately elected by a majority of its population) begs the question of why it should let itself be constrained by two smaller, autocratic states with struggling economies. The answer seems to be that Mbeki, South Africa's president since 1999, has bought into the idea of solidarity politics – that is, that the governments of SADC countries, which almost without exception hail from the liberation parties that led their respective countries to independence, stick together, support each other and certainly do not criticise each other in public. Furthermore, he has also espoused to some degree an anti-neocolonialist discourse, where defending the sovereignty of the fellow African government in Zimbabwe against criticism and sanctions from the West, is more important than challenging the descent into political authoritarianism and economic misgovernance and corruption in that country. Thus, to turn back to the earlier discussion of sovereignty versus comprehensive security, in Southern Africa, South Africa has clearly made a choice in favour of non-interference.

This position has allowed the South African government to be accepted into the political community of Southern African ruling/independence parties. Thus it has ensured that the country is not isolated in African politics, but can receive the backing from other Southern African states when (or if), for instance, it starts campaigning for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. However, it is an excessively timid position when compared to South Africa's vision for the future of Africa. Why, for instance, has South Africa taken a lead in the support of the Mugabe regime instead of quietly building a coalition of like-minded states, such as Mauritius, Botswana, Madagascar, and Mozambique, to work

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[14] Adekeye Adebajo and Chris Landsberg, 'South Africa and Nigeria as regional hegemons' in M. Baregu and Chris Landsberg (eds), *From Cape to Congo: Southern Africa's Evolving Security Challenges* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003), p. 172.

[15] See separate report by Garth Shelton for a discussion of South Africa's arms industry.

[16] For instance, 49 percent of all direct foreign investment into Mozambique in the period 1997-2002 came from South Africa. See Neuma Grobbelaar, *'Every Continent Needs an America': The Experience of South African Firms Doing Business in Mozambique*, Business in Africa Report no. 2 (Johannesburg: SAIIA, June 2004), p. 1.

to strengthen democratic forces within Zimbabwe? South Africa's strategy in its subregion has left the country wide open to charges of hypocrisy – that Nepad is not much more than a rhetorical devise.

Many South African analysts criticise South Africa's self-restraint in Southern African politics. They believe that if South Africa were to take on the role as undisputed leader of the subregion, it could become a tremendous force for good.

South Africa's role should be that of a hegemon. Simply being a pivotal state, an important one, means a rejection of the role of leadership. This is not in the interest of South Africa; nor of other states in the region. Instability in Southern Africa, which hinders development and democracy, will be addressed only when a regional hegemon is prepared to underwrite these objectives.[17]

I would join in with this chorus, although with the cautionary note that South Africa has to deal with a subregional environment that to a strong degree is hostile to any hegemonic ambitions South Africa may have in the area of peace and security. Thus South Africa would have to build up its status and influence in the region slowly. It must create allies with a similar vision of comprehensive security and gradually nudge more reluctant states along. Although the South African government professes to pursue exactly such a strategy, with its 'quiet diplomacy' in Zimbabwe and consensus seeking approach within the SADC Organ, in practice its achievements in this regard have been negligible. Instead it has resigned itself to a role of self-imposed constraint that does not challenge the status quo of underdevelopment, half-hearted democratisation, and political instability which still haunts large parts of Southern Africa.

On the continent, and particularly in the two areas of continental institution building and peace making in the Great Lakes region, South Africa has played a much more constructive role. The next section will look at South Africa's actual initiatives and interventions in the security sector in Africa over the past decade.

From agenda to action: a reluctant emerging power

Of the three terms discussed in the previous section, South Africa fits best the bill of an 'emerging power'. But such a status, if it is to be stable and credible, must be matched not only by diplomatic initiatives (of which South Africa's government has sponsored many), but also by military capabilities and the will to use them. This leads us to ask whether South Africa really has the capabilities and political will available to be an 'emerging power'? Or, to rephrase, does South Africa's foreign and security policy tools and resources match the country's stated ambitions?

The previous section concluded that South Africa, by refusing to assume a political and military leadership role more commensurate with its vast economic and military power compared to its African neighbours, is not playing as prominent a role in the security field in Africa as it could and should have done. The country is nevertheless, together with Nigeria, by far the most important actor in promoting peace and security on the continent. This section sets out the areas and issues with which South Africa has taken the greatest interest and expended the greatest resources in the past decade. It discusses South Africa's actual foreign and security policies over the last decade in order to compare them with the country's stated comprehensive security agenda as well as to gauge whether these policies are commensurate with the status of 'emerging power'.

The section is structured as follows: After providing a brief account of the differences between South Africa's security policies in the Southern African subregion and on the continent, it describes the most important security crises in which the country has played (or attempted to play) a conflict solving, peacekeeping or peace making role. The discussion is divided into, first, South Africa's diplomatic initiatives in the field of peace and security, and, second, its military peacekeeping and peace enforcement capabilities and actions.

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[17] Adam Habib and Nthakeng Selinyane, 'South Africa's Foreign Policy and a Realistic Vision of an African Century' in Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, ed., *Apartheid Past, Renaissance Future: South Africa's Foreign Policy 1994-2004* (Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2004), p. 54.

Differences between engagement in the sub-region and on the continent

As became clear in the discussion of South Africa as a regional hegemon above, it is useful to divide South Africa's security policies into a continental and a subregional level. At the continental level, the country's actions have consciously and almost without exception been subsumed under an AU or sometimes AU/UN umbrella. These efforts include peacekeeping (e.g. in Burundi), mediation (e.g. in Cote d'Ivoire), and military observation (e.g. in Darfur). Thus, South Africa is pursuing a clear agenda on the continent, aimed at providing support for the AU's principles and the decisions of the African Peace and Security Council.

In the sub-region of Southern Africa it is harder to discern South Africa's strategy. Here, South Africa also attempts to pursue its policies within the framework of a regional organisation, SADC. But due to the internal rivalry discussed above, it is less clear what SADC stands for, and as a result, South Africa's stance tends to be more cautious. This is the result of the dilemma of sovereignty versus a comprehensive understanding of security. While SADC leaders have signed up to a comprehensive security vision for the sub-region, in practice SADC is a strongly elitist organisations where sitting governments almost always back each other up.

There are two main characteristics of South Africa's security strategy in Africa. First, South Africa pursues a multilateral approach to security policy and believes in power through persuasion (carrot, not stick). Second, the country adheres to a non-militaristic stance – i.e. it believes that conflicts can never be resolved through violence, only through negotiations and agreements. It consequently uses its resources (including military resources) to support peace processes rather than to enforce compliance with AU or SADC principles through economic, political and military pressure or sanctions. Regarding both these characteristics, South Africa's strategy has been generally more successful at the continental level than at the subregional one, as will be seen in the discussion below of the country's diplomatic and military activities in the past decade.

Diplomatic initiatives
Regional institution building

South Africa has been highly instrumental in subregional and continental institution building. It has been the driving force behind the creation of the AU and Nepad as well as one of the core supporters of the restructuring of SADC, whose security Organ[18] until 2001 was frozen by numerous disagreements and bickering between two camps, led by South Africa and Zimbabwe, over how it should function and who should control it.

Such institution building has been a time consuming effort for South Africa, considering how much of it has been going on in Africa in the last decade, and particularly in the new millennium. Africa's regional security architecture is today both stronger and further-reaching than ever before, and especially the AU shows promise of becoming a principal actor in conflict resolution on the continent, in co-operation with the UN, sub-regional organisation, and individual African countries. Without the considerable efforts of South Africa, it is probable that the plans for creating the AU and its Peace and Security Council would still be at the stage of discussions, declarations and blueprints. I will first take a look at the security institutions of the AU, then SADC.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was officially replaced by the African Union at a 2002 Summit meeting in Durban. The AU is a stronger organisation than the OAU, both in terms of mandate and institutions. The fundamental principles on which the OAU was based were those of sovereignty and non-interference, and the organisation played almost no role in resolving the many internal conflicts and humanitarian crises on the continent (while its existence, particularly in the early years in the 1960s, may have helped stabilise inter-state relations in Africa by strongly confirming the inviolability of borders – even when those borders were artificially created by colonial powers). The Constitutive Act of the African Union also confirms the principle of equal sovereignty, but modifies this by mandating the continental organisation, on the decision of its Assembly of Heads of State, to interfere in the internal affairs of member states 'in respect of grave circumstances, namely war

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[18] The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, created in 1996.

crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity'.[19] The AU has a wide array of sub-institutions, some of which have been inaugurated and others that still only exist on paper.

The AU has a much stronger focus on peace and security than did the OAU. In February 2004, the AU's 53 heads of state signed a Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy. In May the same year, an African Peace and Security Council (PSC) was launched, together with the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The PSC is arguably the most important of the AU's institutions (apart from the AU Assembly of Heads of State, which always has the final word). The PSC plays a proactive role vis-à-vis the Assembly, by debating security crises on the continent and putting forward proposals to the Assembly on what actions to take, including peacekeeping, mediation or even humanitarian military intervention (the latter only in cases of genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity).

The PSC consists of members from 15 AU countries. Ten serve for two years, while five keep their seats for three years. While there are no permanent members and no country has veto powers, the requirements for becoming a PSC member ensure the participation of Africa's economic and military heavyweights such as South Africa and Nigeria. The requirements include the capacity and commitment to shoulder the responsibilities of being a PSC member, such as participating in conflict resolution, peace-keeping and peace-making operations and contributing financially to the AU's peacemaking efforts. After serving one two- or three-year term, there are no restrictions on a country serving consecutive terms on the Council.

South Africa assumed the chairmanship of the Peace and Security Council at its inauguration in 2004. It is likely to keep its seat on the Council in the foreseeable future, and has played a crucial part in building up the PSC's reputation as relatively strong and independent-minded institution. It has done so by bank-rolling many of the PSC's initiatives, in particular by shouldering almost the entire cost of the OAU/AU's first ever peacekeeping operation – the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB)[20] – but also by contributing to the AU's general budgets, hosting meetings, and paying for shuttle diplomacy, such as President Thabo Mbeki's efforts on behalf of the AU to bring the warring factions in Côte d'Ivoire together. South Africa has also been a driving force behind the creation of an AU peacekeeping stand-by force, to be made up by five regionally composed stand-by brigades. While the AU still does not have such a force at its disposal, SADC, ECOWAS and IGAD have all come some way in creating their regional components. In SADC, South Africa has led the work on creating a Southern African peacekeeping brigade.

The support of the AU from the continent's main powers, South Africa, Nigeria and, to some extent, Egypt, has helped ensure that the continental organisation has become a factor to reckon with in the pursuit of peace and security in Africa. This can be seen, for instance, in the international community's approach to the ethnic cleansing in the Darfur region of Sudan, where the efforts of the UN Security Council have been coordinated with those of the AU, and where the latter has almost become an implementing organ for the former.

Compared with the rapid rise to prominence of the AU and its Peace and Security Council, the achievements of SADC and its Organ on Politics, Defence and Security fade. Hopes had been raised that the Organ would start playing a constructive role in the region after its restructuring in 2001, and especially after the launch of the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (the SIPO) and a Mutual Defence Pact at the 2003 SADC Summit in Dar-es Salaam. This was followed by the signing of the SADC Principles and Guidelines for Elections at the 2004 Mauritius Summit. On paper, then, SADC was set to promote a comprehensive security agenda, one both focused on military security (a defence pact against aggression) and human rights and democracy (the Election Guidelines and parts of the SIPO). In practice, though, the only major security crisis on which the SADC Organ has managed to take a strong, common position has been the case of Zimbabwe's spiralling downfall into economic chaos and political authoritarianism. And in that case, the Organ has taken an unanimous stand in support of the sitting ZANU-PF regime. As described in the previous section, rather than pushing its professed agenda of good governance and human rights, South Africa has been leading the Southern African campaign to support Mugabe and protect his interests in international fora such as the Commonwealth and the EU-SADC dialogue.

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[19] AU, *Constitutive Act of the African Union* (Lomé, Togo: AU, 11 July 2000), Article 4(h).
[20] The peacekeeping operation in Burundi was by the end of 2003 estimated to have cost South Africa over R800 million.

Diplomatic peace making and conflict resolution initiatives

South Africa has in its 11-year history as a democratic country been very active as a mediator, facilitator, and catalyst of diplomatic initiatives on the African continent. South Africa is the only country that has been able to make some progress in resolving the seemingly intractable conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. Both countries have enjoyed a few years of relative stability thanks to South Africa's patient and thorough orchestration of a long-drawn out, expensive and complex peace negotiation process, leading up to the establishment of transitional governments of national unity made up of representatives of all the major warring parties and political factions. But neither country has come through this transitional stage to hold national elections yet, and the danger is still very present that the whole process might derail over disputes on how such elections should be conducted and whether to accept their results.

Others of South Africa's diplomatic initiatives have been less successful. The country's 'quiet diplomacy' in Zimbabwe has had no results, and South Africa is widely regarded as biased towards the sitting government against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. The South African government has made no interventions, quiet or otherwise, in the governance crisis in the neighbouring mini-state, Swaziland – one of the world's few remaining absolute monarchies. The South African trade union movement, COSATU, has launched demonstrations in solidarity with the democracy movement in Swaziland, but such activities have not been actively supported by the South African government. In Côte d'Ivoire, the AU has nominated President Mbeki to head the mediation between the southern government and the northern rebels. Again, the South African aim is to establish a transitional power-sharing government, something neither party is likely to be content with. South Africa was also involved in the diplomatic efforts to get president Charles Taylor out of Liberia in 2003, but played second fiddle to Nigeria, not least because South Africa was unable to send more than a symbolic contingent of peacekeeping troops to Liberia to shore up the peace agreement. This leads us to the discussion of South Africa's military capabilities and actions in the past decade.

Military capabilities and actions

While initially reluctant to engage the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in peacekeeping activities outside South Africa's borders, South Africans have been involved in one peace enforcement operation and several peacekeeping and observer missions on the African continent in the past few years. The peace enforcement operation took place in Lesotho in 1998, to restore that country's democratically elected government to power. The military intervention achieved its aim, but messily so – leading to street battles between South African soldiers and rioters in the capital Maseru. The operation did not receive the support of SADC (although a post-hoc legitimation of sorts was achieved). All in all, South Africa came away from the Lesotho experience with a renewed distaste for military peace operations in Africa. This attitude changed, however, when the government realised that the provision of peacekeepers was essential to guarantee the peace agreements it had negotiated in Burundi and the DRC. Today, South Africa is a core contributor to the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) and the UN Operations in Burundi (ONUB), the successor to the South African-led African Mission in Burundi (AMIB). With additional troops deployed in the UN missions in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and Liberia (UNMIL), South Africa has become the largest UN troop contributing country in Southern Africa, number four in Africa (after Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia), and number seven in the world.[21]

All this peacekeeping activity has been achieved within the framework of a very small defence budget (around 1.7% of GDP in recent years[22]). As a result, with 3000 soldiers under UN mandates, South Africa's peacekeeping capacity is stretched to the limit – some would argue that it will not even be able to keep up the present level of engagement.[23] Other problems troubling SANDF are the high

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[21] DPKO, 'Ranking of military and civilian police contributions to UN operations' (New York: DPKO, June 2004).

[22] Mosiuoa Lekota, 'Address by the Minister of Defence, the Honorable Mosiuoa Lekota, MP, on the Occasion of the Defence Budget Vote', (National Assembly, Cape Town, 13 June 2003). www.mil.za/MinistryofDefence/Frame/Frame.htm.

[23] The problem of overstretch has been argued not only by academics, but also by Defence Minister Lekota and SANDF chief of joint operations, Lieutenant-General Godfrey Ngwenya. See Theo Neethling, 'The Defence Force and Peacekeeping: Linking Policy and Capacity', in Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, ed., *Apartheid Past, Renaissance Future: South Africa's Foreign Policy 1994-2004* (Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2004), p. 145.

age of South African soldiers and the spread of HIV/Aids – both wreaking havoc in the country's deployment readiness. The much maligned arms deal, formally known as the Strategic Defence Package, apart from the many allegations of corrupt dealings and propelling prices, did not include acquisitions that will be particularly useful for peacekeeping or peace enforcement operations. This has been partially remedied by the recent acquisition of a number of long range aircraft carriers to be used for the deployment of long-haul peacekeeping operations in Africa, but South Africa is still somewhat half-hearted in its will to expand the use of its armed forces in pursuit of its comprehensive security agenda.

In short, there is a risk of a widening gap between South Africa's security policy ambitions as an 'emerging power' and its capabilities. Only sustained investment in special forces with peacekeeping and peace enforcement training and the right material with which to equip these forces can change this. But the question is whether South Africa is willing to increase its defence spending in order to achieve a higher peacekeeping preparedness. After consecutive cuts in the SANDF budget since the end of the 1980s, defence spending has gone slightly up in recent years to around 1.7 percent of GDP. This is still very low compared to global standards, and widely regarded by military experts as too low compared to South Africa's peacekeeping ambitions.[24]

Peace operations capacity is not only a question of budget allocations for training and equipment. Peacekeeping operations are expensive and in addition difficult to budget for, since their need is, by necessity, unpredictable. It is not possible to set money aside for, say, a peacekeeping deployment in the Togo in 2005-06, on the off-chance that the political crisis in that country would escalate to the sort of violent conflict that would prompt the AU to authorise a peacekeeping mission. Instead, funding for peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations is allocated on an ad hoc basis by the Treasury, on the authorisation from Parliament. However, such funds are not always readily forthcoming from the Treasury, even when the Presidency and Department of Foreign Affairs decide to deploy peacekeepers. For instance, in 2003, the Department of Defence was left with a R200 million deficit caused by its peacekeeping obligations.[25] One way of overcoming this problem would be to establish a peacekeeping fund. There are plans to include such a fund as part of a SADC peacekeeping Stand-by Force. As yet, it is not clear where the money for this SADC fund would come from. While there is a strong interest among Western donors to support regional peacekeeping efforts in Africa, they may balk at bankrolling a SADC peacekeeping fund since Zimbabwe – a country with which they have severed all ties of bilateral development aid – is one of the central peacekeeping contributors in Southern Africa.

One reason for South Africa to boost its military security capabilities and confirm its position as an 'emerging power' is the issue of Security Council reform. According to the December 2004 report by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, only countries that are among the top three contributors in their region to the UN's budgets, programmes, and peacekeeping operations should be elected as new permanent members of the Council. South Africa has voiced its interest in getting one of Africa's two proposed permanent seats, but to achieve this the country will have to show at least the same level of commitment to peace and security in Africa as it does today – in terms of money spent, diplomatic efforts and military peacekeeping and peace making actions. Without extra spending – or at a minimum the diversion of funds towards peacekeeping and peacemaking activities – this will be difficult to achieve.

Links between regional and global levels

South Africa's emerging power role ensures that there are strong links between its regional and global policies. Its global ambitions help shape regional strategies, and vice versa. For instance, to qualify for a permanent UN Security Council seat, South Africa must play an active and constructive role in its own region. Conversely, South Africa's prominent role in the region, combined with its moral stance and multilateral outlook, allows it to punch above its weight in international fora.

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[24] See Neethling, 'The Defence Force and Peacekeeping', p. 146.
[25] This amount was disclosed by Director of Budget, Department of Defence, General Rautie Rautenbach, to Parliament. See, Defence Joint Committee, *White Paper on Peacekeeping: Discussion* (Cape Town: Parliament, 26 March 2003).

In theory, security threats within South Africa's sphere of interest should be dealt with within a tight safety net of regional, continental and global security institutions – that is SADC, the AU and the UN, respectively. The UN Charter relies on regional organisations to be the police of peace and security in their regions. The ideal is the subsidiarity principle, where security threats are dealt with at the closest possible level. Or framed in a manner popularised with Nepad, the ideal is to provide African solutions to African problems, rather than having to rely on former colonial powers or the United States to resolve the continent's security crises – especially since such assistance is not always forthcoming, as the Western response to the Rwandan genocide in 1994 showed.

However, while it is important to build up an African capacity to resolve violent conflict through mediation, peacekeeping and peace enforcement, the continent neither could nor should have to shoulder such burdens alone. Subsidiarity is a sound principle, but only when accompanied by burden sharing mechanisms. For instance, the AU, with the help of member states such as Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa, has shown itself to be good at relatively fast deployment of observers and peacekeepers, but does not have the financial resources to sustain such deployments over time. Furthermore, it does not have the capacity and skill to conduct complex humanitarian missions. The UN, in contrast, has vast resources for peacekeeping, has long experience in complex humanitarian missions where several UN humanitarian and development agencies work side by side with military peacekeepers, but it is usually very slow to deploy. The AU and the UN thus complement each other nicely, and should build on each other's strengths. Thus the principle of complementarity should be added to that of subsidiarity.

The Western powers also have their role to play in this burden sharing arrangement. The UN, the AU and subregional organisations alike have shown themselves less capable of peace enforcement operations. For instance, the UN peacekeepers could not cope with attacks from the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, and order was not restored until the British sent a small contingent of elite troops to fight the rebels. Likewise, French troops were needed to patrol the border between north and south in Côte d'Ivoire, and an EU contingent, Operation Artemis, was rapidly deployed in the eastern DRC to restore order after militias started attacking civilians, peacekeepers and each other in 2003. It seems that in the foreseeable future, Africa will need these sorts of peace enforcement interventions from the much better equipped special forces of the former colonial powers.

An important aspect of the role of an emerging power like South Africa is to use its (limited) clout on the global stage to ensure that the international community, whether it be the UN or the Western powers, supports Africa's governance and peacemaking efforts. South Africa has played a key role as a spokesman for Africa in international fora, and has been invited to the G8 meetings every year in the past few years. The G8 has endorsed the Nepad plan and promised money to train up to 75,000 peacekeepers in the developing world, most of whom would come from Africa.[26] Thus, one of the most constructive contributions South Africa can continue to make to African peace and security is to be a catalyst for constructive relationships between Africa and the developed world – a relationship characterised by subsidiarity, but also by complementarity and burden sharing.

Conclusion: some possible lessons for IBSA

To conclude, what can this discussion of South Africa's role in Africa offer in terms of lessons for IBSA co-operations? First, does it suggest possible security lessons which South Africa has to offer to India and Brazil? And, second, has it brought to the fore potential areas in which IBSA security co-operation would be particularly useful?

Turning first to the question of lessons South Africa may provide for India and Brazil, such lessons seem at first glance difficult to find. Although India, Brazil and South Africa are all regional leaders on their respective continents and (possibly) also 'emerging powers', they are very different countries, situated in very different strategic contexts and harbouring very different threat perceptions. For instance, India is a nuclear power, in a state of cold war with its neighbour Pakistan, while South Africa is an ardent advocate of non-proliferation and arms control – in fact it is the only country in history to have voluntarily dismantled its nuclear capability. While Brazil seems to be not that interested in regional co-operation arrangements, South Africa has based its whole foreign and security policy

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[26] This was pledged at the G8 meeting on Sea Island, Georgia, in June 2004.

approach around regional multilateralism. Before learning experiences can be exchanged and compared, it therefore seems necessary for the three regional powers to first become better acquainted with each others security perceptions, interests and needs.

This difficulty leads us to focus instead on IBSA's strategy for security co-operation. Some areas of co-operation have already been identified in the Action Plan for the IBSA 'Agenda for Co-operation', released in New Delhi in March 2004. They include ambitions to co-operate in practical terms to combat drugs trafficking, arms smuggling and other transnational organised crime, all areas in which it would make good sense to pool resources and information, and in which practical co-operation is already beginning to happen. Plans for co-operation in the field of weapons production seem less realistic and also potentially politically sensitive.

In global strategic terms, the clearest area of co-operation for mutual benefit is for IBSA to work together in lobbying for UN Security Council permanent seats. All three want a seat, all three are front runners in their respective regions, but all three also face potential serious resistance from regional rivals which may thwart their bids. In the case of South Africa, it will have to compete with Nigeria and Egypt for one of (possibly) two African seats[27], while the main opponents to Brazil's and India's ambitions are Argentina and Pakistan. The three IBSA partners would thus do well to work together as a bloc to muster broad support for their regional candidatures.

This aim is complicated by the AU's approach to Security Council Reform. The AU members have come up with a statement (the Ezulwini Consensus[28]) which demands two veto-wielding permanent seats for Africa, but which refuses to discuss which two countries this will be until the African position has been accepted by the rest of the UN. This means that South Africa will not be able to start campaigning openly for a seat until such time (if ever) an agreement has been reached in the UN General Assembly on what a reformed Security Council should look like. Egypt and Nigeria do not seem to be equally diligent in adhering to the common African position, and have stated their wish for permanent seats more clearly and forcefully than South Africa. This could become a problem for South Africa's bid, and the country would be wise to consider ways in which a coalition with Brazil and India can strengthen its cards. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan is pushing for a decision in the General Assembly on the various aspects of UN reform by September 2005, and although this time frame is unrealistic (especially in light of opposition from the two veto powers China and the US), it is important for candidates for new Security Council seats to keep up the momentum towards reform created by the release in December 2004 of the report of the High Level Panel.

Moving away from the question of particular agenda items, IBSA partners are likely to reap some less tangible, but very useful, benefits for security co-operation between the three regional powers, simply by meeting and talking. The potential positive spin-offs from the talking club element of regional institutions are often underestimated. Co-operation and mutual sympathy is strengthened when state leaders and lower level public officials get to know each other personally, through summits, joint committees and working groups. At the moment, IBSA co-operation is led from above and fuelled by the good rapport between the three countries' heads of state. While this is a good starting point, the basis for co-operation would be strengthened if personal and professional relationships are also formed further down the chain of policy-making. Another important aspect of IBSA as a talking club is the opportunity it provides for mapping out common positions ahead of multilateral gatherings. Such coordination could make IBSA into a central actor in the trade negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and in the debates on UN reform in the General Assembly. By forming a powerful bloc in such fora, IBSA may help provide the teeth that South-South co-operation has lacked so far.

To conclude, differences in size, security outlook, strategic context, national interests, etc, make it unlikely that a strong and deep IBSA security co-operation framework will develop in the short or intermediate term. There seems to be more potential for co-operation on trade issues, not least within the framework of the WTO negotiations. This does not mean, however, that the IBSA partners would not benefit greatly from co-operation on selected security issues. A limited, but focused and determined, security co-operation agenda would strengthen the three countries' chances to achieve their international ambitions.

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[27] Kenya has also launched a bid, and other countries may follow suit. However, Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa will be the only serious contenders for permanent seats.
[28] AU, *The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: the 'Ezulwini Consensus'*, adopted unanimously at an extraordinary session of the AU Executive Council on 8 March 2005.

An immediate goal for India, Brazil and South Africa is thus to identify a limited but realistic list of security issues to place on the IBSA security agenda and then to develop practical plans for implementing this agenda in order to keep the momentum going. However, this immediate goal of discovering and working out such an agenda should not completely overshadow the longer-term goal of deepening mutual understanding between the three IBSA partners. The IBSA framework provides an excellent opportunity for three of the South's major heavyweights, India, Brazil and South Africa, to get to know each other better and learn from each others' successes and failures. In the longer term, such mutual learning processes could provide a more secure foundation for IBSA security co-operation. At the moment this foundation is relatively flimsy, based more on the mutual good-will between the countries' three political leaders than on a sense of shared material interests. The three countries play quite different roles in their respective regions and have quite different security ambitions and interests. If the three are serious about building a strong and durable IBSA security co-operation partnership, a first step should be to achieve a greater understanding of each other's security ambitions and interests, while a second and much more difficult one would be to work gradually towards achieving a greater convergence of these ambitions and interests.