SOUTH AFRICA, THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND THE IBSA-BRICS EQUATION: THE TRANSATLANTIC SPACE IN TRANSITION

Francis A. Kornegay1

Introduction

2013 will mark the 10th anniversary of the Brasilia Declaration which, two years later, led to the formalizing of the trilateral India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) dialogue forum. By 2012, all three members of this fledgling partnership in South-South cooperation had been incorporated into the BRICS forum along with Russia and China. The interplay between the IBSA and BRICS forums has generated no small amount of debate over the geostrategic, economic and political implications and efficacy of these new generation formations in the international politics of emerging powers. It is a debate that seeks, among other things to make sense of an overlap in the international relations of developing countries of the so-called global South into the domain of emerging powers.

In this regard, the IBSA-BRICS equation is emblematic of this overlap, especially in terms of IBSA’s effective incorporation into BRICS, bringing together two categories of overlap between emerging (or re-emerging) powers and those of the global South. This has to do with the manner in which BRICS brings together the ‘middle powers’ of the IBSA trilateral and the putative Eurasian ‘great powers’ of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) under the co-leadership of China and Russia.

1 Institute for Global Dialogue, UNISA, Woodrow Wilson International Centre of Scholars. E-mail: francis@igd.org.za.
The fact that India, with its observer membership in the SCO represents something of a ‘swing state’ between the northern hemispheric trajectory of the SCO and the southern hemispheric gravitational pull of IBSA, adds yet another dimension of complexity to this overlapping global South-emerging powers equation. Moreover, nested within the IBSA-BRICS equation is the trilateral ministerial between India, Russia and China as a strategic triangle for managing their ambivalent interrelationships in the greater Eurasian space.

This background is all prelude to exploring the southern hemispheric dimensions of the global South-emerging powers equation revolving around IBSA and BRICS centered on the geostrategic space of the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic. However, unlike an earlier occasional paper off of which this one is adapted focusing on the Indian Ocean, emphasis here is on problematizing South Africa’s South Atlantic strategic potential in tandem with Brazil.2

This necessarily entails drawing comparative reference to the Indian Ocean dimension of this relationship as reflected in the trilateral maritime arrangement among the IBSA troika: IBSAMAR. This paper, therefore, attempts to analyze how South Africa relates to this southern hemispheric context in terms of its unique role and positioning on the African continent as well as how Africa figures in this picture linked to the broader strategic implications of South Africa’s membership in both IBSA and BRICS.

From the vantage-point of how South Africa navigates its bilateral relations within these multilateral frameworks, growing questions of foreign policy identity and strategic autonomy have emerged in the intellectual and policy debates and discourses concerning the utility of the country’s membership and participation in both IBSA and BRICS.

Whereas IBSA was seen as a natural outgrowth of South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy trajectory prioritizing Africa and the South and evoked no controversy, the BRICS connection remains controversial. In the southern transatlantic context, however, BRICS it takes a back seat to IBSA; this is in

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as much as the western hemisphere is much farther removed from the Eurasian
dynamics revolving around the India-China-Russian nexus than the Indian
Ocean.

But the relationship between IBSA and BRICS should not be
approached on a zero-sum basis. IBSA has the potential to actually strengthen
BRICS in terms of the geostrategic synergies that can emerge from them both
depending on how diplomatic strategies are coordinated within SCO-IBSA
geopolitical dynamics. How Tshwane-Pretoria navigates the southern transatlantic in conjunction with Brazil while navigating the Indian Ocean
terrain with India may reveal the possibilities of such synergies being realized.

South Africa and the Southern Transatlantic: Defining the terrain
In assessing the IBSA-BRICS equation in Tshwane-Pretoria’s evolving foreign
policy, the geostrategic logic of IBSA as the basis of a ‘Gondwanan’ configuring
of relations in the Southern Hemisphere is compelling. It places IBSA’s
trilateralism within an entirely different frame of reference from BRICS. In
comparative terms, however, the Indian Ocean dimension of trilateralism is
eminently more developed and in a more highly resolved definition than the
case of the South Atlantic. Therefore, there is a need to contextualize the
greater Atlantic space as this portion of the southern hemisphere relates to
South Africa and the rest of the African continent.

The starting point for such an attempt requires a taking in of the larger
African continental picture and how, what this author refers to as Africa’s
geostrategic spatial interdependencies, conditions its international relations
with all other continental regions as well as the maritime environments that
form part of their interconnectivity.\(^3\) Africa, fragmented as it is as the result of
its 1874 colonial partitioning (effectively ratified by the first generation of

\(^3\) This conceptual perspective was the focal point of a former blogspot by this author: “India, NATO,
Africom and the Dilemma of Geostrategic Spatial Interdependencies”, The Post-West Forum, November
07, 2007. (This blog no longer functions.) This analysis of the Indian Ocean dynamics between Africa and
India were referenced in an unpublished conference presentation on Africom: Steve McDonald (director
Policy on Africa in the New Administration: What will it mean for Africom?”, March 10, 2009,
University of Pittsburgh. (See footnote 4.)
African leaders in the 1963 founding of the Organisation of African Unity), is uniquely vulnerable to a variety of external influences.

Its vulnerability is a function of its positioning as the peninsula of the geological super-continent referred to as “Afro-Eurasia”4. This is reinforced by a political fragmentation into 54 nominally sovereign states depriving it of a coherent security system of control over its coastal waters. (Unpacking “Eurasia” is important in African terms in as much as it embraces the North African Maghreb in geo-cultural, political and economic terms, as well as in its ecology and biodiversity.) Otherwise, “Eurasia” comprises Europe at the far western end of its extremity bordering the transatlantic.

This can be defined as “Western Eurasia” with Asia at the far eastern end of what can be considered “Eastern Eurasia” with “Central Eurasia” comprising the trans-Eurasian “heartland” with Russia as the geo-political arbiter of dynamics in both Europe and Asia with the contested space of Central Asia in the middle. To the extent that such control constitutes an important element of what can be referred to as “continental sovereignty”, Africa’s links with Europe via the Mediterranean and to Asia and Middle East via the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf, all abutting the western Indian Ocean, places it in a comparatively weak strategic position.

However, potential advances in regional and continental political as well as economic integration could conceivably transform this vulnerability, as Africa’s interdependencies with other non-African continental regions are a two-way street. Such inter-linkages are potentially manageable as a function of greater effectiveness in regional, continental and inter-continental cooperative governance.

These interdependencies, in their geostrategic spatial dimension reflect the geopolitical, economic and strategic interplay of linkages between continents and regions defined by their geographic proximities either by land or by sea.5 In this regard, Africa’s spatial interdependence is reflected by the

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4 See Wikipedia “Afro-Eurasia” discussion of the mega-landmass also referred to as “Afrabia” and “Eurafrasia”. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Eurasia.

5 This conceptual framework is elaborated in more detail in this author’s Journal of the Indian Ocean Region (JIOR) 8(1) essay: “South Africa and SADC in the Indian Ocean Maritime Security Equation”, 72-90.
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interplay of its land and sea proximities to Europe, the Middle East, Asia and South America.

The sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) provide the maritime inter-oceanic dimension defining such interdependencies. As will be illustrated this has particular relevance to the Indian Ocean. Otherwise, continental sovereignty becomes a more general function of ‘maritime sovereignty.’ This is conditioned on control of Combined Exclusive Maritime Zones.

**The Atlantic Basin definitional point-of-departure**

As a peninsular continent, Africa’s geostrategic spatial interdependencies constitute a three-sided phenomenon, one that converges at the southerly hemispheric extremity of Africa occupied by South Africa. This is the Cape Sea Route linking the Indian and South Atlantic oceans in a veritable encirclement of the continent.

From the vantage point of rethinking ‘The Atlantic Space’ which preoccupied a July 1, 2011 seminar hosted by the European Commission, this author proposed that the “Atlantic Basin and its governance from an African perspective from South Africa’s vantage point” would might take in three considerations:

“The Atlantic geopolitical and geo-economic space has to be approached as a developmental terrain of North-South dialogue between emerging powers, developing countries and the established powers of the Euro-American North Atlantic;

The north-south Atlantic geostrategic landscape can be differentiated into three subsystemic zones: the Atlantic-Caribbean nexus where the American northern mid-Atlantic meets the ‘Central Atlantic’ at the Atlantic-Mediterranean nexus and, farther south, the South Atlantic-Indian Ocean nexus;

In terms of South Africa’s interests, from a southern hemispheric geostrategic perspective, the Atlantic has to be contextualize, one in relationship to the Indian Ocean within the broader Indo-Pacific strategic realm. This means looking at the two regions comparatively as complementary to a broader African agenda of fashioning maritime governance addressing
security imperative and building functional cooperation and trade and investment flows."6

Conceptualised in this light, it was suggested that from an African continental perspective, “the Atlantic forms one part of what might be referred to as a quadrilateral encirclement of geostrategic spatial interdependencies intruding into its affairs. As such, one can speak of three African covering four realms:

- An Afro-Latin South Atlantic – or ‘Afroatlantica.’
- ‘Euro-Afrabia’ spanning from the southern Mediterranean with outlets onto the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf/Red Sea/Gulf of Aden abutting the northwest quadrant of the Indian Ocean. (This conception, in relation to the European Union can be characterized as ‘Eurafrica’ as in French president Nicholas Sarkozy’s ‘Eurafricque’ merging into his Mediterranean union vision – now immensely problematized by the Great Arab Revolt of 2011).
- Afro-Asia spanning the Afroasian realm of the Indian Ocean bordering the littorals of the Middle East, South Asia and the Southeast Asia-Pacific as well as Eastern and Southern Africa (with the COMESA-SADC-EAC ‘grand free trade scheme) with a plethora of regional economic and security communities addressing regional and interregional governance agendas.”7

It is the Afro-Latin South Atlantic, or afroatlantica, dimension of Africa’s continental identity that preoccupies this analysis. Here, with particular significance in southern transatlantic relations, it should be pointed out that the uniqueness of SADC from the vantage point of South Africa, as the African point of reference for this analysis, is that unlike all other regional economic communities (RECs) on the continent, SADC is the only transcontinental formation of its kind. SADC is bi-coastal, bordering the South Atlantic as well as the Indian Ocean. As such, any comprehensive SADC maritime security SWOT analysis has to incorporate both oceans. This, in turn, underlines the

6 Kornegay, The Transatlantic Strategic Landscape: A South African perspective.” Presentation abstract prepared for a conference for which a synthesis report has been issued as The Atlantic Geopolitical Space: common opportunities and challenges. This conference was jointly organised by DG Research and Innovation and BEPA, European Commission, July 01, 2011. Rapporteur: Mark Aspinall, 1. As a programmatic focus on the Atlantic in its north-south western hemispheric expanse, this exercise has informed an undertaking called the Atlantic Basin Initiative of the Centre for Transatlantic Relations (CTR) at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).
7 Ibid, 1-2.
geostrategic centrality of South Africa in formulating a “Gondwanan” vision of an Africa-centered southern hemispheric security community.

From an historical perspective, as far as Africa is concerned, these three-sided interdependencies have reflected a “one-way street”. This has been reflected in the extent to which external powers from Europe mainly but also from the Middle East have variously penetrated different regions of the continent. This penetration has emanated from both Indian Ocean as well as transatlantic vantage points.

In one or another way these intrusions have tended to involve an extractive proposition, be it the brutal human trafficking in what constituted the depopulating slave trade or in regard to natural resource exploitation. Updated to more recent times, the contemporary “new scramble” for Africa by traditional and emerging powers alike for Africa’s mineral and energy resources reflects a continuity in this pattern accompanied by various and sundry illicit trafficking: in drugs, people, wildlife, the raiding of coastal fishing stocks and illegal logging.

There are, however, positive aspects to this more contemporary “new scramble” as the emergence of major Asian actors such as China, India, Korea among others as well as Brazil, as economic partners, is propelling a surging new chapter in Africa’s economic growth and development. As a result, there is a fledgling trend toward Africa and Africans asserting greater control over the continent’s destiny.

**The Trans-Mediterranean**

Spatial interdependencies between Africa and Europe and Africa and Asia cut both ways – not always to either Africa’s or Europe’s benefit. In Europe’s case, the trans-Mediterranean has long been an illegal immigration transit corridor from African impoverishment below the Sahara and from within the Maghreb itself into a Europe of rapidly aging and declining populations and, now, of uncertain economic prospects.

Thus far, a mutually beneficial framework for the inter-continental management of population flows across the Mediterranean accompanied by a more structured economic integration has proved elusive. This predicament has been made all the more complicated by the “Arab Awakening” upheavals in the
Maghreb on the one hand and the southern European debt crisis threatening the European Union (EU) on the other. Both the asymmetric EU-Africa Strategic Partnership and the separate Mediterranean Partnership between the EU and North Africa seem inadequate to managing these destabilizing trends. There is more about this subject later.

Then there is the energy security dimension. Here, the trans-Mediterranean geostrategic interdependency between Africa and Europe reaches into the Eurasian geopolitical-economic calculus. This is underlined by the possible disruption of an incipient energy alliance that Russia had been hoping to consolidate with Libya and Algeria as a means of tightening its control of the European energy market from the southern Mediterranean. This involves a trans-Saharan oil pipeline hook-up with Nigeria where Russia’s energy giant, Gazprom, is also heavily invested. As such, the upheavals along the southern Mediterranean rim implicate a much broader array of geo-economic interests than the simplistic picture often drawn of a “recolonising” Western economic imperialism.

Indeed, there may have been no need for NATO to back Libyan rebels simply to secure that country’s hydrocarbon resources since those economic and energy security links were already in place (especially between Gaddafi-Berlusconi/Libya and Italy). The mass exodus of Chinese laborers from Libya further underlines this point.

The fact of the matter is that energy security geo-strategy is the leitmotif of Russian aims at integrating into what is envisioned as a ‘pan-European space’ on Russian terms; terms that, from Moscow’s vantage point, will optimally secure its geostrategic spatial interdependence within the Greater Eurasian east-west equation. Meanwhile, as demonstrated in the sidelining of the AU (in favor of the Arab League much to the chagrin of former South African president Thabo Mbeki!) – and South Africa – in Addis’ efforts to mediate the Libyan conflict, these trans-Mediterranean dynamics present a formidable challenge to sub-Saharan African efforts at exerting prerogatives of presumed continental sovereignty over the Maghreb.

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The fact that the Western Sahara dispute remains unresolved to the detriment of the AU’s cohesion with a non-functional Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) says it all! The AU is effectively without a northern regional REC pillar bordering the southern Mediterranean. This is how Africa’s geostrategic spatial interdependencies with Eurasia work against it in trans-Mediterranean terms. As such, Africa is at the mercy of destabilizing dynamics endemic to northern Africa extending down below the Sahara in such vulnerable Sahelian ‘states’ as a currently fractured Mali.

**Afroatlantica/Trans-Med Contradictions**

Given the fact that in Euro-American capitols, there is a bureaucratic bifurcation of Africa into different sub-Saharan (SSA) and ‘the Middle East and North Africa’ bureaus, it would have taken a functioning UMA as the North African REC pillar within the AU to have prevented the diplomatic divide that occurred between the AU and the Arab League in the case of Libya. More to the point in terms of southern transatlantic relations, these geopolitical dynamics involving what amounts to a realignment of convergence between the Arab World via the Gulf Cooperation Council and the West, is its southern Mediterranean-Atlantic nexus revolving around Morocco.

Morocco, as an outlier in inter-African affairs due to the Western Sahara stalemate, has become an alternative pole of geopolitical revisionism aimed at redefining the “Atlantic Space” on Arab-Francophone African terms in apparent alignment with France, Portugal and Spain. In successive conferences, Rabat has launched a *Tri-continental Atlantic Initiative* (May 29-30, 2009) and an *African Federation of Strategic Studies* in Marrakesh.9

This latter launching occurred at the beginning of 2010 under the auspices of the Moroccan Centre for Strategic Studies. It may be seen as one more indication of a bid to influence the geopolitical and economic trajectory of the mid-Atlantic abutting the Mediterranean interface between Africa and

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Europe. As such, NATO reportedly endorsed a closely related *Mediterranean Dialogue* at its Chicago summit in May 2012.\(^{10}\)

What kinds of conflicts of interests there are that could emerge out these North African dynamics revolving around Morocco and the new South American regionalism emanating out of Brasilia as well as AU-African diaspora linkages with Caricom pertaining to the Caribbean are anyone’s guess. Geopolitically, this seems to be a terrain ‘up for grabs.’ But all of these ill-defined emerging centres of powers impinging on a redefining of transatlantic relations will have to be factored into any calculus aimed at carving out a sphere – or spheres – of geostrategic autonomy as pertains to evolve a South Atlantic agenda compatible with the aims of IBSA in tandem with a broader BRICS global calculus.

This is where defining the Atlantic Space will require some intellectual reengineering of the geopolitical imagination among African and South American intelligentsias in sorting out contradictions between the Afro-Latin *afroatlantica* and trans-Mediterranean streams impinging on transatlantic ties. Here, West Africa will have to play a major role which means that South Africa and Brazil will have to develop an IBSA outreach that draws in the western arm of SADC revolving around the emerging geopolitical assertion of Angola and the ECOWAS powers of such major actors as Nigeria and Ghana. In security terms, ECOWAS already has an institutional stake along its littoral domains of the South Atlantic focusing on the stability of the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea.

Given the dearth of focus on the South Atlantic within the transatlantic equations in search of strategic coherence, the Afroasiatic-Indian Ocean realm of Africa’s interdependencies will not be touched on here as they have been amply dealt with elsewhere by this author and others of more authoritative vintage. Suffice it to be stressed that the Indian Ocean nexus forms an emerging centre of gravity in the overall west-to-east shift in the global economy as one of the main, if not the main, trans-shipment focal point of commercial and energy transactions. It is a lake of convergence in the interdependent economic

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relations between Africa, the Middle East and greater Asia as well as the centre of geostrategic maneuverings between the US, India and China stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Asia-Pacific and from the Straits of Malacca to the Mozambique Channel.

Nevertheless, where the Indian Ocean meets the South Atlantic around South Africa’s ‘Cape Sea Route’ is where the IBSA countries are presented with a major opportunity for delving in some proactive redefining of the southern hemispheric strategic landscape as it pertains to issues of maritime security and functional cooperation. As such, an assessment of the meager multilateral infrastructure of southern transatlantic relations is in order.

**SA and the Rise of Angola in an Emerging South Atlantic Calculus**

Far from having the level of multilateral cooperation that is emerging in the Indian Ocean, the South Atlantic has no real multilateral architecture to speak of. To be sure, there is no lacking in issues around which a southern transatlantic agenda could be developed. There also exist initiatives that could serve as a basis for cooperation in addressing such issues in developing an agenda and multilateral architecture. Unlike in the case of the Indian Ocean, however, South Africa does not figure as a central African actor as its fellow SADC member state, Angola.

As far as the issues are concerned, these include the same maritime security challenges as faces the Indian Ocean. These pertain to piracy and the full panoply of transnational crime in the illicit trafficking in drugs, people, arms and various illegal commodities. There are intense efforts underway in combating these non-traditional threats especially in the more northerly mid-Atlantic abutting the Caribbean, northern coastal South America and across the ocean in the Gulf of Guinea domain of ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). However, these efforts have yet to inspire a transatlantic architecture apart from such localized cooperation initiatives as those addressing Nigeria’s preoccupation with the Niger Delta and broader regional security concerns in the Gulf of Guinea.

From the vantage point of regional cooperation along the western African Atlantic littoral, the three RECs pertaining to this realm includes, besides ECOWAS, ECCAS and SADC. SADC is the only REC within the AU
framework that is bicoastal in embracing both the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean regions of the continent. In terms of how Tshwane-Pretoria relates to the South Atlantic, a major geopolitical development along the southerly littoral of coastal West Africa is the rise of Angola.

It is as the main aspiring regional emerging power within both SADC as well as ECCAS that Angola must be afforded greater attention. What is more, South Atlantic issues such as they are at this point, tend to fall more in the domain of ECCAS and ECOWAS than within SADC. This does not necessarily relegate South Africa to a back seat in the southern transatlantic. But it does imply a sharing of leadership with fellow SADC member Angola as well as, in terms of ECOWAS, Nigeria.

For Tshwane-Pretoria, the Angolan connection is especially strategic. It has both its cooperative as well as its competitive aspects. This was born out most graphically in the July accession of South Africa’s former Home Affairs (and former Foreign Affairs) minister, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to the Chairmanship of the AU Commission. As SADC’s candidate for this hotly contested position against the opposition of Nigeria and ECOWAS, Angola played a major role in her becoming the AU chair. Luanda bankrolled the lobbying of her candidacy to the tune of $176,000.11

With one of the fastest growing economies in Africa and a highly motivated compulsion to play a more active role in inter-African affairs, Luanda has already exhibited its activism with the memorandum of understanding it had recently with Guinea-Bissau to strengthen that country’s capacity to cope with transnational criminal penetration from South American drug cartels. The fact that Guinea-Bissau, like Angola, is a Lusophone former colony of Portugal highlights another major factor in the still unfocused southern transatlantic picture: the Lusophone dimension via the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

Lusophonie encompasses a geo-cultural community ranging from Brazil, on the South American side of the Atlantic, as well as Portugal, a long-standing member of the northern transatlantic community, to Guinea-Bissau.

and Cape Verde within ECOWAS and Angola, with its overlapping memberships in the SADC and ECCAS regional economic communities. With respect to the latter, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) also forms part of this African interregional picture.

**ZPCSA: Lusophone platform of southern transatlanticism?**

Lusophone ties are a major factor in what have been long-standing strategic relations between Brazil and Angola. This is irrespective of either country’s relations with South Africa. In recent years, the Angola-Brazil bilateral relationship has figured prominently in efforts to revive and reinvigorate the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic (ZPCSA). The history of the ZPCSA goes back to the Cold War and the height of the apartheid Afrikaner nationalist regime in South Africa’s bid to break out of diplomatic isolation. Projecting itself as a bulwark against communism in the service of protecting the Cape Sea lanes around the southern oceans from Soviet expansion on land and at sea, there was a short-lived idea floated of there being established a ‘SATO’ – South Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

As an anti-Soviet alliance of right-wing regimes in the Southern Hemisphere, from South Africa on the African side to authoritarian “Cone Sur” regimes like Chile under Augusto Pinochet, SATO would have become the southern complement to NATO of which Portugal is a member and, at the time, as colonial overseer of Angola, would have been a strategic linchpin in an all-Atlantic strategy against Moscow. Such a southern transatlantic regime would have rounded out US strategies under Nixon, Carter and Reagan administration throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s. Indeed, post-liberation Angola’s civil war featuring Soviet-Cuban backing of the MPLA against a tacit alliance between Washington, Beijing and Pretoria in support of Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA can be viewed as a variant of such a South Atlantic anti-communist-cum-Soviet strategy.

The international opprobrium directed at the apartheid regime in Pretoria, the Pinochet regime in Chile and other southern cone autocracies along with the overthrow of settler colonialism in the Portuguese ‘overseas provinces’ of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome and Principe (as well as Mozambique on the Indian Ocean side of Africa), foreclosed any
possibility of SATO gaining geopolitical-diplomatic traction. The joint ending of the Cold War by Ronald Reagan administration and Mikhail Gorbachev’s Kremlin which eventually facilitated Cuba’s withdrawal from Angola after the decisive battlefield victory over South African forces at Cuito Cuanavale created a new Southern African landscape: the retreat of Afrikanerdom from Namibia and from the pinnacle of political power in South Africa. Overall, the South Atlantic situation, geopolitically, had been transformed.

The ZPCSA had been formed as part of a global anti-apartheid strategy against the legitimizing of Afrikaner nationalist regime attempts at overcoming isolation as well as to oppose any prospect of pro-NATO strategic positioning by the US and the West in the South Atlantic. Post-apartheid, ZPCSA represented an attempt to maintain this region, at least in its southern-most reaches, as a zone of nonaligned neutrality; the South Atlantic would be kept out of geostrategic “Great Game” geopolitics. In this, Brazil has tended to emerge more or less as the guardian of what could be viewed as an extension of its regional sphere of influence, an expansion from the Amazonian mainland to the off-shore “Blue Amazon” as it were.

At the same time, the South Atlantic, via the ZPCSA, has served as a convenient vehicle for Brasilia in optimizing a strategic element of its Africa policy dovetailing with the Lusophone CPLP agenda with Angola emerging at a key linchpin. Luanda, in the meantime, had become estranged from a newly liberated post-apartheid South Africa wherein Nelson Mandela’s government of the African National Congress (ANC) regime sought a diplomatic solution as opposed to a military one to the MPLA regime’s civil war with Savimbi’s UNITA. The tensions emanating out of these differences in strategy toward Savimbi coloured SA-Angola relations throughout the Mandela and Thabo Mbeki administrations in Tshwane-Pretoria until Mbeki’s ouster by the ANC in 2009 and the assumption of the current Jacob Zuma administration.

This history of post-liberation estrangement and reconciliation between South Africa and Angola is critically important to understand the inter-African politics of SADC’s component of the South Atlantic and how it may intersect with the South American side across the ocean, Brazil in particular. After all, it was not necessarily detrimental to Brasilia’s interest that Luanda and Tshwane-Pretoria were not seeing eye-to-eye.
Moreover, it meant that the MPLA government itself was split between pro-Brazil and pro-South Africa elements, as well as pro-South Africa elements being offset by those who could be viewed as patently anti-South Africa. In any case, it gave Brazil an one-up on South Africa in the courting of a geographically “pivotal state” along the western African Atlantic littoral. It also meant that Brasilia would never be totally beholden to Tshwane-Pretoria in pursuing its African economic diplomacy.

In the rotational between South America and Africa in presiding over the ZPCSA, Angola’s assumption of the chairmanship of this grouping has elevated Luanda’s importance. The post-apartheid and post-Cold War agenda of the ZCPSA can be summarized as reflecting a rather expansive six-point human security cooperation agenda:

- Economic cooperation in eradicating poverty by creating partnerships for sustainable development, trade, investment and tourism;
- Crime prevention and combating drug trafficking, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and transnational organized crime, including piracy;
- Peace, stability and security, including conflict prevention and peace-building within the Zone;
- Scientific research, environmental and marine issues;
- Cross-cutting issues and means of implementation;
- And the need for an “implementation and follow-up mechanism.

Known as the Luanda Action Plan, what has been formulated calls for the establishment of rules of procedures for a Permanent Committee and Ministerial Meetings driven by national focal points amongst member States. It is not clear how much has transpired since this action plan was adopted at the 6th Ministerial Conference in Luanda on June 19, 2007. But it is important to note that this attempt to revitalize the Zone is part of a more generalized global South diplomacy that, between Africa and South America, included the 1st Africa-South America summit that was held in Abuja on 26-30 November 2006 and which acknowledged ZPCSA support.

The fact that action plan called for a “review of national and multilateral financial mechanisms which can be used to finance projects in the
Zone…” is a potentially important factor in activating an autonomous sphere of interregional cooperation; this is in light of the current BRICS agenda promoting local currency financing in trade and investment amongst emerging powers and within the global South. As members of the BRICS banking mechanism, this is where the membership of South Africa and Brazil in IBSA provides a point of strategic convergence between IBSA and BRICS that could have major geo-economic impact in the inter and intra-regional politics of the global South such as in the South Atlantic.

Angola – not Nigeria – and the Gulf of Guinea

The Luanda Declaration which produced the plan of action also welcomed the establishment of the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea as a “sub-regional vehicle for cooperation, promotion and maintenance of stability and security, and for the attainment of the principles and objectives of the Zone.” Noticeable in this regard as a reflection of Angola’s increasing diplomatic activism was the ZPCSAs’s expression of “gratitude to the Government of Angola for hosting the headquarters of the Commission and facilitating the operationalization of its secretariat.” As such, Angola is proving to be a key strategic linchpin linking the agendas of the African RECs bordering the South Atlantic littoral.

Apart from Angola’s SADC membership, its headquartering of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) places Luanda squarely in the geopolitical dynamics of ECOWAS as well as in the Central African politics of ECCAS/CEMAC. The Commission’s cabinet council includes, besides Angola, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sao Tome & Principe, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Indeed, interestingly, although it tends to be a superficial association of Gulf of Guinea dynamics with the ECOWAS region and Nigeria’s maritime security concerns associated with oil exploration and exports, the interregional balance within the GGC is heavily

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14 Ibid, 5.
weighted toward the Central African ECCAS where Angola vies for leadership with the DRC, both also being members of SADC.\footnote{There is, however, an “inactive” Gulf of Guinea Energy and Security Strategy (GGESS) created in June 2005. This initiative drew together Nigeria, the U.S., Great Britain, Canada, Switzerland, Netherlands, Norway and the Gulf of Guinea States. See: Paul Francis, Deirdre LaPin, Paula Rossiasco, \textit{Securing Development in the Niger Delta: A social and conflict analysis.} (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, 2011), 111. Report published under the Africa programme.}

The influence of ECCAS is further enhanced by a GGC decision taken to establish a Regional Centre for Maritime Security in Central Africa (CRESMAC) based in Congo-Brazzaville. Nigeria, however, has called for the GGC to serve as the point of departure for the establishment of an international naval force to protect the off-shore oil industry in the Gulf of Guinea. Indeed, within the framework of an inter-African geopolitics of cooperation within the South Atlantic generally and the Zone in particular, the GGC provides a fitting platform for a pan-African strategic convergence of agendas.

The rub here, however, is the unfortunate manner in which inter and intra-state regional instabilities have forced major states to be at loggerheads in their response to such crises, the Ivory Coast civil war a case in point. This is where a closer examination of South Africa’s diplomacy in the ECCAS and ECOWAS regions in alignment with Angola merit attention although the details of the inter-African dynamics surrounding Ivory Coast are still unclear. What is clear, however, is that Tshwane-Pretoria may need to fashion a much broader South Atlantic geostrategic diplomacy as a means of more effectively balancing its interests in this part of the continent. This is where IBSA may emerge as a key factor.

**Tshwane-Pretoria’s Balancing Act: The IBSA dimension**

Whereas Brazil-Angola relations have been on a good Lusophone geo-cultural and political footing for quite a lengthy period, it may well be that the post-liberation estrangement between South Africa and Angola has made Tshwane-Pretoria anxious to play catch-up under the Zuma administration. It is understandable that, under the circumstances, the ANC in Luthuli House and the Union Buildings would not want its rapprochement with Luanda to be channeled through Brasilia. However, in its anxiety to cover lost ground in
what should have been a close post-liberation bilateral relationship, South Africa may be guilty of over-compensating in indulging the MPLA on critical issues of inter-African diplomacy.

South Africa’s alleged siding with Angola in backing former Ivory Coast leader Laurent Gbagbo over French-aligned Alessane Ouattara over the outcome of presidential elections won by Ouattara, may be seen as a case in point. Luanda’s brief against Ouattara, supported as he was by ECOWAS led by Nigeria, was rooted the political – and perhaps more than political – backing France gave to Savimbi. The ‘friend of my enemy being my enemy seems to have meant that Tshwane-Pretoria may have felt compelled to realign its position on Ivory Coast to harmonize with Luanda, a position at loggerheads with Nigeria and much of ECOWAS but also compatible with the tacitly pro-Gbagbo postures of China and Russia.

In effect, in the Ivory Coast imbroglio, the two most powerful members of SADC were going up against Nigeria and ECOWAS in a consequential regional power where French interests figured significantly in the equation. Both Luanda and Tshwane-Pretoria had their beef with Paris. Neither country is accommodative of the neocolonial sphere of influence France wants to maintain in francophone Africa.

But from South Africa’s vantage point, was Ivory Coast the right battleground on which to challenge France’s irresistible compulsion to interfere in the politics of its former colonies? Gbagbo, after all, had dubiously distinguished himself as an ethno-regional entrepreneur cloaked in anti-imperialist garb at the expense of Ivory Coast’s territorial integrity. To then jeopardize the much needed coordination on inter-African politics between South Africa and Nigeria did not bode well for South Africa’s reputation as a stabilizer in its bid for continental leadership.

The difficulties encountered by Tshwane-Pretoria in trying to get Abuja to back Home Affairs minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as SADC’s candidate for Chair of the AU Commission seems emblematic of South Africa’s recent difficulties in inter-African diplomacy. The Abuja-Pretoria axis that existed during the respective Nigerian and South African presidencies of Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki no longer exist.

Yet SA-Nigerian relations is basic to any kind of serious pan-African strategic alliance formation within the AU as a compass in guiding African
common positions and for informing African strategy in engaging emerging and traditional powers alike. Ideally a ‘strategic triangle’ between South Africa, Nigeria and a post-Mubarak Egypt as a networking framework within the AU slotting in other key actors such as Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya would be optimum in anchoring Tshwane-Pretoria’s strategies within the global South/emerging powers concentric circle where BRICS and IBSA enter the equation.

Within the South Atlantic geopolitical context, why not a ‘strategic triangle’ between South Africa and Brazil with Angola? Extrapolating off of such a trilateral linkage, an IBSA outreach providing greater strategic definition to the southern transatlantic would lend IBSA greater regional depth to the benefit of South Africa, Brazil and India. Of course such a potential would logically amplify the geostrategic logic of the trilateral maritime/naval cooperation exercises between these three regional powers in IBSAMAR; and this at a time when India is chairing the Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) for the next two years while South Africa, over the same period is chairing the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS).

The question that goes begging: what will the IBSA trilateral do with IBSAMAR over the next two years while Delhi and Tshwane-Pretoria are holding down these two Indian Ocean chairmanships? It would seem that a multilateral architectural linkage is there for the making between the IOR-ARC and IONS on the one hand and the ZPCSA on the other. But this is where a strategic triangulation of creativity between South Africa, Angola and Brazil becomes compelling in developing a multilateral strategic convergence with the admittedly still underdeveloped (but more sharply resolved) Indian Ocean framework. As such, what might the options be for building on the ZPCSA and such auxiliary sub-regional initiatives as the GGC?

Here, it is not the African members of the ZPCSA who will set the pace. Rather, it will be Brazil as the only South Atlantic powerhouse in the western hemisphere with the geopolitical-economic heft and capacity to offset the US and its North Atlantic allies in influencing the terms of multilateralism in the southern transatlantic. But South Africa, as the “Gondwana Pivot” astride the southern sea lanes and as Brazil’s strategic partner in IBSA and BRICS legitimately has as much reason to influence South Atlantic developments as
either Brasilia or Luanda. Nevertheless, it is the western hemispheric inter-
American dynamic between Brasilia and Washington around which the future
of much of the South Atlantic will revolve.

A consequential determining factor will be Brasilia’s “state of mind”
informing its strategic compulsions vis-à-vis the “Blue Amazon”, how
expansively or narrowly inclined it is to motivate its own outreach and that of
IBSA and the ZPCSA in structuring multilateralism in the South Atlantic.
Indeed, a more actively considered IBSA outreach strategy would seem critical
in whatever course South Atlantic diplomacy might take.

IBSA outreach is the key contingent variable. As such, in consultative
conjunction with South Africa and Angola, there are at least three options that
Brazil might consider depending on how proactive it and they are in agenda-
setting in the transatlantic:

Option I: A South Atlantic sphere of influence
Here, Brasilia, in conjunction with Tshwane-Pretoria and Luanda, explores
with other ZPCSA member States the transformation of the Zone into a South
Atlantic Council to offset the long-established northern transatlantic
community. This would seem to require a more elaborated institutionalizing of
a South Atlantic geopolitical, economic and maritime security and functional
cooperation agenda. It would involve a more comprehensively defined role for
the Brazilian leg of IBSAMAR to serve as the focal point for the kind of
international naval force advocated by Nigeria, except with a much broader
writ beyond protecting the offshore oil industry in the Gulf of Guinea. It may
mean the establishment of a South Atlantic treaty whereby all ZPCSA member
states would become signatories.

The South Atlantic Council would, at least initially, be focused on
building up its own collective strategic autonomy and capacity vis-à-vis all the
other external actors as a precondition to a more expansive multilateral
engagement beyond the South Atlantic. The question is: how far into the mid-
Atlantic should a South Atlantic Council encompass? Into the Caribbean within
the western hemisphere and the Mediterranean on the African side where a
distinctly Moroccan agenda has been taking shape? Or geopolitical scope is
limited to the current Afro-South American membership of the ZPCSA? More
than likely, from at least a developmental standpoint, the ZPSCA would define
the scope of a South Atlantic Council where priority would be given to establishing its own identity unencumbered by an already established northern transatlantic agenda, though this agenda is being rethought in the think-tanking ‘hot houses’ of Washington and Brussels.

Option II: A north-south transatlantic dialogue
The establishment of a South Atlantic Council takes place within the context of an expansive maritime security dialogue between IBSA/IBSAMAR and the ZPCSZA on the one hand and selected northern transatlantic institutional actors. These might include the Atlantic Council in Washington accompanied by the Centre for Transatlantic Relations (CTR) situated at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and its fledgling Atlantic Basin Initiative. This might entail roping in Portugal, Spain and Morocco as well.

Within the context of such a north-south dialogue, there should still be ample scope for the carving out of an independent South Atlantic multilateral identity through the setting up of a South Atlantic Council building on the Zone and in tandem with a more robust IBSAMAR. Ultimately, this might lead to an interactive architecture embracing the Atlantic Basin around an Atlantic Council-South and an Atlantic Council-North linked to a transatlantic assembly-type structure that institutionalizes a dialogue of strategic convergence between north and south.

Here, it should be kept in mind that the north Atlantic is not sitting still. There remains that idea of a ‘transatlantic free trade area’ between the US and Europe that could, at some point revive geo-economics momentum in the northern hemisphere as the EU navigates its way out a Eurozone crisis that leads to greater integration, political union perhaps. This in turn could be accompanied by the idea of a more integrated North America along the lines of a “North American Blueprint” outlined in the July/August 2012 issue of The

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16 The CTR convened an “ eminent persons group exploratory meeting” at the Palacio dos Bandeirantes, São Paulo, Brazil, on 19-20 April, 2012; and will convene a follow-up authors’ workshop on “The rising importance of the Atlantic Hemisphere” on 12-13 September, 2012.
*American Interest* by Robert Pastor, professor and director of the Center for North American Studies at American University. Pastor advocates that the NAFTA strategic triangle of the US, Canada and Mexico adopt a principle of “managed interdependence” in moving from a “dual-bilateral relationship to a trilateral approach” in deepening North American integration.\(^{17}\)

No doubt given the fraught geopolitics of inter-American relations, including the continued unresolved question of Cuba, the abortive Free Trade Area of the Americas is unlikely to see a revival while Washington focuses on ‘free trade’ by other means via the Trans-Pacific Partnership (which will likely incorporate some of South and Central America). Renewed interest in North American integration revolving around an enhanced NAFTA linked to economic integration with a recovering Eurozone are other possibilities to be kept in mind while generating multilateral momentum in the South Atlantic. Ultimately both ends of the Atlantic will have to be approached geopolitically and economically as one zone of north-south integration within the western hemisphere interacting with integrationist dynamics in both Africa and Europe.

Option III: A South Atlantic-Indian Ocean maritime security council

This option could accommodate either of the first two as it is critically important that IBSA/IBSAMAR be afforded an integrally central role in whichever path a more highly resolved South Atlantic multilateralism would take. But this option would make it incumbent on South Africa and India, in their respective chairmanships of IONS and the IOR-ARC, to coordinate with Brazil in establishing a multilateral maritime structure of security and cooperation spanning the southern sea lanes under the IBSAMAR banner. This might entail bringing together the ZPCSA with IONS and the IOR-ARC in some form of high-level and ongoing consultation and dialogue, perhaps an IBSA/IBSAMAR summit that South Africa would host. Its aim would be to initiate the structuring of a multilateral mechanism that enhance the leverage of IBSA in accelerating UN Security Council reform.

This should obtain in as much as any external “out of area” involvement in a “maritime security and cooperation council” for the South Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean would have to be predicated on new terms of reference for the current outdated collective security regime. In any case, such a proposed maritime multilateral structure does not require necessarily being situated within the UN system, unless major reforms are contemplated and able to be leveraged by a proactive IBSA strategy in the southern oceans.

Conclusion
There are several observations to be made from the forgoing surveying of South Atlantic dynamics as they pertain to South Africa within the context of the IBSA-BRICS equation. The first has to do with the emergence of Angola as an alternative power centre in inter-African politics to South Africa’s dominance within SADC and farther afield on the continent. It is not for nothing that a proposal for the setting up of a SADC development bank to compete with Tshwane-Pretoria’s Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) has emerged in the wake of South Africa’s becoming a member of BRICS with its emerging financing mechanisms (including all five BRICS pledging billions to the IMF as a global financial “firewall” in the context of the Eurozone crisis).

Apart from Luanda politically and financially supporting Dlamini-Zuma as SADC’s successful candidate to head up the AU Commission, only Angola, within SADC, could financially mount an alternative development financing initiative to DBSA – and this at a time when DBSA has embarked upon its own international subsidiary to address the bank’s development financing role in BRICS in terms of Africa. Where this proposal will lead at a time when the BRICS countries are vetting the feasibility of their own development bank initiative linked to local currency financing is far from clear. It cannot be excluded that Brazil itself could be a factor in a Luanda DFI initiative within SADC countering the DBSA as South Africa’s signatory to the BRICS Banking Mechanism. For apart from the South Africa-Brazilian bilateral relationship within the context of both IBSA as well as BRICS, there has emerged something of a Lusophonic Brasilia-Luanda axis in the affairs of the South Atlantic revolving around the ZPCSA.
The question here is to what extent this Lusophone axis on both sides of the South Atlantic can interact with a bilateral axis between Tshwane-Pretoria and Brasilia within the trilateral framework of IBSA to accommodate a strategic triangle between South Africa, Brazil and Angola? Quite possibly much may depend here on Brazil’s calculus as Itamaraty may perceive it in its interest to promote Angola as a counterweight to South Africa in the geopolitics of the ‘African gateway’ to Africa’s vast and rich continental market.

If, however, there could emerge a political-diplomatic meeting of the minds between Brasilia and Tshwane-Pretoria on the need for them both to join with India in proactively giving more multilateral structure to a southern hemisphere linking Africa, Asia and the Americas via the southern sea lanes, then Brasilia may well value and prioritize a trilateral axis between itself and Angola that includes South Africa. For Angola’s geostrategic potential is incomparably limited compared to South Africa’s. The geographic positioning of South Africa as a triple gateway to the South Atlantic, the Indian Ocean as well as to the hinterland African market makes it an unavoidable factor in anyone’s southern hemispheric geopolitical-strategic calculus. The question outstanding is what will South Africa’s leaders make out of these natural advantages in how it navigates with Angola and Brazil in regard to the future of the southern transatlantic?

Will they, in conjunction with India, within IBSA, exhibit sufficient boldness of geopolitical and strategic imagination to translate South Africa’s natural advantages of geography into a new international subsystem; one that enhances their individual and collective strategic autonomy within BRICS as a potentially revisionist global economic governance alliance?

Dominated as BRICS is by China and Russia, the fact that these two have other strategic ‘fish to fry’ in reconfiguring northern hemispheric Eurasian power equations must also be factored into the calculus of the IBSA members of BRICS. This is critical given the interdependency of changes in the global North and the global South. Both IBSA and BRICS constitute different but interrelated paths toward a new multipolar strategic landscape. In this regard, IBSA might well reinforce the overall potency of BRICS through the fashioning of a new South Atlantic multilateralism in tandem with the Indian Ocean. The trajectory could well be toward a vision of building global integration from south to north.
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ABSTRACT
In a context of increasing South-South cooperation, the members of an important trilateral dialogue forum that represent the emergent powers – IBSA –, have been incorporated into another organization, BRICS. It resulted from an overlap of the Southern developing countries into the domain of the Euro-Asiatic great powers. Bearing in mind that both alliances are centered on the geostrategic space of the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic, South Africa’s South Atlantic strategic potential in tandem with Brazil is of extreme importance. It is possible to differentiate two steams in the transatlantic ties: the Afro-Latin and the trans-Mediterranean. It is also relevant to place the role of Angola in the African continent as a possible influence in South Atlantic’s dynamics, given due importance to the Lusophone ties which are represented by CPLP.

KEYWORDS
IBSA; BRICS; South Atlantic; South Africa; South-South Cooperation.

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