

ALLIANCES BEYOND BRICS:

SOUTH AFRICA'S ROLE IN GLOBAL ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

4-5 December 2014

Venue: SRC Chambers, University of Pretoria

Background

South Africa's role in global economic governance has recently become more identifiable by its membership of the G20 and the BRICS. The G20 has carved out a role for itself as the premier forum on global economic governance while the BRICS have been positioning themselves as a force for change in global economic governance reform. In the tussle for influence in global economic governance between the emerging economies and the G7/8, the BRICS grouping has the potential to emerge as a strong coalition within the G20. However, the role of the BRICS in shaping/influencing the agenda of the G20, particularly on matters which are crucial for the future development agenda of developing economies, has been muted.

In light of other emerging economies, including Turkey, Indonesia and Mexico, the BRICS as a group in global economic affairs is too small to represent the emerging world and yet too big to be irrelevant. Considering the diversity of the emerging economies' strategic interests in the G20, the BRICS' weakness has to be viewed within the context of a generally fragmented developing world. Countries such as South Africa have to define and pursue their own strategic interests in the G20 and other global economic governance institutions and, drawing from that, seek out appropriate allies and/or join corresponding coalitions. These coalitions might have to transcend the BRICS including, inter alia, developed countries. In mapping out a foreign economic strategy, countries are required to have a deep knowledge of the positions that potential allies are taking on targeted issues. In so doing, they are then able to join coalitions that support their priorities.

In framing South Africa's agenda and interests in global economic governance, it is important to map out the issues that are of priority to SA also considering that South Africa frequently posits its engagement in international economic fora as acting in the interest of Africa – as framed within its *African Agenda*. This suggests deference to regional priorities when setting its global economic governance agenda. Thus arriving at its foreign economic strategy would imply lobbying and determining who South Africa aligns with in the African space, the BRICS space and beyond. A project of this nature has to transcend the BRICS, especially bearing in mind the different

perspectives on the BRICS in different government departments. Moreover, SA has to take cognisance of conflicting interests within the BRICS, including their diverse strategic interests in the G20. Other considerations and questions in this process would include: How to frame its interests – as purely South African priorities or framed with deference to African perspectives? How does taking certain positions reflect on South Africa in the continent, do they enhance or reduce its standing? Would they increase South Africa's relevance? Does geopolitics and geo-economics make it a necessity that the regional dimension be considered? Importantly, how does South Africa marry its national commercial interests with the African agenda, which emphasises African priorities?

It is necessary to consider whether specific issues are country-specific, of regional priority or if they dominate the global economic agenda. These could possibly cover areas such as the financial sector, trade, investment, reform of global institutions, and south-south development cooperation. The BRICS alliance does not seem to have yielded any benefits for South Africa in terms of interest articulation in global economic governance beyond the rhetoric of reform and democratisation of global economic governance institutions. BRICS does, nonetheless, serve a purpose by contributing to the reshaping of the global political economy. However, with regard to elevating South Africa's voice in global economic governance and framing an agenda that supports South Africa's growth and development, the benefits are not immediately apparent.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that South Africa needs to explore alternative groupings in global economic governance. These ought to speak to its individual strategic interests. This project seeks to identify such coalitional possibilities for South Africa, through a country case studies approach, looking at other middle powers and how they engage on the global arena as well as the effectiveness of their engagement. A few emerging economies, with similarities to South Africa, have therefore been selected for the study. It is anticipated that the findings of such case studies will feed into an analysis of how best to craft a South African global economic governance engagement process. This requires analysis in the case studies that goes beyond traditional diplomacy, looking at the intersection between diplomacy and the actual processes of engagement with various domestic stakeholders. The engagement process should therefore be considered from three different levels:

- domestic level – exploring interests formation and the institutional set-up;
- regional level – evaluating the process and effectiveness of regional representation as well as the actual impact and
- the global level – analysing coalitions and alliances, exploring the strength and weaknesses of such coalitions as well as the motivations for group formation.

This conference is aimed at exploring these various issues and interests of South Africa and other emerging and middle powers with a view to identify alternative coalitional possibilities for South Africa in mapping its strategy for global economic governance engagement. Speakers from Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa will present and discuss the issues, interests and strategies of individual countries, as well as of informal groupings.

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DRAFT PROGRAMME

DAY 1: Thursday, 4 December 2014

09.30 **Registration**

09.45 **Welcome and Introduction**

Maxi Schoeman (UP) and Elizabeth Sidiropoulos (SAIIA)

10.00 **A South African perspective**

Chair: Sandy Africa, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria

Presenters: **Mzu Qobo** – *Senior lecturer in the Department of Political Sciences and deputy director at the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn), University of Pretoria.*

Memory Dube – *Senior researcher in the Economic Diplomacy Programme, SAIIA.*

Discussion

10.45 **Tea/coffee**

11.00 **Repositioning South Africa in Global Economic Governance: A perspective from Nigeria.**

Chair: Roland Henwood, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria

Presenter: **Cyril Obi** – *Program Director at the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and leads the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) program.*

Discussion

11.45 **FOCAC**

Chair: Garth le Pere, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria

Presenter: **Sanusha Naidu** – A foreign policy analyst currently working as a consultant at Fahamu in Nairobi and a research associate at the University of Pretoria.

Discussion

12.30 **Lunch**

14.00 **An Australian perspective**

Chair: Lesley Wentworth, SAILA

Presenter: **Mark Beeson** – Professor of International Politics at Murdoch University in Perth, Australia.

Discussion

14.45 **Tea/coffee**

15.00 **A Mexican perspective**

Chair: Peter Draper, SAILA

Presenter: **Hernán Gómez Bruera** – Professor and postdoctoral fellow at the Public Policy Division of the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económica (CIDE), in Mexico City.

Discussion

15.45 **Wrap-up**

Presenter: **Alan Alexandroff** – Director of Online Research and the Director of the Global Summitry Project (GSP) as well as a Senior Editor for the Global Summitry Journal at the Munk School of Global Affairs, the University of Toronto.

16.00 **End of day one**

DAY 2: Friday, 5 December 2014

10.00 **A Canadian perspective**

Chair: Sandy Africa, Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria

Presenter: **Andrew Cooper** – Professor at the Balsillie School of International Affairs and the Department of Political Science, the University of Waterloo.

Discussion

10.45 **Tea/coffee**

11.00 A Turkish perspective

Chair: Memory Dube, SAIIA

Presenter: *Mehmet Arda – Adjunct professor at Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey and an active researcher at the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) and Global Relations Forum (GIF).*

Discussion

11.45 How can we improve the role of middle-power countries in shaping the global governance? An Indonesian perspective.

Chair: Memory Dube, SAIIA

Presenter: *Maria Monica Wihardja – Economist at the World Bank Office, Jakarta, Indonesia.*

Discussion

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Panel discussion – What have we learned?

Chair: Alan Alexandroff, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto.

Participants: *Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Fadi Nacerodien (tbc), , Sandy Africa, , Peter Draper and Garth le Pere.*

15.30 Closure

END OF WORKSHOP