



Institute for Security Studies



Situation Report

Date issued: 26 July 2011

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Distribution: General

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The 2011 GIBSA Conference on the United Nations Security Council*

Positions,
Demands,
Shared
Interests

The United
Nations
Security
Council
in 2011

For several years, a number of countries have been aspiring to be included in the group of permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Among these countries are Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil. This Group of Four (G4) presented a proposal for UNSC reform in 2005 that would have assigned them and two African countries (one of them most likely South Africa) permanent seats. The year 2011 opens a special window of opportunity for a new reform approach since Germany, India, Brazil and South Africa (GIBSA), all heavyweights in their respective regions, are all non-permanent members of the UNSC. This year is GIBSA's chance to form a common agenda and to initiate a reform of the Council. Above all, GIBSA need to show that they can contribute to the effectiveness and legitimacy of the UNSC.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the most respected institution in global security governance. It consists of five permanent members, the P5, which are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, it has ten non-permanent members that are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms.

The Security Council's primary responsibility under the UN Charter is to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security. It has a wide range of powers to deal with threats to peace and security. The UN Charter further includes the authority for the UNSC to investigate disputes that may lead to international friction and to call upon the affected parties to settle their dispute by peaceful means (Chapter VI). The UNSC can determine the existence of a threat to peace and may recommend measures to restore peace and security (Chapter VII). In order to stop aggression, the Council can, on the one hand, decide binding economic sanctions or other measures that do not include the use of force. On the other hand, the UNSC is the only institution that can authorize and legitimize the use of force through military action anywhere in the world if it deems this necessary in order to restore peace and security. It has the power to take universally binding decisions – its resolutions are binding for all member states (Chapter VII). Over

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the years, there has been an expansion of the concept of “threats” to international peace. It now includes such issues as humanitarian crises, the proliferations of weapons of mass destruction or international terrorism. More and more issues are brought to the attention of the UNSC, including human rights violations, climate change or HIV/AIDS.

The UNSC is in charge of 17 missions across the globe, with major emphasis currently on Côte d’Ivoire and Sudan – South Sudan having become independent on 9th July and the old UN mission’s term expiring. Moreover, Afghanistan remains focus area: NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will leave in 2014. This creates the need to build up the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) as a replacement. The instability of some states in South Asia and Africa, and the unfolding crises in North Africa and the Middle East could also lead to additional UN peacekeeping missions.

The numerous ongoing conflicts that will have to be dealt with continuously and the necessity for effective and swift reaction to potential new crises make the reform of the UNSC a priority for the international agenda. Reform proposals include the enlargement of the UNSC as well as the addition of new permanent members either with or without veto power. Moreover, improved regional representation is under discussion. Countries aspiring to membership such as GIBSA argue that there is no justification why the P5 still have an exclusive right to permanent seats in the Council while other strong and important members of the global community do not. For example India and Brazil are important regional and global powers. Both countries have an economy close to the size of France or Britain and are still growing. Brazil has been invited as a mediator in African conflicts where Western countries were not welcome, for example in Guinea-Bissau. South Africa has established itself as the primary interlocutor representing Africa in numerous international forums as peacemaker in Africa. Finally, the reform demands also include an improved relationship between the UNSC and the General Assembly (GA) of the UN as well as better working methods: there have been proposals for more transparency of the UNSC towards the GA and a better information policy regarding ongoing missions

There are many valid reasons to call for an enlargement of the UNSC, especially for more permanent seats, but there are also concerns. It is desirable to open the UNSC to more countries, to bring in fresh perspectives and different opinions and capacities. However, there is also the danger of an impasse – creating a structure that will be in permanent gridlock. The UN Charter demands that the Council is “so organized as in order to function continuously” and this in combination with the fact that none of the original P5 countries are prepared to give up their current privileges (permanency and veto power) might just be the crux of the enlargement dispute. More members with potentially ever more differentiated opinions increase the chance of decisions being blocked. In theory, having more members that also bring a broader range of issues such as trade, energy and climate to the table is undoubtedly a positive change. However, such a shift may cause disagreements between the members, may overburden the agenda, and therefore might threaten the functionality and the efficiency of the institution. Beyond that, having more members does not automatically create more legitimacy. Legitimacy is determined by how the membership criteria are defined, who has a veto power and how well different regions are represented. The perceived legitimacy of the decisions (outcomes) and their implementation (effectiveness) are pivotal for the authority of the UNSC.

With the GIBSA countries all in the Council as non-permanent members, the year 2011 could be seen as something of a test-run for permanent membership. It will be a special opportunity for these countries not only to advocate their own interests but also to prove to the Council their positive contribution. Developing a common agenda would give the GIBSA countries more leverage and increase their chances of success.

An enlightening example for possible new group formations within the international order is the vote distribution on the recent Libya resolution: the

abstentions were made by permanent members China and Russia and the non-permanent members Brazil, Germany and India. Everybody else voted in favor of the resolution, including South Africa, which maintained solidarity with the other African members on the Council, Nigeria and Gabon. This shows a common position of at least three GIBSA states, and a rather unusual alignment for Germany, which normally sides with other European states or at least Western countries like the United States. This non-alignment drew consequences during the G8-conference in Deauville, France, on May 26th, when Germany was not invited to a meeting concerning Libya with Canada, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Germany, whilst keeping its traditional position in Europe and the West in general could, however, increasingly emphasize the importance of its bilateral and multilateral relations with the IBSA countries and other emerging, southern powers.

A core topic of GIBSA and an area for cooperation is UNSC reform. GIBSA demands more transparency, more legitimacy and a UNSC that reflects the countries' role in the international system.

Germany

Germany has begun its 2-year term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for the fifth time in January 2011 (counting its membership as the FRG). As an important contributor to UN missions, Germany strives for a permanent seat in the UNSC. In the medium run, it envisions a joint permanent seat for the EU, which would possibly require France and the United Kingdom to give up their current permanent seats in the Council. In the strict military sense, Germany counts as a middle power and would be ill-advised to try and take the lead in a major crisis. Current foreign minister Guido Westerwelle has proclaimed Germany's guiding principle in its UNSC membership as promoting a culture of military restraint. Responsibility to protect is close to the German agenda, but the country prefers peacekeeping over peace enforcement – armed intervention is not a preferred option for Germany, as the recent vote on the Libya intervention shows. More generally, the German approach to conflicts entails development aid and crisis prevention. Germany believes that it is never enough to secure peace without tackling the civil (social, economic or ecological) dimensions of a conflict.

The Federal Government has listed five top priorities for German UNSC membership: (1) peace, security and crisis management; (2) issues with global relevance such as consolidating peace; (3) humanitarian issues; (4) transparency and openness; and (5) UN reforms. Germany will also be directly affected by the expiration, and most likely renewal, of UN missions in Sudan, Darfur and Lebanon, all of which involve German personnel. In a speech on the German program in the UNSC, Foreign Minister Westerwelle identified permanent UNSC membership and protection of children in armed conflicts as top priorities. Accordingly, Germany holds the current chairmanship of the working group 'Children and Armed Conflict'. The German Permanent Mission to the UN was involved in launching the campaign "protect my school" together with the UN's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. In addition, Germany holds the chairmanship of the Al Qaeda/ Taliban Sanctions Committee (1267-COM), which deals with the challenge of international terrorism alongside the Counter-Terrorism-Committee (CTC).

Possible areas of involvement for Germany are conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since these are already part of Germany's foreign policy regional focus; and Germany has acquired some expertise and influence there. And there is North Korea, which Germany takes an active interest in and which will be high on the UNSC (sanctions) agenda. In Afghanistan, Germany has been involved since 2001, it has invested a large amount of resources both in military engagement and economic developments, and it has already been selected a lead country on Afghanistan (with ISAF becoming less and less important until 2014, when the UN-mission UNAMA needs to step in.)

According to the German government, climate change, resource scarcity and global food crisis – though not traditional issues in the Security Council – also rank high on Germany's UNSC agenda, and so will economic and social equality. Notoriously multilateral in its foreign policy orientation, Germany will also promote closer operative partnerships between the UN and the EU, NATO, G8 and G20, all of which Germany is a member of.

The pending reform of the UNSC itself is a very important objective of German foreign policy during the time of its UNSC membership. The German Government is convinced that the UNSC should mirror the global political structures and division of power as they are today, not as they were in 1945. Most importantly, the government believes that those countries that support and help implement the UNSC's goals to the greatest extent should have permanent seats. Germany is the third largest net contributor to the UN budget.

India

India was elected a non-permanent UNSC member in 2010 for the seventh time since the Council was founded. In January 2011, India began its 2-year term. It has a great advantage over other bidders for a permanent UNSC membership: an endorsement from the four permanent members France, Russia the United Kingdom, and the United States. In the recent UNSC vote on the no fly zone in Libya, India abstained from voting, thereby aligning with the other GIBSA countries, with the exception of South Africa.

India's UN agenda includes counterterrorism, development, peacekeeping, and disarmament – for years, the Indian military has been one of the biggest contributors to UN missions. India pursues security cooperation on issues such as terrorism, natural disasters and drug trafficking. It places an emphasis on peaceful, non-military actions in achieving the UNSC obligation of ensuring international peace and security. India often presents itself as opposed to armed intervention. The country's strategy for cooperation includes climate change – an agenda item that it shares with many of the other GIBSA countries. Overall, India places an emphasis on the importance of multilateralism to achieve the UNSC's obligations. A common agenda among the GIBSA countries also exists with regard to non-proliferation and disarmament. India supports Germany and others in their call for a removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from foreign territories. Moreover, India emphasizes the importance of political crisis management. For instance, relations with Afghanistan are a pressing issue on India's agenda. The country's final agenda topic is, again, shared between all GIBSA countries: the need for UNSC reform.

India believes that new developments in the international system call for reforms of the existing international institutions, first and foremost the UNSC. Here, the first agenda item is enhanced transparency. This could be achieved through improved annual reporting by the UNSC and better access of non-UNSC members to the documentation and work of the UNSC. In addition, India demands more consultations with the countries that contribute troops to UN missions. The second agenda item includes the principles of representativeness and democracy. India recognizes that not every country can be represented in the UNSC, but believes that certain regions in Africa and Asia should have a better representation in order to reflect current international realities. India therefore advocates an increase in the numbers of both the permanent and non-permanent members of the UNSC. The non-permanent members would continue to be elected on a two-year basis while the group of permanent members would remain fixed, albeit with an increased membership size. All of this would enhance legitimacy and representativeness of the UNSC in India's eyes. India emphasizes the need for a proper representation of regions in UN processes. Regarding its own permanent UNSC seat India, as the largest democracy in the world with a considerable and increasing economic impact and a tradition of participating in UN peacekeeping operations, feels entitled.

Brazil

Brazil started its 2-year term as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2010. It is Brazil's tenth term since the founding of the UN. The wish to become a permanent member of the UNSC is on top of the country's agenda for its term. The country feels that as the largest country in Latin America, it should be represented as a permanent member in the UNSC in order to increase the Council's legitimacy. Brazil clearly considers itself a soft power with very limited military resources – the country spends less than 1 percent of its budget on defense each year. As such it is interested in bringing issues into the UNSC that are not necessarily considered hard security issues. These issues include climate change, trade and energy issues which of course also have a general impact on risk and security matters. Instability arising from poverty is also one of these issues. In general, Brazil finds the current definition of security matters under discussion in the UNSC much too limited and narrow. Socioeconomic matters for one are much closer to the Brazilian agenda, reflecting the country's own achievements over the last decade. One important point for Brazil is an insistence on rule of law in the WTO, closing the Doha-Round and improving market access. Brazil is outspoken on the fact that it plans to have a proactive agenda on the matter. Further, Brazilian topics include water resources, deforestation, deep-sea oil, and energy in general.

With regard to security issues, the Brazilian Permanent Mission to the United Nations names efforts towards disarmament, the promotion of respect for International Humanitarian Law, the strengthening of peacekeeping operations and an approach that links the preservation of security with the promotion of socioeconomic development as Brazil's main goals; regarding current UNSC operations, the Permanent Mission indicates a focus on establishing peace in the Middle East, on acting in Guinea-Bissau and on stability in Haiti. Brazil already plays a leading role in the UN stabilization mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), where it contributes both military and police personnel.

The country feels strongly that it has a lot to offer to the old UNSC members; first of all a fresh perspective, but most of all a very different relationship with many of the countries considered troubled or in conflict. For example, the presidents of Israel, Iran and the president of the Palestinian Authority were all welcomed in Brazil within the same month in 2009, a demonstration of how well respected Brazil is to hold dialogue with very differently positioned states. Another example is the proposal to ship Iran's uranium abroad for safe enrichment. Although it was met with strong resistance from the West, Brazilian and Turkish foreign ministers Celso Amorim and Ahmet Davutoglu considered the idea calmly. The country's stance is quite influential: when Brazil decided to recognize a Palestinian state in November 2010, several Latin American countries immediately followed suit.

Regarding Security Council reform, Brazil holds the view that both permanent and the non-permanent seats should be added to the Council. The idea of new permanent seats for industrialized countries but rotating seats for developing countries is considered unacceptable. Brazil would also refuse to share a rotating permanent seat with other countries from the Latin American region. The country rejects the idea of a new category of membership within the UNSC but favors the current system of permanent and non-permanent seats. Within this system it believes that there should be a new permanent seat for Brazil and additional non-permanent seats for other Latin American countries. With regard to the critical question of efficiency, Brazil has indicated that it is prepared to accept that new permanent members commit themselves unanimously not to act on their possible veto powers, thereby being granted 'de jure equality' but agreeing to 'de facto differentiation'. This would nonetheless democratize the UNSC in the eyes of the aspiring permanent member. Finally, Brazil believes that more members might actually not function as a blockage, but instead prevent a polarization of members as the new members could assume a bridging role.

South Africa

South Africa joined the UNSC for the second time as a non-permanent member in 2011. It was endorsed by the African Union and received substantial support from the UN General Assembly for its candidacy. As a mid-sized economy, South Africa regards itself representative of the developing world and a voice for Africa. In this capacity, it faces strong competition from Nigeria, which is also currently a UNSC member, also claims to represent Africa, and, like South Africa, aspires to a permanent seat in the UNSC. However, South Africa has an advantageous position because it will likely be backed by India and possibly Brazil in its ambitions for a permanent seat on the basis of the IBSA partnership. In March 2011, South Africa voted in favor of UNSC Resolution 1973 that sanctioned armed intervention in Libya in solidarity with the other African members in the Council. Subsequently contested, the vote has been justified as a commitment to the responsibility to protect (R2P) and the general protection of human rights – principles that can also be found in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. An involvement in African issues also corresponds with South Africa's agenda for its UNSC term.

South Africa's agenda topics for the UNSC can be summarized as peace, development and security – although it adopted a deliberate strategy, during its previous membership, to restrict UNSC engagement in matters not considered to fall within a narrow definition of international security. It remains to be seen if the presidency of Jacob Zuma will continue with this approach in 2011/12. The country is a strong advocate of multilateralism as a means to achieve these goals. It wants to get problems important to Africa regarding peace and security on the international agenda, while also focusing on the global level. For instance, South Africa wants to address conflict and post conflict situations in Africa that dominate the UNSC agenda, thereby emphasizing problems like the need for closer cooperation between the UNSC and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), UN peacekeeping intervention in Somalia, children in armed conflict, and women, peace and security. South Africa is also a strong advocate of non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control, as are the other GIBSA countries. In addition, it wants to increase partnerships between Council and non-Council UN members in order to tackle socio-economic developmental problems. For its Council membership, South Africa further regards enhanced regionalism as an important agenda topic, which will become relevant for future peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts. The country considers regional and subregional organizations to be valuable tools to legitimize foreign engagement. South Africa believes that the regions should become key actors that legitimize UN sanctioned responses and that the UN and regional organizations, such as the African Union, should assume joint responsibility for peacemaking and peacekeeping.

Like the other GIBSA countries, South Africa is convinced that the emergence of multiple centers of power in the international system puts the legitimacy of the international institutions' current composition into question. It is the disproportionate influence of the P5 that disturbs the Security Council's effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy. The growing economic share of the emerging markets should be reflected in established international institutions such as the UNSC. Although the U.S. remains unchallenged in its military power, South Africa believes that the role of soft power – economics, culture and information – is rising. South Africa has many soft power attributes and recognizes the need to make the UNSC more equitable, transparent and democratic. In this regard, South Africa has called for a more consensual approach to external intervention and subscribes to the African position reflected in the 2005 Ezulwini consensus according to which Africans demand two permanent seats with veto powers and five non-permanent positions, instead of the current three. There are signs that both South Africa and Nigeria may be prepared to engage within the African Union to amend some of the provisions contained in Ezulwini given the unlikely agreement on the expansion of the veto powers to new permanent members. Only once there is an agreement on enlargement will the AU engage on the choice of countries and in that process the option of regular elections within Africa for

membership onto the UNSC may become an option. Africa will play an important role in enabling the reform of the UNSC, since 53 of the 192 members are African.

Acting and voting together on shared goals, GIBSA could quickly be considered an important informal partnership within the United Nations Security Council. In the past, none of the states has proven very effective in agenda setting, a task the United States is extremely good at and lately China has learned to use for its purposes. The aim should therefore be to set the agenda, not to take over an existing agenda.

The individual agendas of these four countries are quite extensive, but there is a list of common criteria, goals and interests that they share. All GIBSA countries are democratic, yet they are not aggressive exporters of their own respective model of democracy to others. They all are multilateralists, indulge in public-private partnerships within their states, are in favor of the freedom of seas and generally support free trade. Though they clearly have very different perspectives on the matter, with India being a de-facto nuclear power and the others not, all four GIBSA members support non-proliferation and, more generally, prefer diplomatic over military means and peacekeeping over military peace enforcement. Moreover, the four countries are all involved in the process of more regional integration in their respective regions and have an interest in the further development of emerging markets.

Many of these interests could well be worked into a common agenda. Clearly, there are differences and difficulties to be expected, for example all four countries have very different relationships with the United States, the country which is unquestionably the strongest player in the UNSC. But teamwork and multilateralism might be a good common strategy in order to ensure that the Security Council better reflects the new global power realities.

	Agenda	Agenda for UNSC reform	Common Points
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ humanitarian issues, special focus: protecting children in armed conflict ▪ climate change and security ▪ Afghanistan – dossier ▪ peace building and crisis prevention ▪ method: military restraint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ more permanent seats for those countries helping to implement UNSC goals ▪ a permanent seat for Germany ▪ enhancing transparency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ diplomatic measures preferred to military ones ▪ interested in regional cooperation ▪ non-proliferation
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ broaden the topic range for UNSC: i.e. food crisis, climate, energy, trade, resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ stick to original division of permanent and non-permanent seats but increase them ▪ a permanent seat for Brazil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ generally supportive of free trade and freedom of seas ▪ climate change and security as agenda topic
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ counterterrorism ▪ broaden topic range: climate change, natural disasters, drug trafficking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ enhancement of transparency: improved annual reports and better access to documents for non-UNSC members ▪ increase of both permanent and non-permanent seats ▪ interest in permanent seat (endorsed by US) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ multilateralism ▪ Reform of UNSC welcomed, permanent seat aspired

	Agenda	Agenda for UNSC reform	Common Points
South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ development ▪ African focus ▪ non-proliferation ▪ enhanced regionalism ▪ climate change, women, peace and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ more legitimacy for UNSC via more proportionate representation of today's multiple centers of power ▪ take into account the role of emerging soft powers ▪ Increase of both permanent and non-permanent seats ▪ a permanent seat for South Africa 	

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Background: GIBSA

In 2007, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP) in Berlin together with the Centro de Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (CEBRI) in Rio de Janeiro, the (IPCS) in New Delhi, and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria launched a strategic Quadrilogue: GIBSA. This Quadrilogue aims at facilitating exchanges on perceptions and analyses of international relations as well as regional issues, to encourage the identification of common positions and approaches and to develop options for co-operation based on equal partnership.

The Quadrilogue started in 2007 with a conference in Berlin and was since then held once a year, in each Rio de Janeiro (2008), Johannesburg (2009), New Delhi (2010) and Berlin (2011). The latest meeting took place in Berlin on 18th and 19th of May, 2011. The conference dealt with the UN Security Council, in particular UNSC reform as, for the first time, all four countries are represented in Council in 2011. The conference included a session on the "Relevance and importance of the UN Security Council in the 21st century", and sessions on the agenda-setting strategies and country specific agendas by the GIBSA partners German, India, Brazil and South Africa.