

**ARE THE NEW INTERNATIONAL FORUMS OF THE GLOBAL  
SOUTH ANTI-WESTERN?  
NOTES FROM HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL  
PERSPECTIVES**

***OS NOVOS FÓRUNS INTERNACIONAIS DO SUL GLOBAL SÃO  
ANTI-OCIDENTAIS?  
NOTAS A PARTIR DAS PERSPECTIVAS HISTÓRICA E  
INSTITUCIONAL***

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to verify the claims that the new international forums created by countries from the Global South, the BRICS and the IBSA, are anti-Western. Firstly, it reviews the Eurocentric historical literature aiming to determine what it classifies as “Western”, and uses this to evaluate Global South countries and forums. As these preliminary findings are insufficient to conclude anything, it investigates these countries actions within existing organizations – where different national agendas weaken coordination – and the establishment of new forums – which brings more optimistic perspectives. The conclusion is that although these groups might not be labeled “anti-Western”, their coordinate institutionalized action has the potentiality to bring about new structures to the international system with a non-Western paradigm.

**Keywords:** East-West divide; Global South; New International Forums.

**Resumo:** Este trabalho tem como objetivo verificar as alegações de que os novos fóruns internacionais criados por países do Sul Global, o BRICS e o IBSA, são antiocidentais. Primeiramente, faz uma revisão da literatura histórica eurocêntrica com o intuito de determinar o que esta define como “ocidental”, e a partir disto avalia os países e fóruns do Sul Global. Como estes resultados preliminares não permitem uma conclusão, investiga-se a ação destes países nas organizações internacionais existentes – onde distintas agendas nacionais dificultam a coordenação – e a criação de novos fóruns – que apresenta resultados mais otimistas. A conclusão é que apesar destes grupos não poderem ser classificados como “antiocidentais”, sua ação coordenada e institucionalizada tem potencial para criar novas estruturas no sistema internacional de acordo com um paradigma não ocidental.

**Palavras-chave:** Divisão Leste-Oeste; Sul Global; Novos fóruns internacionais.

*Introduction*

The present paper aims to discuss whether the new international forums composed by countries from the “Global South” are anti-Western. In order to try to answer this question, it shall take into consideration two of the most famous and recently created groupings, i.e., the BRICS – which now brings together Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – and IBSA – composed by the same members, but

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Russia and China. This analytical choice has been made because these are possibly two of the most famous and discussed new international groupings which bring together only developing countries from the South. Meanwhile, both also have some particularities, whose closer examination can provide us good insights about their nature and purposes in relation to the current international order.

It begins with an overview of the emergence of new countries into the spotlight of the international arena, trying to highlight the historical moment when this phenomenon has taken place and its main characteristics. Next, it proceeds to a historical analysis of what has been called “the rise of the West”. In this second part, the objective is to present what specifically characterizes the West, and therefore what does it mean to be Western. To do so, we present a brief review of the historical literature which covers the moment of the rise of Europe written by some historians considered to be Eurocentric, trying to capture which characteristics they see as particular from this moment. These observations shall be used as benchmarks for the comparison with the countries which are currently being appointed as the recent risers. Finally, it proceeds to an institutional analysis about what have been the main innovations developed by these new groupings.

### *The Phenomenon of the Emergence of the Global South*

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century presented many challenges to the established powers, especially the United States and Europe. Early in the century, in 2001, the United States have suffered the September 11 terrorist attacks in its own soil. The American reaction was to begin wars first in Afghanistan and later in Iraq which, by their turn, brought additional difficulties for the country, including an extremely high cost of several billion dollars, of American lives which have been lost in combat and of growing public dissatisfaction, both at home and abroad. Also, in the last years of the first decade of the century, the United States, and soon after its European partners, have found themselves among the most severe financial crisis since the Wall Street crash in 1929.

It is precisely in this turbulent scenario to the rich, industrialized nations of the North that the phenomenon of the rise of emergent countries takes place. While traditional centers of power and influence were facing tremendous difficulties, new countries of the so called “Global South” have attracted international attention. According to Benachenhou (2013, p. 199), the typical profile of an emerging country:

Is the one of a country which has achieved the diversification of its economy, developing mainly products which have greatest demand in the world market; which frequently enjoys an efficient financial intermediation with an efficient banking industry and a dynamic capital market; which has a strong agricultural basis [...]; which has an opening policy – often selective, but evolutionary – which allows it to place itself in a regional and/or global labor division and which boosts growth with its technologies, its markets and its capitals, assuring a notable foreign investment flow and growing international destinations to its exports.<sup>1</sup>

Although Benachenhou's description is not sufficient, it focuses on the crucial issue of the emergence of these countries, the economic power. Take as an example the four initial countries of the then-called BRIC – Brazil, Russia, India and China. Even though each one has its own national peculiarities, all of them have achieved great economic success in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to their integration within global economy. While China has established itself as a fundamental production center of manufactured goods to international trade, India has managed to insert itself in the services sector, especially in what relates to information technology. Both Brazil and Russia have benefitted from the high prices of their exporting commodities in the international market (ZAKARIA, 2012; BREMMER, 2012; KUPCHAN, 2012)

Nevertheless, although the economy is a crucial element in the rise of the emerging countries, it does not explain this phenomenon in its entirety. According to Zakaria (2012, p. 04), “the rise of the rest is at heart an economic phenomenon, but it has consequences for nearly every other sphere of life”. In part as a consequence of their economic success, emerging countries achieved greater self confidence, which has been translated into an assertive, creative and pragmatic diplomatic posture (BISLEY, 2013, p. 14). Many situations exemplify this transformation, as in the year of 2008, when Brazil and India aligned themselves to block Doha Round negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Russia invaded Georgia simultaneously to the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing (BISLEY, 2013, p. 14).

Observing this combination of increasing economic power with proactive political-diplomatic action, some analysts declared that we are witnessing “the crisis of global power”, which is a “consequence of the dynamic center of gravity from the West to the East” combined with poor performance of the United States, at home and abroad, and a global “political awakening” (BRZEZINSKI, 2012, p. 05).

This process might be perceived in two different, although interrelated, domains. The first one is the contestatory role played by emergent countries within already existent international organizations. More confident, these countries claim those

institutions were designed according to an old world order, from the post-World War II, which is not representative of the current international distribution of power. In this sense, for example, emerging countries have criticized the weighted votes at the IMF, claiming greater responsibility for themselves. The strongest critique to the existing international institutions, however, refers to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) structure, in which only five countries hold veto power. Paul Kennedy (2010, p. 247) highlights the challenge imposed to the Council by the rise of emerging countries:

The power-political implications of the rise of, say, India and Brazil to greater economic and strategic influence inevitably challenge the stranglehold that the five permanent veto-owning members have had in the Security Council over the past sixty years. It was an axiom of the UN's founding fathers that Great Powers had somehow to receive special (if negative) rights in order to prevent them from leaving or blocking the international system, as happened in the 1920s and 1930s. It would be hard to deny that argument to India if its GDP sails past that of Britain and France over the next decade or so.

The second domain is the establishment of new international forums composed by countries from the Global South. About this process, Andrew Hurrell (2010, p. 62) observes that recently “there has been an increasing emphasis on different sorts of informal groupings, clubs, concerts and coalitions” which are forming “a complex mosaic of various groupings that are emerging in a process of ‘global à la cartism’ or ‘messy multilateralism’ [...] in response to shifts in global power”.

In 2001, for instance, investment bank Goldman Sachs published a study authored by its Head of Global Economic Research, Jim O'Neill, which has since had a significant impact on world politics. O'Neill presented scenarios of economic evolution according to which the BRICs – Brazil, Russia, India and, especially, China – would soon overcome the traditional G-7 economies (O'NEILL, 2001). Although the main purpose of this report was to orient global investors about promising markets for them, the countries analyzed have been inspired and started to establish some diplomatic links.

The first steps have been meetings among representatives of these four countries alongside the annual opening session of the United Nations General Assembly, until they decided to institutionalize the group. Together with institutionalization was created an Annual Summit, with the presence of the chiefs of state themselves, and many sectorial coordination mechanisms addressing the most different agendas. The latter accession of South Africa into the grouping – which changed its acronym to BRICS –

shows how the original investment strategy has become a comprehensive and institutionalized mechanism of political diplomatic coordination.

Although the BRICS is the most publicly discussed new international forum, emerging countries have also established others in recent years. In 2003, for example, Brazil, India and South Africa created the IBSA-Dialogue Forum, which itself claims to be the gathering of three multiethnic emerging democracies with the purpose of establishing global coordination aiming the reform of the international institutions architecture (IBSA, 2006). This was the culmination of a process of mutual cooperation and engagement which included the three countries fight against pharmaceutical industries in relation to the HIV/AIDS medicaments – in 1997 Brazil approved a patent law allowing its government to break the commercial monopoly of the drugs patent while South Africa passed an Act permitting itself to import these medicaments from India at a lower cost – and opposition to the Iraq war (PRASHAD, 2012, p. 180-185).

Taken together, all these facts represent an important challenge to today's international order. Emerging powers seem to be taking on the global stage, but exactly how it will happen – and whether it will at all – is still extremely uncertain. Nevertheless, this very possibility that new actors, different from the current Western ones, may join and shape international order bring up fears that this order will be anti-Western. According to Patrick (2010, p. 44), “emerging powers [...] often oppose the political and economic ground rules of the inherited Western liberal order, seek to transform existing multilateral agreements, and shy away from assuming significant global responsibilities”. He presents many of the fears expressed by Western policymakers: “what if the new global order leads to an era of multipolarity without multilateralism?”; “the emerging non-Western powers do not share the United States’ view on global governance”; “the emerging nations are intent on altering existing rules, not adopting them hook, line and sinker”; “all of today’s emerging players seek to have greater weight in global governance, but they do not necessarily seek more global governance”; “these rising players have a penchant for playing to the gallery and voting against US preferences” – among many others (PATRICK, 2010).

These claims ought to be evaluated. If by one side, i.e. geographically, the emerging powers are certainly not from the West (with some exceptions, as is the case of Brazil), this is not sufficient to claim the next world order will be anti-Western. To examine this issue more carefully, it is important to proceed to a historical analysis of how the West has risen and became constituted, looking for what are the most important characteristics of being Western.

*What is the West? What is it to be Western?*

There is a large historical literature about what has become known as “the rise of the West” which tries to explain what have been the reasons why Europe and the Western world have become more powerful than others and thus hegemonic. In this paper, we shall analyze only a few authors’ works, considered Eurocentric, trying to show what they conclude that many others have also defended. Usually, the elements presented include democracy, capitalism, rationality, and culture and values, often in an interlinked manner.

First of all, however, it seems important to perceive when the phenomenon of the rise of the West has occurred, according to these historians. For Eric Jones, this process can be traced back to between A.D. 1400-1800, “when Europe underwent those political, technological and geographical upheavals which were to make it the birthplace of the industrial world” (JONES, 1987, p. 225).

Another important author, Michael Mann, traces two different phases, according to his theoretical formulations, to conclude that it was a process which lasted from 1000 to 1800. For him, there was a first moment, when Europe was characterized by intensive power, that is, “the ability to organize tightly and command a high level of mobilization from the participants, whether the area and numbers covered are great or small” (MANN, 1986, p. 07). This division is important, for it allows Mann to counter argue those who claim that in this period Europe was inferior to Asia. To him, however, this is only true if we consider extensive power, i.e., “the ability to organize large numbers of people over far-flung territories in order to engage in minimally stable cooperation” (MANN, 1986, p. 07). Considering intensive power, he further claims, Europe was already ahead of Asia, for it incorporated some inventions – notably the water wheel, the diffusion of the heavy plow, of the three-field system and of horseshoes – which led it to dispose of a “whole new agricultural system” through decentralized regional control (MANN, 1988, p. 07-09). Mann even defends it is difficult to precisely date these innovations but, even though their use has intensified after A.D. 1000, its development dates back to earlier moments (MANN, 1988, p. 07-09). Finally, for him the year of 1450 marks a decisive turn, in which Europe surpasses Asia by using extensive power techniques – by then, especially through the scientific revolution and the naval expansion –, in a process which would reach its apex in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Industrial Revolution (MANN, 1988, p. 07-09).

Thirdly, David Landes has a similar narrative: he describes how Europe was in a terrible situation around the year 1000, stressing it was invaded and ransacked by many different peoples, but “once the Europeans found themselves reasonably secure from outside aggression (eleventh century on), they were able, as never before and as nowhere else, to pursue their own advantage” (LANDES, 1999, p. 40). This has led to the “long multicentennial maturation (1000-1500)” which rested on an “economic revolution”, and a “long period of population increase and economic growth”, only once briefly interrupted by the plague (LANDES, 1999, p. 40).

From these three authors, we may see that there is a certain convergence that the rise of the West was a long process, which lasted roughly from the late Middle Ages to the Industrial Revolution. In these centuries, some aspects have been pointed as fundamental ones, and certainly one of them is *democracy*, related with the political situation of Europe during the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

For Mann (1986, p. 376), for example, around A.D. 1000, Europe was a “multiple acephalous federation”, i.e., it was not governed by an individual person or institution. Actually, no center or single political agenda had full control of the continent. Instead, it was composed of small and interlinked interaction networks, which had their autonomy guaranteed by law or habit, which allowed a situation of equilibrium. At that moment of the end of feudalism, small and politically weak states, which had growing, but far from hegemonic, domestic powers, composed a “diplomatically regulated multistate civilization” (MANN, 1986, p. 507).

David Landes presents a similar rationale. For him, “in those middle years between ancient and modern, fragmentation was the strongest brake on willful, oppressive behavior. Political rivalry and the right of exit made all the difference” for Europe (LANDES, 1999, p. 38). He goes even further, claiming this Western feature dates back to the battles between the Greeks – representing the West, free cities/polis and popular sovereignty – and the Persians – representing the East, aristocratic empires and oriental despotism, and concluding that “Europe had always thought of itself as different from the societies to the East” (LANDES, 1999, p. 30).

As Landes explicitly points out, often, when stressing the virtues of Western democratic and freedom values, authors resort to a comparison with Eastern regimes. In order to do this, they compare Europe with what has been called “oriental despotism”. This term has a long history within Western thinking, whose notion is present in seminal works by Aristotle, Montesquieu and Hegel, just to name a few (MINUTI, 2012). Roughly, it states that the environmental conditions of Eastern societies led to

the development of hydraulic systems of irrigations, which demanded great state coordination. This necessity has led to a concentration of power on the hands of a single ruler, which acted in despotic ways. Max Weber, in 1898, wrote that:

The crucial factor which made Near Eastern development so different was the need for irrigation systems, as a result of which the cities were closely connected with building canals and constant regulation of waters and rivers, all of which demanded the existence of a unified bureaucracy (WEBER, 1976, p. 157).

The notion of oriental despotism has since been a fundamental reference for those who tried to study the rise of the West. While in the East whole societies were dominated by despotic rulers, free cities was the order of the day in the Occident, in a situation reinforced by the political fragmentation in which the power was split among multiple spheres, individuals and institutions. This has empowered citizens in face of the state, and later allowed democracy to flourish. But the notion of oriental despotism is not only used to justify European democracy in contrast to Oriental authoritarian regimes, but it is also part of the explanation of the development of capitalism in Europe. According to Landes (1999, p. 31), for example,

Linked to the opposition between Greek democracy and oriental despotism was that between private property and ruler-owns all. [...] In these circumstances, the very notion of economic development was a Western invention. Aristocratic (despotic) empires were characteristically squeeze operations: when the elites wanted more, they did not think in gains of productivity.

Also, Michael Mann labels Europe in the 12<sup>th</sup> century a “competitive civilization”, in which fragmentation of power allowed for trade to flourish (MANN, 1986, p. 504). He also highlights the importance of private property, since to perform in a competitive environment, autonomous actors must have the freedom to act without a third party’s constraint. Indeed, he presents the etymology of the word “private” as “hidden” or, specifically in this case, “hidden from the power of the state” (MANN, 1988, p. 11).

Private property rights of autonomous actors led to the growth of commerce and the economy, and created conditions to the rise of the bourgeoisie and capitalism, the latter an element frequently pointed out as characteristic of the rise of the West. However, another element was involved in the development of capitalism: inventions. As we have seen earlier, for example, Mann cites many inventions in order to explain



the development of a new and revolutionary agricultural system, which had an important economic impact. For his part, Eric Jones defends that “European society always contained a number of individuals whose creative talents were directed to improving the means of production. [...] It was their hobby or obsession. This was a deep seated cultural phenomenon” (JONES, 1987, p. 228). It is thus presented as an innate characteristic of Europeans to be creative, something which distinguished them from other peoples. But Jones also offers a comparison with Eastern societies, arguing that “despite great creative surges in times when Europe had still been primitive, despotic Asian institutions suppressed creativity or diverted it into producing voluptuous luxuries” (JONES, 1987, p. 231).

In the same way, the “invention of invention” marked positively the European development, according to David Landes. Europeans, who differentiated themselves from other peoples for their “*joie de trouver*”, have routinized discoveries (LANDES, 1999, p. 58, 204). This has given them a technological superiority, which culminated with the Industrial Revolution.

According to this interpretation, Westerners were constantly trying to come up with new ideas and produce new inventions, what has been called as a typical European “rational restlessness”, which according to Mann (1986, p. 398) “was the psychological makeup of Europe”. Restlessness had already been pointed out as a singular European characteristic: their incapacity of settling down was unique, and could not be found at any other civilization (MANN, 1986, p. 12). But also, this restlessness was rational, and here lies another fundamental contribution from Weber’s studies. According to this view, Christianity encouraged moral and social improvement against the secular authority, which, although being used sometimes to undercover repression, allowed the emergence of strong streams of social unrest (MANN, 1986, p. 13). Christian nonconformity and dissatisfaction bias is contrasted to Eastern religions which generally accepted the social order, either rationally (Confucianism), irrationally (Taoism) or mystically (Hinduism) (MANN, 1986, p. 13).

#### *Some conclusions from the comparison with the historical literature*

So far, we have briefly seen some of the elements most utilized by historical literature to explain the rise of the West and thus characterize what it is to be Western. We shall now use these as a benchmark for the evaluation of the BRICS and the IBSA, to try to answer our self imposed question of whether these are anti-Western. Very

probably, the two most controversial elements from this list are capitalism and democracy.

Beginning with capitalism, there is a clear challenge presented by China, which remains notionally a communist country. Even though since Deng Xiaoping's reforms the country has adopted capitalist structures, especially through the creation of the special economic zones (RODRIK 2011, p. 152-3), many fear that it represents a threat to capitalism. Nevertheless, an interesting explanation comes from the "varieties of capitalism" literature, which emphasizes "institutional and organizational diversity of contemporary economic forms" (BEESON, 2013, p. 278). This branch of studies highlights how national differences in economic institutional arrangements are a reflex of each country's own history and development path (BEESON, 2013, p. 279). This perspective is of special interest for our present enquiry.

Western fears about East Asia are not a new phenomenon, as we have seen in relation to the idea of oriental despotism. Moreover, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans felt their preeminence and civilization was threatened by the "yellow peril to the Occident"; nowadays, East Asia is a threat for its economic models "that, by not accepting the existing rules of the game, either disadvantage the West, or threaten the dominance of the liberal economic order; or more often, both" (BRESLIN, 2011, p. 111).

Last decades' extraordinary economic growth of China has brought its peculiar economic model to international attention. Joshua Cooper Ramo labeled it the "Beijing Consensus" and affirms that:

It replaces the widely-discredited Washington Consensus, an economic theory made famous in the 1990's for its prescriptive, Washington-knows-best approach to telling other nations how to run themselves. [...] It does not believe in uniform solutions for every situation. It is defined by a ruthless willingness to innovate and experiment, by a lively defense of national borders and interests, and by the increasingly thoughtful accumulation of tools of asymmetric power projection. It is pragmatic and ideological at the same time (RAMO, 2004, p. 04).

The Chinese model of capitalism has differentiated itself from the American one mainly for giving a much larger role for the state to intervene in the economy, and have thus been called "state capitalism". However, although it does not follow the neoliberal principles advocated by the Washington Consensus, it has managed to achieve impressive results, diminishing domestic poverty (even though it still remains extremely high) and growing extraordinarily its industrial basis, exports and GDP.

Alongside this sort of state-centric capitalism lays another model, also criticized by Western authors, which is known as “crony capitalism”. This label is given to countries in which there is a close relation between business and political interests, and where business tycoons increase their fortunes through rent-seeking practices (THE ECONOMIST, 2014). The Economist magazine has elaborated a crony-capitalism index. In its 2014 edition, this ranking was led by Hong Kong, followed by Russia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> place. India was in the 9<sup>th</sup> position, and South Africa and Brazil, in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> respectively. Finally, China appeared at the 19<sup>th</sup> position (THE ECONOMIST, 2014). Although we can see that all the BRICS countries are among the 20-most-crony-capitalist states, this is something usually pointed out when one is discussing Russia, where a few people have bought huge state-enterprises at the moment of the dissolution of the USSR and since then have obtained huge financial gains. Russia, however, does not have the same state economic control as China does. Nevertheless, Dani Rodrik affirms that:

China was able to elicit inordinate amounts of private investment under a system of state ownership (township and village enterprises), something that Russia failed to do under Western-style private ownership. Presumably this was because investors felt more secure when they were allied with local governments with residual claims on the stream of profits than when they had to entrust their assets to private contracts that would have to be enforced by incompetent and corrupt courts. Whatever the underlying reason, China’s experience demonstrates how common goals (protection of property rights) can sometimes be achieved under divergent rules (RODRIK, 2006, p. 11-12).

According to Rodrik’s view, the Chinese model, which is more distinct from the American than the Russian one is, has been capable of achieving economic success, even in protecting property rights. It seems, therefore, that the varieties of capitalism existing in the BRICS countries are not exactly anti-Western by judging from the historical perspective. What it presents is a different institutional organization as a result of each country’s own historical process. In other words, it is not anti-capitalist, but actually it is not liberal, especially divergent from the current neoliberal model. However, in 2011, when Europe was facing a tough financial situation, the then-Chinese premier, Wen Jiabao, imposed some conditions to a possible aid from China, among which it was recognizing his country as a market economy (ANDERLINE, ZHANG, 2011). It seems, therefore, that the main difference is not about being capitalist, but about rejecting the neoliberal guidelines. According to Beeson (2013, p.

286-287), “China could also provide an alternative, non-neoliberal vision of how the world could be organized”. However, he also points out that “the Beijing consensus is about maintaining political control and authority whilst simultaneously allowing a pragmatic, but still limited, expansion of the role of the private sector”, since the capitalist class has failed to “push for political liberalization” (BEESON, 2013, p. 286-287).

This brings us to the democracy issue, another challenging one in the process of the emergence of countries from the Global South. First of all, if we use for our analysis the Polity IV index, referring to the year of 2012, China is considered an autocracy, Russia, an open anocracy, and Brazil, India and South Africa, democracies (POLITY IV, 2012). Here, once again, China poses an apparent challenge to Western order, since we have seen through our literature review that historians present democracy as one of the most important elements to the constituency of the West. The fact that the second largest economy, which is gaining greater political influence in consequence of it, is an autocracy is extremely troubling to those who defend liberal democracy. Also, there is the Russian situation, where elections are regularly held since the end of the USSR, but are constantly charged of not being free but, instead, manipulated by the current political rulers (BARRY, SCHWIRTZ, 2012).

Still in this discussion, but from another point of view, Zaki Laïdi argues that “the BRICS – even the democratic ones – fundamentally diverge from the liberal vision of Western countries” (LAÏDI, 2011, p.02). Furthermore, for him, the BRICS “share a common fundamental political objective: to erode Western hegemonic claims by protecting the principle which these claims are deemed to most threaten, namely the political sovereignty of states” (LAÏDI, 2011, p.01). His conclusion is that the BRICS identify themselves as a group because they “share a sovereigntist approach to avoid sharing sovereignty” (LAÏDI, 2011 p. 12). This claim, however, seems to go on the opposite direction of what has been concluded from the literature review. Historians defend that the political fragmentation of Middle Ages Europe developed a competitive civilization and that if a ruler had had total control, as happened in Asia, this might not have been the case. What Laïdi claims, on the other hand, is that the BRICS wish to defend their sovereignty against the hegemonic Western, and that this would therefore be anti-Western – something opposite from the review of the historic literature.

Another element of the Eurocentric historical discourse about the rise of the West is “inventiveness”. In this section, it is useful to look at the current intellectual property patents records. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has released its

latest report in 2013, with data collected in 2012. In this report, we can see that the country that “has accounted for the largest numbers of applications filed throughout the world for the four types of IP (patents, utility models, trademarks and industrial designs)” was China, accounting for 27.8% of all global patent filings (WIPO, 2013, p. 5-6). If we sum all the patent applications by office of origin, we shall see that the BRICS countries have filled 778.503 cases in 2012, while the G-7 represented 1.031.370. At a first view, this could be interpreted in the same way as David Landes did, supposedly proving a greater Western inventiveness. However, if we take Japan out of the G-7 sum, for it is an Asian country, whose development was supposedly affected by oriental despotism, the six Western countries selected would represent only 688.574 patents in 2012 – less than the only five BRICS countries.

Finally, there is the discussion about rationality and culture. On the one hand, no serious analyst could, nowadays, defend that the BRICS countries and their citizens are irrational, or less rational than their Western counterparts. On the other hand, there is indeed a lack of cultural homogeneity among these countries. While Christianity is pointed out as a fundamental connecting element during the rise of the West, we see a different perspective at the “rise of the rest” – Catholicism, Christian Orthodoxy, Hinduism, African Religions and even Atheism or Confucianism both group together large parcels of these countries populations.

After having seen an overview of the emergence of countries from the Global South, a brief literature review of Eurocentric historians explaining the “rise of the West” and comparing it to the BRICS and IBSA countries nowadays, we can now try to answer our self imposed research question, assuming that to be anti-Western these countries should have policies and institutions in opposition to the Western ones.

Beginning with capitalism, we have seen that the greatest difference relates to neoliberal policies from the Washington Consensus. Nevertheless, some left-wing analysts, like the Marxist Vijay Prashad, do not even agree with this. For him, “the BRICS group has not endorsed an *ideological* alternative to neoliberalism. What it has advanced is a set of proposals that are gentler than Northern neoliberalism, with a modest challenge to US hegemony” (PRASHAD, 2012, p. 223). Also, one should wonder: how can a grouping, originally designed by one of the biggest investment banks in the world as an attractive source for financial investments, be anti-capitalist?

Secondly, there is democracy. On the one hand, it is true that China is an autocracy, and Russia’s democratic legitimacy is often contested. On the other hand,

one of the main goals of the BRICS and the IBSA is to reform the global governance architecture, specially making it more democratic.

Third, certainly it is not possible to say these are anti-Western groupings in what refers to inventiveness. Not only these countries value scientific discoveries and progress, as they are having a large contribution in the filling of new patents. And, finally, the cultural/rational element is also not valid here, for it would not be acceptable either to say that these are irrational countries or that because they not all of them are Christian they are anti-Western.

To sum up, results here obtained are insufficient to conclude the BRICS and the IBSA are anti-Western. Their different forms of capitalism, or even democracy, which could be the arguments more favorable to this thesis, are not in opposition to the Western model. The other elements observed are even less convincing of such opposition. However, we have only examined this question through historical perspective. It seems useful to advance this research agenda through an institutional observation, since West hegemony is considered to be consolidated at the international order established after the Second World War. Thus, analyzing the institutional innovations of the BRICS and the IBAS would probably present a more accurate way to conclude if these represent an anti-Western challenge or not.

### *Emerging powers actions within existent international organizations*

According to Kupchan (2012, p. 65), the current world order, shaped after the end of World War II, represents the apex of the expansion of the West. For him, a first phase of this process began in 1648 with the Westphalia Treaty and lasted until the founding of the Concert of Europe, in 1815; it was a moment when typically European practices and institutions were developed and exported to the New World. From this followed the *Pax Britannica*, from 1815 to 1914, when the West (Europe) dominated the world through Imperialism. Finally, since 1914, but mainly since circa 1945, “the United States took over from Europe the management of the Western order, adapting it in ways that suited its interests and values” (KUPCHAN, 2012, p. 65): it is the *Pax Americana*, which shaped the current existing international organizations.

Today’s emerging countries realize everyday how Western-shaped institutions end up avoiding a broader, deeper and more influential participation of them. Kishore Mahbubani, who was the permanent-representative of Singapore to the UN headquarters in New York for a long time, defends that “institutions of global governance are weak

today by design, rather than by default” (MAHBUBANI, 2013, p. 223). He points that “the West has adopted an intelligent long-term strategy. If it can control an international institution, it allows that institution to become strong [...]. If it cannot control an international institution, it deliberately debilitates that institution” (MAHBUBANI, 2013, p. 224).

Mahbubani’s mistrust towards the existing international organizations is somehow spread around emerging countries foreign policy narratives. It is a common discourse, which points out how these forums are biased towards Western interests, and is especially invoked referring to the privileges the permanent members of the UN Security Council dispose. Hampson and Heinbecker conclude that

[...] many developing countries have long felt disempowered by international institutions and feel that they have not received commensurate benefits from their participation in post-World War, global multilateral economic, financial and trading arrangements (2011, p. 301).

However, a closer look at the behavior of the emerging countries within these organizations reveals that although their discourse is somehow unified, they still lack unity in action. Rios and Veiga (2013) studied how the five BRICS countries have behaved recently within global economic forums. Their conclusion is that “the feasibility of the BRICS as a negotiating coalition in the studied economic forums is questionable” (RIOS; VEIGA, 2013, p. 20). The authors point out how these countries are ultimately led by individualistic national interests in the ongoing negotiations, which usually brings them to conflicting positions. The least conflictive national agendas are those of Brazil and South Africa, both “agricultural and mineral commodities exporters” (RIOS; VEIGA, 2013, p. 05). Meanwhile, India and China, whose relation is historically conflictive, have also diverged recently: their different national exporting agendas (mostly agricultural and industrial, respectively) make them constantly disagree (RIOS; VEIGA, 2013, p. 06). One theme which has full convergence of national interests is the reform of international financial institutions. Even there, however, the agreement might last only until these reforms are achieved (RIOS; VEIGA, 2013, p. 07).

On the multilateral trade system, for example, the main relation between BRICS countries agendas is one of disagreement. Roughly, Brazil and South Africa have a pro-liberalization posture in relation to agricultural goods, while China and India share a more defensive approach, trying to protect their fragile agricultural sectors (RIOS;

VEIGA, 2013, p. 11-12). On the other hand, when discussing non-agricultural market access (NAMA) Brazil is the most defensive of all of the five, while China discretely aims to boost its manufactured goods exports (RIOS, VEIGA, 2013, p. 11-12). These individual differences create many disagreements between countries that were all supposedly united against the Western dominance of international institutions.

### *Creating new international forums*

Although there may be some challenges to the coordinate action among the emerging countries within existing international forums, their capacity of affecting the multilateral system is increased by their possibility of establishing new groupings. According to Hampson and Heinbecker (2011, p. 307):

New informal partnerships [...] and international institutional innovations seem likely to emerge among countries that are not themselves 'great powers' by the traditional definition, but that nonetheless have both compelling strategic interests in a peaceful, prosperous world and the diplomatic and, sometimes, military capacity and political disposition to make a significant difference. Global governance and regional arrangements seem unlikely to be left exclusively to the permanent members of the Security Council.

Globalization has catalyzed the power shift taking place in the international system, but it was not the only factor that caused it. The United States, after the end of the Cold War, deliberately pursued a policy of "hub and spoke", selecting countries from around the world which pleased them and keeping relations with them in the condition of "regional leaders" (ALDEN; VIEIRA, 2005, p. 1082). This deliberate activist policy ended up legitimating some countries as regional powers within their geographic domains – especially India, Brazil and South Africa. There is a large literature which labels these countries as middle powers, but one of a new type.

Traditional middle powers (as Canada and the Netherlands, for example) are known to be strong supporters of multilateralism either because of a lack of strong material capabilities (materialist approach) or because they see themselves as coalition facilitator, catalysts to global issues or norms and rules enforcers (conduct approach) (ALDEN; VIEIRA, 2005, p. 1078). They often defend least developed or developing countries within the multilateral organizations, while keeping a "tacit acceptance of structural inequalities in the international system", since "procedural rules which guide international institutions are designed in such a way as to delineate difference"



(ALDEN; VIEIRA, 2005, p. 1078). Precisely here is where the new emerging powers differentiate themselves from these established middle powers.

Brazil, India, South Africa and China, for example, do not only wish to humanize the policies or international norms; their opposition is overall aimed at the structural inequality, often created intentionally at the design of the institutions. This wish to structurally reform global governance institutions results not only in opposition from large powers, but also from the established middle powers – who, despite advocating for more human outcomes, benefit themselves from the unequal structure of these international forums (ALDEN; VIEIRA, 2005).

Having grown exponentially in recent years, enjoying tacit legitimization from the American foreign policy as regional leaders and in face of the challenges imposed to act within existing international institutions, emerging countries have recently resorted to the creation of new forums. This was the background in which appeared the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA). The original document of the group was the “Brasilia Declaration”, publicly released in the beginning of June 2003, when the foreign ministers from the three countries met in Brasilia in sequence to a meeting of the Heads of States at the G-8 Summit in Evian, earlier that month. Later, in September 2003, the group was formally introduced to the international community at the opening of the General Assembly of the UN.

The Brasilia Declaration presents the group’s understanding of the world order and their aims. They present themselves as “three countries with vibrant democracies, from three regions of the developing world, active on a global scale, with the aim of examining themes on the international agenda and those of mutual interest” (IBSA, 2003). It is noteworthy that they propose, for multiple times, social policies and defend humanitarian aspects of international cooperation. The group reminds of global inequalities, recalling that they are aggravated by the deepening of globalization, and the need to fight these. The three IBSA-governments propose to put priority

on the promotion of social equity and inclusion, by implementing effective policies to fight hunger and poverty, to support family run farms, and to promote food security, health, social assistance, employment, education, human rights and environmental protection (IBSA, 2003).

This normative and social impetus has driven the consolidation of their trilateral cooperation. A Trilateral Joint Commission was established, composed of the three countries Foreign Ministers and their staff, to guide the group. This decision of

allocating IBSA command within the Foreign Ministries was important, since it “sought to rapidly institutionalize a process that might otherwise fall victim to the vagaries of political fortunes or individual interest” (ALDEN; VIEIRA, 2005, p. 1089). It was also established an annual meeting of the Heads of States.

According to these social and political priorities established since the group’s origin, more than fifteen sectorial working groups were created. These are forums for experience exchange and mutual learning of best practices and policies (WHITE, 2010, p. 04), covering themes as diverse as agriculture, public administration and defense, for example. Having closely studied ten specific IBSA-working groups (WGs) from 2003 to 2012, Souleh-Kohndou (2013, p. 22) concluded that:

Despite growing interactions, some evidence of trade intensification and concrete results coming out of the different WGs, variations exist in implementation and effectiveness varies among the WGs. While some of the WGs such as the WG on tax and revenue administration and the WG on public administration have delivered concrete outcomes, others, including the WG on tourism and the WG on environment, meet less frequently and deliver less concrete outcomes. This variation arises because, as noted above, WGs are relatively autonomous and do not have binding agreements on their outputs. The reasons for lack of productivity of some of the WGs are diverse and range from scheduling issues, to geographical distance and language barriers.

The outcomes of these working groups are thus mixed, and it would be hard to draw a unified conclusion about the emerging countries impact on global governance through them. We should therefore look closer to another initiative of the IBSA grouping, i.e., the IBSA Fund.

Formally called “The India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation”, the IBSA Fund was established in 2004 and became operational in 2006. According to its 2014 Portfolio:

The IBSA Fund supports projects on a demand-driven basis through partnerships with local governments, national institutions and implementing partners. Initiatives are concrete expressions of solidarity and objectives range from promoting food security, to addressing HIV/AIDS, to extending access to safe drinking water – all with the aim of contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Important concerns of IBSA partners in the design and implementation of the Fund’s projects include capacity building among project beneficiaries, built-in project sustainability, and knowledge-sharing among Southern experts and institutions (IBSA, 2014, p. 02)

Every year, each one of the three countries contribute with one million dollars to the Fund, which is directed by their Governments and managed by the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (SU-SSC) hosted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). So far, the IBSA Fund has accumulated 27 million dollars, which was used to finance projects in insofar thirteen developing and especially least developed countries (LDCs), as Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Sierra Leone. The latter, for instance, had its entire Presidential Cabinet and 5% of its ministerial staff trained by an IBSA-Fund financed project. The three largest-budget areas covered by the funding are agriculture (31.1%), health care (26.1%) and livelihoods (18.3%). 45.3% of the budget approvals are destined to projects in Africa, 18.8% to projects in Asia, 18.4% to Arab States and 16.9% to Latin American countries. The least developed countries are receptors of the majority of the projects, precisely 64% (IBSA, 2014).

These projects are presented to the Fund by the receiver countries/candidates. Ten criteria are used to evaluate them: Reduction of poverty and hunger; National ownership and leadership; South-South cooperation; Use of IBSA country capacities; Strengthening local capacity; Ownership; Sustainability; Identifiable impact; Replicability, and; Innovation. It is useful to remark how different these criteria are from the conditionalities imposed by the International Monetary Fund when lending money to a country, which include governance and macroeconomic and social policies impositions to be followed by the receiving state (IMF, 2014), and which often causes deep social collateral damages. Also, the experience exchange and best practices mutual learning which guide the relations among the three IBSA members is also present in their relation with third party countries through the Fund action.

Quantitatively, the IBSA Fund might be extremely small in comparison to traditional assistance and development initiatives operated by established institutions. Nevertheless, the Fund is widely considered a huge success story and “an effective instrument that demonstrates IBSA’s true potential” (WHITE, 2010, p. 04). It won the United Nations South-South Partnership Award in 2006, an MDG Award in 2010 and the South-South and Triangular Cooperation Champions Award in 2012 (IBSA, 2014).

Also, the Fund is important for the analysis of the impact of new international forums created by emerging countries. On the one hand, it shows how plurilateral, or “minilateral”, groupings, despite being composed by a limited number of countries, might engage with third parties. Hampson and Heibecker (2011, p. 306) acknowledge the increased capacity of decision making and agility of these new plurilateral groups, but stress that they lack the universal representation of established organizations such as

the UN, which excludes most countries, and especially the least developed ones. Furthermore, the beneficiary countries are not simply passive aid receivers, since IBSA Fund projects are executed through partnerships with national governments and local institutions (IBSA, 2014).

This is even more important for it composes the emerging countries action as donor states, which challenges traditional international assistance rationale, in which aid flows from North to South and incorporates a binary vision which differentiates donors and receptors:

Structural dichotomies and binary oppositions have always determined development thinking since its beginning in 17th century Europe and still do in today's international development discourse. The foundation of the development paradigm is therefore difference in a twofold sense. The development paradigm universalistically denies difference at one level and essentialises the same difference at another. [...] These binaries are not merely descriptive but highly normative in the sense that they legitimize a distinct political and economic order. In their normative character these discursive categories not only intend to consolidate the status quo but also silence critique in the name of humanitarianism and benevolent development 'assistance'. This normative character is translated into various dimensions such as a geographical dimension, where the normative is formulated as a spatial logic (the West or North and the non-West or the South), or a historical dimension where the superior is the one ahead in a chronological or evolutionary order (SIX, 2009, p. 1005-1107)

### *Conclusions*

The facts studied above are certainly far from sufficient to draw lasting conclusions about the real impact and nature of the recent actions and institutions established by emerging powers from the Global South. Nevertheless, it is possible to point some observable features and tendencies.

The most important of the conclusions is that it seems a bit extreme to label these new initiatives as anti-Western. The BRICS and IBSA countries do not propose policies which go in the opposite direction than those held by the established powers. What our brief review of the recent historical facts demonstrates is, actually, an inability of pursuing actions autonomously within the existing forums. Even in these institutions, there are important disagreements among the emerging countries, which weaken their capacity of advocating for structural change and thus any chance of making these institutions pursue anti-Western goals. Not even seems true the accusation of an anti-

multilateralism approach, since we have not witnessed any action destined to purposefully undermine the multilateral system and organizations.

What we do have witnessed, indeed, is a plurilateral engagement in these new forums, and here we may draw another lesson. Although these countries have been profiting with these informal, flexible and variable coordination mechanisms, it was the more institutionalized initiatives which have propitiated the most concrete outcomes, as we can see in the IBSA case where the evaluation of the working groups is one of mixed results while the IBSA Fund is considered a success.

Finally, from the elements considered in this paper, the IBSA Fund is precisely the one which seems most capable of delivering innovative and transformative results, to developing and least developed countries but also to the whole global governance architecture. Not only it is promoting necessary projects in the neediest regions of the world, but it is also changing the fundamental paradigm of international assistance and humanitarian aid. It simultaneously changes the position of these new donors – who have historically been aid receivers and colonized countries – and helps the least developed countries. Also, it has an extremely important outcome in challenging these North-South, East-West dichotomies, which, as Six (2009) points out, have structured international relations and legitimized Western world order for centuries over. Certainly there are critics to it and improvements that can be made – as achieving more accountability and increasing the overall pool of resources of the Fund (STUENKEL, 2014) –, but it seems to have the potential to be representative of a transformative time to come in world politics. Although it would be extreme to label it “anti-Western”, this could also be subversive to Western hegemony – for its transformation of historical structural relations, patterns of action and identifications – and the most close to an autonomous policy from the West possible in the near future.

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> All the quotes extracted from sources published in languages other than English have been freely translated by the author.

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