[Original Articles]

Leveraging Influence on the UN Security Council: The Cases of Brazil, India, and South Africa*

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Resumo

Alavancando Influência no Conselho de Segurança da ONU: os Casos do Brasil, da Índia e da África do Sul

Há sempre ceticismo sobre se um membro eleito pode exercer influência no Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas (CSNU). Este artigo reavalia como Brasil, Índia e África do Sul tentaram influenciar o processo de tomada de decisão do CSNU como membros no período 2010-2012. Aborda a dinâmica e as práticas do Conselho, a centralidade dos cinco membros permanentes (P5) e as formas utilizadas pelos três países para atingir seus objetivos de política externa. Por meio desses casos específicos, este artigo mostra que, embora haja espaço para um membro eleito influenciar o Conselho, é difícil desafiar a predominância do P5 mesmo aproveitando oportunidades e engajando-se com os principais atores do CSNU.

Palavras-chave: Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas; Brasil; Índia; África do Sul; influência de membros eleitos

Abstract

Leveraging Influence on the UN Security Council: The Cases of Brazil, India, and South Africa

There is always scepticism about the extent to which an elected member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) can meaningfully exert influence. This article reassesses how, between 2010 and 2012, Brazil, India, and South Africa tried to leverage their membership to influence UNSC decision-making processes. It addresses the Council's dynamics and practices, the centrality of its five permanent members (P5), and the ways these countries achieve their foreign policy objectives. Through country-specific cases, this article shows that although there is space for an elected member to influence the Council, challenging the predominance of the P5 remains difficult, even by seizing opportunities and engaging with key UNSC players.

Key-words: UN Security Council; Brazil; India; South Africa; elected members' influence

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Résumé

Renforcer l'Influence au Conseil de Sécurité de l'ONU: Les Cas du Brésil, de l'Inde et de l'Afrique du Sud

Il y a toujours un scepticisme quant à savoir si un membre élu peut exercer une influence au Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies (CSNU). Cet article réévalue comment le Brésil, l'Inde et l'Afrique du Sud ont tenté d'influencer le processus de prise de décision du CSNU en tant que membres pendant la période 2010-2012. Il aborde la dynamique et les pratiques du Conseil, la centralité des cinq membres permanents (P5) et les moyens utilisés par les trois pays pour atteindre leurs objectifs de politique étrangère. À travers ces cas spécifiques, cet article montre que bien qu'il y ait de la place pour un membre élu pour influencer le Conseil, il est difficile de défier la prédominance du P5 même en profitant des opportunités et en s'engageant avec les principaux acteurs du CSNU.

Mots-clés : Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies ; Brésil ; Inde ; Afrique du Sud ; influence des membres élus

Resumen

Aprovechar la Influencia en el Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU: Los Casos de Brasil, India y Sudáfrica

Siempre existe escepticismo sobre si un miembro electo puede ejercer influencia en el Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas (CSNU). Este artículo reevalúa cómo Brasil, India y Sudáfrica intentaron influir en el proceso de toma de decisiones del CSNU como miembros en el periodo 2010-2012. Examina la dinámica y las prácticas del Consejo, la centralidad de los cinco miembros permanentes (P5) y las formas en que los tres países alcanzan sus objetivos de política exterior. A través de estos casos concretos, este artículo muestra que, aunque un miembro electo tiene margen para influir en el Consejo, es difícil desafiar el predominio de los P5 incluso aprovechando las oportunidades y comprometiéndose con los actores clave del CSNU.

Palabras-clave: Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas; Brasil; India; Sudáfrica; influencia de los miembros elegidos

Introduction

Membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) brings certain benefits that explain why countries devote considerable diplomatic resources to being elected non-permanent members. Membership often forms part of the foreign policy goals of states intending to influence the maintenance of international peace and security in some way or another. Thus, the Council is a showcase for the external activities that states carry out to advance their foreign policy objectives. Being a member can facilitate: the advancement of national interests; the pursuit of multilateral action on priority issues; the strengthening of relations with counterparts in the Council; displays of power, leadership, and/or the ability to design policy; and enhanced knowledge of UNSC dynamics, among others. This explains why states demonstrate such willingness to become part of the UNSC, particularly so-called middle, emergent, or rising powers.

There are several debates surrounding the concepts of 'middle,' 'emergent,' or 'rising' powers. In the field of international politics, literature on 'middle powers' is extensive and covers several aspects of the phenomenon. Debates surrounding 'middle powers' during the post-Cold War era, in particular, have shown that the concept itself is contested, as are the indicators used to define it (see, e.g., Hurrel *et al.*, 2000; Robertson, 2017; Jordaan, 2017). Over the course of its development, the concept of 'middle powers' has always included positional and hierarchical parameters but has grown to include criteria relating to various functional, normative, and policy outcomes (see Abbondanza, Wilkins, 2022). According to Robinson (2017), the vastness and complexity of these definitional terms have generated a situation in which 'confusion reigns supreme'. Additionally, the relatively new concept of 'awkward power' has been applied to states that escape the available theoretical classification of an 'emergent power'. 'Awkward power' is defined as "*a state with significant capabilities and influence, which defies neat categorisations onto the conventional power hierarchies, on account of its contested, neglected, or ambivalent international status*" (Abbondanza, Wilkins, 2022:24). This concept proposes certain criteria that are useful for analysing elected members' position in and ability to influence the dynamics of the UNSC.

Within the UNSC, five permanent members (P5) wield power and control over decision-making processes, a phenomenon described by Simpson (2004) as 'legalised hierarchies'. Given their superior problem-solving abilities (Destradi, 2019), these powerful states face a broad range of

expectations. The P5, therefore, possess a 'special responsibility' to reconcile the 'concert' and 'governance' functions of the UNSC as well as to contribute to the achievement of governance objectives (Ralph *et al.*, 2019). Traditionally, the P5 are divided into two blocs: the P3, comprising the Western powers of the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and France, and the P2, comprising Russia and China. Over the last decade, rivalries between the great powers have increased and become highly politicised, with serious consequences for dynamics within the UNSC more broadly.

In this context, the UNSC's elected members (E10) aim to exert influence and have certain capabilities to do so. On the one hand, however, an elected member's interests are often constrained by the P5 in the context of the 'diplomatic game' played at the UNSC. On the other hand, members also face expectations articulated by both permanent members of the UNSC and other members of the UN. These expectations can sometimes contradict one another, challenging the performance of a given member-state within the Council (Destradi, 2019). Moreover, P5 countries need elected members to legitimise their proposed resolutions, especially on more controversial issues. In this 'game' of UNSC decision-making, members of the P5 can even offer material benefits to less powerful members (in practice favourable votes) when it comes to these sensitive issues. At the same time, members of the E10 have the potential to vote against the interests of the P5, making it possible to constrain the Great Powers' ability to enforce their own preferences and perspectives (see Costa, Baccarini, 2014).

Particularly over the last decade, the E10 have played an important role in driving new ideas and working methods as well as acting as a bridge between permanent members in times of political division, allowing for consensus to be reached. From 2011, these elected members developed an unprecedented level of coordination as a group in order to play more active roles. This was the result of widespread frustrations regarding the UNSC's failure to take decisive steps in resolving a number of important conflicts (e.g. Syria), increased differences among the P5, and a growing perception that certain members of the P5 were using their privileged position to block important political initiatives and/or push for actions according to their own particular interests, among others. This movement to effectively exercise responsibility within the Council rather than passively accepting the stalemates and arrangements of the P5 over the last decade has led the elected members to proactively engage in areas where some progress might be possible (Loraine, Sam, 2018).

Traditionally, studies on the UNSC focus on the dominant position of the P5 (see, e.g., Hurd, 2002; Keating, 2015). Recently, however, scholars have devoted themselves to elected members, such as Ekengren, Hjorthen, and Möller (2020), and the case studies of Australia by Farral and Prantl (2016), Poland and South Africa by Pay and Postolski (2021), Sweden by Olsson et al (2021), and Germany and South Africa by Brosig (2021), among others.

It can be assumed that among the E10, some middle, rising, emergent, and awkward powers enjoy more favourable conditions to pursue and exercise influence, making the case that their potential and weaknesses in the UNSC should be examined. Consequently, this study addresses the cases of Brazil, India, and South Africa as elected members of the UNSC. These case studies have been chosen for a number of reasons which flow mainly from the power advantages they have compared to other Global South states. In the current 2022-23 period, Brazil is fulfilling its 11th mandate, ranking one of the highest in terms of the number of times it has participated as an elected member. India has a record of eight mandates, while South Africa has fulfilled three terms over the last 15 years.

These countries share political, material, and ideational interests; they share the belief that they are entitled to influence world affairs and display various similar behaviours. Moreover, they can be differentiated from other middle-size states by their tendency not to integrate themselves within broader alliance systems, as countries like Japan, Canada, and Australia often do through their close alignment with the US. Brazil, India, and South Africa have adopted a strategy of grouping themselves together under various institutions and forums to leverage their capacity to influence the international system according to their interests. Examples include the association of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA). Although each state's actions are grounded in its own traditions and interests, membership in these common groups indicates the potential for coordination and even alignment on certain issues of the UNSC agenda. Past and present cases at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) clearly demonstrate that Brazil, India, and South Africa have strategically participated across a variety of coalitions (e.g. Cairns Group), sponsored and co-sponsored statements, and submitted draft texts. These countries can either adopt a more flexible, consensus-based approach, or they can resist pressures to conform, such as the recent case of contestation at the WTO for the special rights of developing countries.

Yet while their strategies and approaches differ, certain issues bring them together. For example, in 2004, Brazil, India, and South Africa spearheaded the coalition of countries interested in agricultural negotiations at the WTO towards the removal of farm subsidies and opening up of world agriculture trade (Times of India, 2004). In 2019, India and South Africa opposed the US-led reform proposal of the special and differential treatment for developing countries. In 2022, India and South Africa pushed for a developing-country intellectual property waiver on COVID-19 vaccines (Schöfer, Weinhardt, 2022).

Certain UNCS debates directly concern the material interests, normative values, and foreign-policy principles of these countries. Over the last two decades, Brazil, India, and South Africa have played a fundamental role in peace operations, one of the UNSC's most important tools for managing and resolving conflicts: Brazil in Haiti, India as one of the biggest troop-contributing countries (TCC), and South Africa in peace operations across the African continent. These particular countries therefore offer suitable insight into agency outside of the P5, providing an important window into some of the Council's key dynamics.

In this article, I focus on the period of 2010-12, during which Brazil, India, and South Africa were all members of the Council (Brazil in 2010-11, and India and South Africa in 2011-2012). Although the countries served as elected members on other occasions, the period selected is particularly important for several reasons. Firstly, 2011 was the first time all BRICS countries were members of the UNSC. Secondly, it was during this period that the UNSC had to deal with particularly complex issues, such as the crisis in Libya, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Thirdly, their presence as key contenders for a permanent seat in the reformed Council at this time would anticipate certain levels of activism to justify their aims.

I argue that: 1) despite the reality of P5 power and control of the Council, Brazil, India, and South Africa have tried to strategically and innovatively influence UNSC outcomes in a variety of ways; 2) they are particularly well-positioned to leverage influence because of their willingness, capacity, and ability to mediate between groups within the UNSC; and 3) their ability to influence is reduced when they take a position contrary to what a permanent member wants. I use UN documents, national policy documents, existing studies, and interviews to substantiate my arguments.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how Brazil, India, and South Africa aimed to become influential players in the UNSC, by detailing the methods they have used to exert influence and the results of these efforts. The paper does not aim to measure influence or generalise a conclusion; rather, the intention is to understand these countries' quest for influence and the outcomes of their attempts. Since elected members and Council dynamics change over time, the paper analyses these three countries' influence on Council dynamics during a specific period only.

The article proceeds across four sections. Section 1 presents the ways elected members can exert influence on the UNSC and the difficulties and constraints they generally face in doing so. Section 2 explores the general behaviour of Brazil, India, and South Africa as elected members between 2010 and 2012. Section 3 presents illustrative cases of attempts and/or *de facto* exercises of influence on specific issues and situations as well as their outcomes. The final section provides a conclusion.

Playing the Game: Opportunities, Difficulties, and Constraints on Exerting Influence

Some countries are "in a similar position in the global order [and] are recognised and influential powers within their own region" (Brosig, 2021:2). They tend to aspire to higher relative positions (status) in the international system (Alden, Vieira, 2005); they aim to become important players in global affairs, to project power both within and outside their respective regions, to gain greater access to international decision-making institutions (Holbraad, 1984), and to acquire new capabilities in terms of influencing the global agenda. They usually contest current norms by bringing in, projecting, and promoting new ideas (see, e.g., Cooper, Flemes, 2013). As a member of the UNSC, countries can compensate their small financial and military capital with diplomatic capital, i.e., the political power they obtain through social competencies, reputation, and personal authority, which enables them to achieve their objectives and fulfill responsibilities (Adler-Nissen, 2008; Kuus, 2015; Ralph *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, being a member of a defined club of actors such as the UNSC is a chance to gain recognition within the international system/community (Edström,Westberg, 2020), advance one's status therein, and exert influence (Langmore, Farrall, 2016).

In general, perceptions about the emergence of these 'new powers' in world politics have ranged from enthusiasm to contestation and disappointment. For at least the first decade of this century, great expectations have been placed on them. However, most of these countries have presented limited contributions to global governance, and their capacity to assume a managerial role in global politics has clearly decreased. Even if the euphoria surrounding this group of countries has subsided in recent years, they cannot be ignored and remain an important unit of analysis.

The concept of awkward power is characterised by several key features: incomplete material and/or military capabilities (power asymmetry); a transitional "in-between" status (power liminality); a lack of external acceptance, or partial acceptance (power frustration); the search for alternative forms of governance (awkward pathways); the employment of unusual coping mechanisms (awkward strategies); and the presence of divergent or atypical behaviours (awkward postures) (Abbondanza, Wilkins, 2022:380).

Regarding material and military capabilities, Brazil and India present deficits in military capability, even if the latter possesses nuclear weapons (Abbondanza and Wilkins, 2022:381). This deficiency is higher in the case of South Africa. With regard to status, Brazil and India find themselves straddling the middle and great power status. However, neither has been recognised for their power aspirations, a consequence of their atypical diplomacy. While India and South Africa 'are climbing the power ladder at a steady pace', Brazil has fluctuated in both economy and foreign policy, especially in the last years (Abbondanza, Wilkins, 2022:386). In terms of external acceptance, both Brazil and India—and, to a certain extent, South Africa—continue to be excluded from the P5 membership of the UNSC, a position they believe they are entitled to. This apparent impenetrability relates to the first characteristic—asymmetry—that is, lacking the material and behavioural attributes required to be recognised as 'part of the club'. The concept of 'awkward strategy' can apply to all three countries, as they pursue alternatives to their exclusion from the 'top club' of the international system by creating cross-regional forums such as BRICS, IBSA, etc., championing "regional institutions as a platform to project their influence" (e.g. Brazil, UNASUL, and MERCOSUL), and actively participating in multilateral organisations and forums. In general, they tend to leverage regional organisations. For example, UNASUL and MERCOSUR in the case of Brazil, and AU and SAADC in the case of South Africa (Abbondanza, Wilkins, 2022). Finally, in relation to the 'awkward postures' category, Brazil, India,

and South Africa have tended to be suspicious of great power behaviour, eschewing any form of unilateralist intervention outside of those legitimised by international organisations. Brazil, in particular, shows a deep-rooted apprehension of military interventions, while South Africa is only willing to accept intervention in certain situations. It is worth noting that South Africa's multidimensional and conflicted sense of national identity can lead to somewhat inconsistent and contradictory behaviour in relation to foreign policy. While all three countries have deployed forces overseas (as part of peacekeeping operations, hereafter PKOs), the number of Indian troops placed available to the UN has been considerably high in the last decades. Except on a handful of occasions, Brazil has "only provided token contributions to UN PKOs" (Abbondanza, Wilkins, 2022:395).

These characteristics allow us to better understand and explain the place of Brazil, India, and South Africa within the UNSC as well as their attempts, successes, and failures to leverage influence therein.

In general, an E10 state can accomplish its goals during its mandate by gaining access to new opportunities, building on its strengths, making strategic decisions (by developing methods of engagement), and carrying out tactical manoeuvres (by positively dealing with and taking advantage of the UNSC's internal and external dynamics and its working methods).

Farrall et al's (2020) framework of analysis posits that elected members influence the Council through legitimacy dynamics, diplomatic capacities, favourable conditions, and formal, and informal mechanisms of influence. Since the UNSC constitutes a cluster of alliances and political groupings, the most effective means of utilising legitimacy dynamics is through coalition-building. Diplomatic capacities are related to the number and quality of a country's diplomatic representation both at the UN and at the national level. Favourable conditions depend on the Council's timing, political context, and composition in a given year. Meanwhile, mechanisms can make use of both formal channels (such as the presidency, chairing subsidiary bodies, and pen-holding resolutions) and informal channels (Arria-formula and informal meetings and negotiations).

Members of the E10 can take the leading role on specific issues by pursuing and securing negotiations, attaining outcomes on complex challenges, pushing forward policies and practices, and even introducing innovations. Additionally, influence can be exerted through proposals and/or the co-sponsorship of the Council agenda. Some elected members

have succeeded in exerting influence by advancing particular themes as a feature of their broader strategic policy (e.g. Canada on the responsibility to protect – R2P).

An elected member takes on the Council presidency either once or twice during its mandate, determined by a monthly rotation through the English alphabet. The presidency presents the most visible occasion to shape the agenda and schedule debates on priority matters. Traditionally, elected members also chair subsidiary organs and thematic working groups, providing additional avenues to influence the agenda and decisions.

Although unusual, an elected member can also be the penholder of resolutions, shaping and driving the drafting process of a resolution. UNSC practices typically assign this role to a P5 member for country-specific resolutions, while the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) often set the terms of debate, essentially framing an issue and outlining a course of action before consulting others (Ralph, Gifkins, 2017: 13). P3 countries usually use this position to drive the length of negotiations, language, and direction of UNSC resolutions. In practice, they are the sole penholders on most country-specific items on the Council's agenda (Martin, 2020). This practice can be viewed as a mark of competence (Adler-Nissen, Pouliot, 2014), but may also lead to concerns about weakened deliberation and exclusionary practices (Ralph, Gifkins, 2017). On the other hand, while specific country resolutions are often driven by the P3, thematic agendas provide an opportunity for elected members to pursue specific issues strategically.

The E10 have successfully proposed Council decisions across several areas. For example, Australia, Luxembourg, and Jordan drafted decisions on the humanitarian dimensions of the Syrian conflict, while Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, the Netherlands, and Sweden worked on the link between violence and food insecurity. In 2016, when Egypt faced political pressure and had to withdraw its draft resolution on Israeli settlements, elected members from four different regional groups (Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, and Venezuela) successfully brought it to a vote (SCR, 2018). Recently, elected members such as Belgium, Germany, Indonesia, and Kuwait, among others, have led on and/or acted as penholders for a variety of issues (Sievers, Daws, 2018).

While there are opportunities for exerting influence, countries outside the P5 face challenges in fulfilling their duties in the UNSC. P5 states constantly reveal divergent preferences on salient issues and compete

for influence over other members. In the context of such divergences, E10 members are placed in a difficult position when it comes to pursuing their national interests.

Once elected, a country's diplomats from its representative missions in New York (and from the ministries of foreign affairs) must work towards developing the resources necessary to sustain their effective participation. This entails proactive engaging with and responding to events on the Council, rather than simply positioning oneself subserviently. The UNSC's daily work involves engaging across a broad range of issues, frequently attending formal and informal sessions, as well as regular meetings. For instance, in the period of 2011-12, the UNSC held 790 formal meetings and adopted 118 resolutions, 51 presidential statements, and 150 press statements (South Africa's second…, 2013).

The meetings and consultations are intense because of the Council's responsibility to manage peace operations in the field, to "supervise the work of subsidiary bodies it has authorized, and monitor sanctions it has enacted" (Bosco, 2014: 14). Moreover, most of the Council's work happens behind the scenes (Farrall *et al.*, 2020), for example, in short meetings and during working breakfasts. Consequently, elected members face a heavy workload, spending countless hours in formal and informal activities (Martin 2018), with administrative tasks often outweighing substantive political engagement (Roele, 2020). Even when they occupy the position of chair, elected members do not have full control over the organs and groups they oversee. Consequently, engagement with the UNSC needs to balance potential benefits with the limitations of a country's permanent mission. The higher the number and quality of diplomats on the permanent missions in New York, the higher the country's capacity to manage all its Council work (Carvalho, Singh, 2021). Additionally, the capacity of foreign ministries to support their representatives at the UN depends on the level of activity that a country is able to carry out in the UNSC. Making a difference thus requires a combination of diplomatic will, capacity, and resources. Since few permanent missions have the capacity to cover all Council agendas, members (especially the E10) must select the issues that diplomats will actively engage in according to their own areas of priority.

The P5 exert considerable control over decisions and are largely unaccountable to other members. Indeed, the veto power they hold is the biggest constraint on elected members' positions within the UNSC's decision-making process (Martin, 2020). Moreover, the P5 possess institutional

knowledge of the UNSC's internal processes, many of which they themselves established, a knowledge non-permanent members rarely have. The P5 use their accumulated practical experience to their advantage in negotiations and deliberations according to their interests (von Einsiedel, Malone, 2018). Gaining such experience and strengthening institutional memory is part of the interests of the countries that constantly run for non-permanent seats on the Council, as is the case for Brazil (interview, diplomat from Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN – NY, 2018).

While the P5 countries remain on the Council and can protect their areas of interest in the long term, elected members have only a two-year tenure within which to work on priority issues (von Einsiede, Malone, 2018). However, certain states have used their Council membership to champion particular ideas and continue working on the same issues in other parts of the UN system after completing their mandate, e.g., South Africa on UN-AU relations (initiated in its first Council term in 2008 and continuously supported since) (Carvalho, Singh, 2021).

The following section explores the approaches of Brazil, India and South Africa in the UNSC, before surveying specific cases in which they attempted to exert influence.

Brazilian, Indian, and South African approaches in the UNSC

The traditional foreign policy approaches of Brazil, India, and South Africa are quite similar. In general, they are based on the pillars of sovereignty, autonomy, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, multilateralism, peaceful coexistence, and negotiated settlements of disputes (see Kage, 2005; Amorim, 2010; Singh, 2020; Carvalho, Singh, 2021).

During the presidency of Lula da Silva (2003–2010), Brazil advanced its efforts to better position itself in the international arena. Its evolving activity at the global level included the willingness to take greater responsibilities in international security, which was translated mainly into its work as an elected member of the UNSC and in the UN peace operation in Haiti (MINUSTAH). These endeavours aimed to showcase the country's ability to contribute to international peace and security in order to achieve a permanent seat on the UNSC.

India's deepening engagement with the UN is based on its "commitment to multilateralism and dialogue as the key for achieving shared goals and addressing common challenges faced by the global community" (India, 2020). Indian leaders have traditionally hankered for 'great power' recognition in world affairs. In order to increase its chances of achieving a UNSC permanent seat, the utmost priority for India, the latest governments have strategically intensified participation in peace operations. As a result, the country has become one of the biggest TCCs in the world (Krishnasamy, 2010).

Regional peace and security, as well as the strengthening of the UN and African Union (AU), were regular priorities for South Africa during its Council membership (Carvalho, Singh, 2021). Since regionality is central to the country's views on peace and security, South Africa's main objectives during its term were: to contribute to conflict resolution, peace, and stability in Africa; to strengthen the partnership between the UN and the AU; to defend the integrity of the UN Charter and the Rule of Law as the foundation for multilateral cooperation by making the P5 more accountable; and to advance the reform of the UNSC, including its working methods, to make it more democratic, representative, legitimate and transparent (South Africa's second…, 2013).

Brazil has a professional diplomatic corps and a considerable network of embassies to support the decision-making process. Almost 30 Brazilian representatives are assigned to the Permanent Representative Mission in New York, which works closely with the Minister of External Relations (MRE in Portuguese) (Brazil, 2021). This network, its working methods, and the experience it has acquired during the various terms as elected members are all factors that support the country's performance at the UNSC. Brazilian ambassadors at the UN often act according to foreign policy goals, most of them having lasted through time, independently of changes in government and/or the leadership of the MRE.

Despite some successful actions over the last decades, India's foreign policy capacity between 2011-2012 was limited due to institutional deficiencies, especially given the very small scale of its diplomatic corps and the individualistic decision-making habits of the more powerful officers of the Ministry of External Affairs. The Foreign Service was one of the most elite institutions, and "the most significant ambassadorial and foreign policy jobs are usually filled by career civil servants". However, "decisions are often highly individualistic [centered] on senior officials responsible for particular policy areas [instead] strategic planners at the

top". New Delhi does very little collective thinking about its long-term foreign policy goals, and strategic planning takes place on an individual level within the government, granting foreign service officers considerable autonomy (Miller, 2013:14). Despite the UN being high on India's foreign policy priorities, the country still lacked the staff required to deal with high workloads. India's Permanent Representative Mission in New York encompassed a diplomatic corps of almost 15 persons in 2021 (India, 2021), half the number of diplomats as Brazil and South Africa. Looking at their level of activism within the UN makes it clear that India is managing well even with relatively few resources.

The South African foreign service does not have the capacity and institutional memory that Brazil possesses, which it acquired through its constant presence in the UNSC. Nevertheless, some individuals within the service understand its dynamics and, by taking advantage of them, have gained some weight in decision-making. Between the 1990s and around 2015, South Africa's diplomatic staff had predominantly been from the 'apartheid generation' and served under the African National Congress (ANC), which functions more as a movement than a political party. Since this generation has given way to a new one, leadership has changed, and new diplomats have joined the political arena. Moreover, since decisions were made by the ANC, the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation (MIRC) had limited autonomy in decision-making. Today, the situation has changed, and the process has become more balanced between the executive (economy), the party (ideology), and the MIRC (technical decisions) (G. Carvalho, personal communication, March 15, 2022). The Permanent Representative Mission in New York encompasses a diplomatic corps of almost 30 individuals and works in close connection with the MIRC (South Africa, 2021).

All three countries have sought ways to engage and advance topics of interest by taking advantage of the Council's dynamics and working methods. In general, they used their time as presidents and chairs of subsidiary bodies in similar ways.

During their respective terms, Brazil chaired the Cote D'Ivoire and the DRC Sanctions Committees; India chaired the Somalia/Eritrea and Counterterrorism Committees; South Africa chaired the 1540 Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism Committees, and worked hard to revitalise the Ad-hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa (SCR, 2010, 2011).

Brazil has historically been actively involved in the interconnection between security and socioeconomic development. Its vision has been that peacekeeping and peacebuilding should intersect at some point in the lifecycle of a peace operation and that the end goal of UN interventions should be sustainable peace (SCR, 2010a). Consequently, Brazil has tried to move the Council more towards conflict prevention and away from its traditional focus on conflict management (SCR, 2010f). It pushed for certain missions to be authorised to perform early recovery activities and support peacebuilding activities (e.g. UNAMID in Sudan and MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo) (SCR, 2010d, 2010e) and organised stakeholder meetings and thematic debates on reconstruction and humanitarian programs in Haiti (UN, 2011e).

During the Council's presidency in February 2011, Brazil organised an open debate on the linkages between development and peace and security. The aim was to encourage a comprehensive approach to this issue and explore the Council's options for cooperating with other organs in the UN system (SCR, 2011g). Brazil proposed that the Council should adopt a more meaningful approach to development, addressing the root causes of violence, including social and economic factors (UN, 2011c). As result of the debate, a presidential statement was issued, emphasizing the points presented by Brazil (UN, 2011e).

India's efforts in the UNSC primarily focused on the situation in its immediate and extended neighbourhood, including Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Africa. They also worked to enhance international cooperation in the areas of counterterrorism, prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors, implement anti-piracy measures, and strengthen UN peacekeeping and peace-building efforts (India, n/d).

India organised a debate on peacekeeping and relations with TCCs during its presidency in August 2011 (UN, 2011b), focusing on its traditional stance of upholding state sovereignty principles and critiquing humanitarian interventions (Singh, 2020). This perspective is often articulated through anti-imperial identity discourse (Choedon, 2007). India has long been concerned about the mismatch between resources and mandates of peacekeeping operations. It believes that peacekeeping operations often lack the necessary resources to implement increasingly complex mandates, such as early peacebuilding tasks. The country has criticised the decision-making of the peacekeeping operations and advocated for

greater involvement of troop and police contributors in the deliberations for setting up and reviewing missions (Blah, 2017; Hansel, Möllerb, 2014). As a result of the debate, a presidential statement highlighted the need to enhance considerations for early peacebuilding activities in the mandates and structure of peacekeeping operations, and to improve communication between the troop and police contributors, the UNSC, and the Secretariat (UN, 2011j).

During India's presidency, in November 2012, two open debates were held: the first on piracy as a global threat, and the second on the UNSC's working methods. The piracy debate is of particular concern to India "as many of the seafarers held captive by pirates are Indian nationals" (SCR, 2012d). Since 2008, on India's initiative, the UNSC has been engaged in combatting piracy, and the country has actively participated in the international naval operations on the coast of Somalia and in the Contact Group on Piracy of the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), which aims to coordinate international counter-piracy efforts (India, n/d). The Council adopted a presidential statement expressing its grave concern about the threat posed by piracy, condemning hostage-taking and violence against hostages, and calling for a continuation of efforts to combat piracy at the national, regional, and international levels (UN, 2012b).

During its presidency in January 2012, South Africa organised a high-level debate on the strategic partnership between the UN and the AU, chaired by President Jacob Zuma. It resulted in Resolution 2033, which reiterated the importance of establishing a more effective relationship between the UNSC and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC). The resolution called for the elaboration of "further ways of strengthening relations between the two Councils" and recognised that regional organisations are "well positioned to understand the causes of armed conflicts owing to their knowledge of the region," among others (UN, 2012e:1).

South Africa also convened a high-level meeting on the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), presided over by Minister Nkoana-Mashabane, and an open debate on the Rule of Law in the maintenance of international peace and security in conflict and post-conflict situations (South Africa's second..., 2013). The former paved the way for the adoption of Resolution 2036, enhancing the strength of AMISOM (UN 2012f), while the latter resulted in a Presidential Statement (UN, 2012a).

Since all three countries showed particular interest in working methods, they promoted informal briefings on the issue in order to discuss and change certain practices within the UNSC. Brazil holds the opinion that debates within the UNSC are themselves an achievement since they serve to raise awareness of the topic and promote a platform for the resolution of key issues. The country strategically avoided advocating for the Council's direct involvement in development issues (one of its priorities) by trying to bypass the debate on whether or not this was a Council matter in the first place. It framed the debate by pointing out that if the Council were more informed about the development aspects of conflict situations, it would be better prepared to address peace and security issues (SCR, 2011g). Moreover, the country used high-level officials to draw attention to these debates. The open debate on the linkages between development, peace, and security organised during Brazil's presidency was chaired by the Brazilian Foreign Minister and attended by the Secretary-General, six foreign ministers of Council members, and representatives of 46 non-Council member states (SCR, 2011d).

South Africa strategically utilized the participation of high-level authorities, such as the President and the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, in events to help achieve its goals on priority issues. President Jacob Zuma presided over the meeting on strategic coordination between the UNSC and the PSC, while Minister Nkoana-Mashabane presided over a meeting on Somalia. Moreover, the country leveraged various leadership positions in the UNSC to improve the Council's working methods. For example, as chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, it succeeded in improving the working methods by involving the broader UN membership and non-state entities in discussions (South Africa's second..., 2013). Additionally, the country dispatched key authorities to events of interest sponsored by other countries. For instance, in February 2011, Minister Nkoana-Mashabane participated in a high-level meeting on the maintenance of international peace and security organised by the Brazilian Presidency.

However, despite the Brazilian opinion that debate is itself an achievement, it is questionable whether or not the outcomes have achieved any real progress and/or affected the work of the UNSC. In general, it seems that presidential statements and resolutions tend to employ vague language instead of making decisions on concrete action or implementing new procedures that might better address certain issues.

Leveraging Influence as an Elected Member: Achievements and Setbacks

A look at voting patterns within the Council demonstrates certain similarities between the three countries. In a broader perspective, during the ten occasions on which Brazil was an elective member of the UNSC, the country abstained only 10 times and cast only one negative vote. In its seven terms as a UNSC member, India has recorded 13 abstentions and no negative votes. Similarly, during its three terms as a UNSC member, South Africa has abstained on 5 occasions and has never cast a negative vote.

Between 2010 and 2012, 178 resolutions were adopted. On four occasions, veto power was used by China and Russia (three times) and the US (once). Only ten resolutions passed in this time, falling short of the required 15 affirmative votes with Russia abstaining in five and China abstaining in four.

The table below summarizes this pattern of votes. It suggests that Brazil, India, and South Africa alike tend to approve resolutions regardless of which country or group of countries submitted the proposal. Only on a few specific occasions did they deviate from this pattern, suggesting that they deliberately sought to exert influence over sensitive issues at the UNSC.

Table 1
Brazil, India, and South Africa Votes on the UNCS (2010-2012)

Year	Nr of Resolutions	Record	Description	Abstention	Vote No	Solution
2010	60	S/RES/1929 (2010)	On measures against the Islamic Republic of Iran in connection with its enrichment-related and repro-cessing activities, including research and development	Lebanon	**Brazil** Turkey	Approved 12-2-1
2011	66	S/Res/1973 (2011)	On establishment of a ban on flights in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya airspace	**Brazil** China Germany **India** Russia		Approved 10-0-5

Table 1
Brazil, India, and South Africa Votes on the UNCS (2010-2012) (cont.)

Year	Nr of Resolutions	Record	Description	Abstention	Vote No	Solution
		Draft Resolution S/2011/612	Middle East situation	**Brazil**, **India**, Lebanon **South Africa**	China Russia	Not approved 9-2-4
		Draft Resolution S/2011/24	Middle East situation, including the Palestinian question		United States	Not approved 14-1-0
2012	53	Draft Resolution S/2012/538	Middle East situation	Pakistan **South Africa**	China Russia	Not approved 11-2-2
		Draft Resolution S/2012/77	Middle East - Syria		China Russia	Not approved 13-2-0

The author, based on UN, 2023

Brazil voted no only once (Resolution 1929 regarding sanctions on Iran) and abstained once (Resolution 1973 on Libya). India abstained once (Resolution 1973), while South Africa voted affirmatively to all resolutions during its term. Vetoes were cast around the Syrian conflict (by China and Russia), and the Middle East, including the question of Palestine (by the US). Contentious issues were related to the votes regarded the war in Syria (Brazil and India) and the Iranian nuclear program (Brazil) (UN, 2021). It is clear that these countries attempt to increase their influence through so-called 'hard cases'. Therefore, focusing on 'hard cases' allows us to explore how countries work individually and collectively to influence decisions, as well as the outcomes and setbacks they face when doing so. Consequently, both situations, Iran and Syria, are among the cases addressed in the following sub-sections.

Making a Difference or Mere Puppets of Big Powers?

Brazil is traditionally sceptical of sanctions. It used the issue of the Iranian nuclear program to oppose sanctions and advocate for negotiations, even though neither that particular region nor the broader theme formed part of Brazil's priorities at the UNSC.

Brazil abstained when the resolution on Iran was adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in November 2009. Since Iran had not suspended its uranium enrichment activities, negotiations were conducted among the P5, mainly France, Russia, and the US, to impose further sanctions on the country. Brazil voiced reservations regarding additional sanctions and joined Turkey in bilaterally seeking a negotiated solution (SCR, 2010b). Both countries had friendly relations with Iran and were commissioned by Western powers to negotiate an agreement (Leverett, Leverett, 2010). However, the US was apparently determined to approve new and broader sanctions and was working towards consensus within the UNSC. It also appears that the US did not expect an agreement to be reached. Surprisingly, even though the US had included provisions that Iran had previously opposed, Iranian authorities accepted the Brazil-Turkey mediation and agreed to all terms and conditions (Dreyfuss, 2010; Parsi, 2010). On 17 May 2010, an agreement on a fuel swap plan was announced by Brazil, Turkey, and Iran (Borger, 2010).

However, a consensus on the sanctions among the P5 had already been reached. The next day, the E3+3 (Germany, France, and the UK, along with China, Russia, and the US) agreed on a proposal for new and broad sanctions against Iran. These sanctions encompassed activities related to uranium, heavy weapons, missiles, travel bans, asset freezes, and the inspection of Iranian ship cargo, among other measures. Brazilian authorities, including the President and Minister of Foreign Affairs, reiterated that a negotiated solution remained possible. President Lula wrote to the presidents of France, Mexico, Russia, and the US on 25 May, arguing that Iran was open to further dialogue (SCR, 2010c).

Beyond rejecting the Brazil-Iran-Turkey deal, the US administration "accused Brazil and Turkey of being international ingénues, suckered into a spoiling operation by Iran" (Financial Times, 2010). Moreover, the press portrayed Brazil and Turkey's involvement as driven by their own economic interests regarding Iran (Sanger, Slackman, 2010), alongside their desire for international standing and recognition (Friedman, 2010).

On 9 June, the Council approved Resolution 1929, which expanded sanctions against Iran, with 12 members voting in favour. Brazil and Turkey voted against the Resolution, and Lebanon abstained (UN, 2010). The unprecedented 'no' vote clearly demonstrated the disappointment of the Brazilian and Turkish governments.

The case of Iran appeared as an opportunity for Brazil (and Turkey) to reinforce its traditional position for negotiated solutions. The success of a small coalition, consisting of two elected UNSC members, in navigating a complex negotiation on a material issue would have undoubtedly demonstrated that Brazil could and should have a place at the main table of the international game. However, both Brazil and Turkey were surprised to find that the US had already decided on sanctions over an agreement. This decision, made by consensus of the P5, essentially tosed aside Turkish and Brazilian efforts. This situation demonstrates the difficulty of making a difference when a P5 member has already formed a decision. Moreover, the case highlights the importance of an elected member understanding the game, paying attention to reading between the lines, and discerning underlying intentions to avoid becoming a mere puppet of the biggest players.

In reality, Iran expanded its nuclear infrastructure, which led to yet more sanctions. In December 2010 and January 2011, discussions were held between the E3+3 and Iran in Geneva, Switzerland and Istanbul, Turkey, respectively, to discuss a plan similar to what had been negotiated with Brazil and Turkey (SCR, 2011b). An agreement was reached in 2015 (US, 2015) and suffered a setback when the US withdrew in 2018 (Landler, 2018). Thus, the issue remains on the agenda without a lasting solution.

This case is an example of how countries can attempt to make a difference by pushing back against majority lines. However, it also demonstrates and reinforces some of the characteristics of so-called awkward powers and the problems they face. Firstly, it confirmed Brazil's tendency to be suspicious of great power behaviour and its search for bilateral or collective associations (in this case, with Turkey) to leverage influence. Secondly, the US' ability to act in ways that Brazil cannot, reinforced Brazil's frustration and confirmed a sense of powerlessness to make a difference through global influence.

Trying to Influence Without Blocking

Libya was another emblematic case. On 17 March 2011, the Council adopted Resolution 1973, which authorised all necessary measures to protect civilians in Libya, imposed a no-fly zone, and strengthened sanctions against the regime (UN, 2011h). While South Africa voted for the resolution, Brazil and India abstained, along with China, Germany, and Russia (UN, 2011f). In practical terms, the concept of R2P was used to justify interventions to change the Libyan regime (see Rhoads, Welsh, 2019).

The Brazilian Representative criticised the resolution for contemplating "measures that go far beyond that call", arguing that the use of force would not put an immediate end to the violence nor protect civilians, and that the measures might have the "unintended effect of exacerbating tensions on the ground and causing more harm than good to the very same civilians we are committed to protecting" (UN, 2011:6). The Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) justified their abstention, stating that "the principle of R2P is being selectively used to promote national interest rather than protect civilians" (Prashad, 2012). South Africa's vote followed an AU and Arab League call for a resolution to the crisis. However, days after the resolution passed, South African leaders criticised the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) for overstepping its mandate (Serrão, 2011). The South African argument was to prioritise the protection of civilians (PoC) above the no-fly zone, asserting that the authorities did not imagine the consequences of the resolution. This proved to be a political shot in the foot, and the government tried to backtrack when NATO indicated a regime change, thereby hurting pan-Africanism (remembering that Gaddafi was an African leader). Public opinion took a firm stance, leading to an internal division within the MIRC, making it difficult to answer and justify the vote. This was especially problematic, especially in the context of President Zuma's prioritisation of the BRICS project (G. Carvalho, personal communication, March 15, 2022). The South African stance was questioned as a possible inconsistency in the country's position.

Contrastingly, it was also viewed as a potential shift in foreign policy under the Zuma administration in relation to the former president, Mbeki. Zuma appeared to adopt a more flexible stance on state sovereignty in cases where the state clearly commits human rights violations (Serrão, 2011). In this way, South Africa intended to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian access (SCR, 2011c). In fact, shortly thereafter, President

Zuma complained that "the AU's plan was completely ignored in favour of bombing Libya by NATO forces" (SCR, 2012a:5). Months later, the country insisted that the UNSC recognize the adverse effects of the situation in Libya on the Sahel region (SCR, 2012a). As a consequence, South Africa became more cautious in situations that could lead to a change of regime.

Brazil, India, and South Africa all clearly opposed changing the narrative of Resolution 1973. In April, at the BRICS summit in Beijing, leaders expressed concern that the Resolution was being interpreted arbitrarily, particularly regarding NATO air strikes that surpassed the resolution's scope (SCR, 2011e). Subsequently, they accused NATO of exceeding its mandate in Libya (SCR, 2012a). This case shows that Brazil, India, and South Africa were cautious about the long-term implications of authorising military force to protect civilians. They were concerned about the potential negative impact on the wider protection agenda and the apparent political selectivity in the UNSC's response to protection challenges (SCR, 2011h).

This case demonstrates that although the three countries cautioned against the negative implications of the resolution and sided with the P2, they ultimately allowed action to go ahead in Libya through abstention. This can be understood as an attempt to generate influence through discourse without necessarily blocking what the P3 had already decided. Once more, this case confirms some of the key characteristics of awkward powers and the problems they face. First, all three countries tended to be suspicious of great power behaviour and to coordinate their actions to leverage influence. Second, the case confirms South Africa's contradictory behaviour and the difficulty of reconciling the key concept of state sovereignty with action against human rights violations. Third, the case illustrates the challenges that countries face in leveraging influence without confronting the great powers.

Opposing Through Coalitions

The events in Libya resulted in deep divisions within the UNSC regarding Syria and brought BRICS members closer together in their rejection of the possible application of the 'Libyan model' in the Syrian civil war (see Brosig, 2019). The draft resolution on the situation in Syria that circulated on 25 May, 2011, left BRICS countries uncomfortable with its action-oriented language, which could lead to robust follow-ups by the Council. Since Russia and China threatened to veto the draft, it was not put to a

vote (SCR, 2011c). It was only on 3 August, 2011, that the UNSC adopted a presidential statement expressing concerns over the deteriorating situation in Syria (UN, 2011d). IBSA members engaged in the issue, and Deputy Foreign Ministers of the group visited Damascus that month (SCR, 2011k). In October, a draft resolution condemning the Syrian crackdown on protestors was negotiated. BRICS countries had concerns about including language on the intention to consider adopting targeted measures, and Brazil requested strengthening the language on resolving the crisis peacefully and through an inclusive Syrian-led political process. In the end, it was vetoed by China and Russia, with the abstention of Brazil, India, Lebanon, and South Africa (UN, 2011i). In July 2012, a new resolution was again vetoed by China and Russia, with the abstention of Pakistan and South Africa (SCR, 2012b).

The Syrian crisis showed that exclusionary practices, such as P3-dominated pen-holding, exacerbated the challenge of developing a collective conscience that would allow progress in the country's political and humanitarian situation. The P3 could not advance resolutions for military action; Russia used its veto power to protect its particular interests, followed shortly by China. Meanwhile, Brazil, India, and South Africa aligned themselves with the P2 within the BRICS group (see Ralph and Gifkins, 2017).

In October 2011, India's position was justified as the resolution failed to address its concerns regarding the threat of sanctions. South Africa "was concerned about the sponsors' intention to impose punitive measures that would have pre-judged the resolution's implementation [and] believe that these were designed as a prelude to further actions", particularly after the sponsors of the draft resolution "rejected language that clearly excluded the possibility of military intervention". Brazil expressed hope that further efforts would be made to muster broader support before the resolution was put to a vote (UN, 2011g:11).

In December, the Arab League initiative called for an immediate cessation of all violence and the withdrawal of the military from the streets. They demanded the release of political prisoners, accelerated political reform within a specific timeline, serious dialogue with opposition representatives, and a follow-up mechanism including an Arab team of observers. Brazil, India, and South Africa recalibrated their positions and supported the Arab League initiative (SCR, 2011l). Consequently, in February 2012, India and South Africa voted in favour of a resolution

sponsored by Morocco proposing the deployment of an observation mission (UN, 2012c) as well as a draft resolution in July 2012. Both were vetoed by China and Russia (UN, 2012d).

These mixed responses demonstrate several key points. Firstly, Brazil, India, and South Africa have utilized multilateral bodies such as IBSA and the Arab League to seek solutions to settle the crisis, a key characteristic of so-called awkward powers. Secondly, they took a stance against a possible replication of the Libyan model through the BRICS coalition, displaying another characteristic of awkward powers: suspicion of great power behaviour and the utilization of collective association to leverage influence. Thirdly, by abstaining, they aimed to avoid straining ties with the P3, in essence a divergence from the posture of the great powers (awkward postures).

Trying to Influence Through Norm Entrepreneurship

The incongruence between human protection aims and their implementation on the ground (Taleski, 2018) has long been criticised by Brazilian authorities. Through a Brazilian initiative, a joint thematic briefing was held in February 2011 to discuss for the first time three protection-related thematic issues: the protection of civilians; women, peace, and security; and children and armed conflict. A key issue was the use of military force to protect civilians (SCR, 2011h). Due to the ongoing events in Libya, Brazil's Permanent Representative at the UN cautioned the need for accountability measures and underlined that "the use of force to protect civilians does not abrogate international law" (Brazil, 2011). In September 2011, at the UN General Assembly (UNGA), President Rousseff emphasised the "painful consequences of interventions" and raised deeper controversy over whether force can protect (Rousseff, 2011). Brazilian authorities went beyond criticism by proposing a provocative new idea of 'Responsibility while Protecting' (RwP), in which the country presented a set of principles to guide the international community when exercising R2P and called for enhanced Council procedures to monitor and assess how resolutions are interpreted and implemented to ensure accountability while protecting. The concept was formally presented in November 2011 centred on three major ideas: the need to revise the use of preventive measures in the implementation of R2P; the need to establish more specific criteria for the authorization of coercive intervention; and, normative and institutional accountability on the part of those authorized by the UNSC (UN, 2011a).

Since the concept of RwP challenged the ideas and interests of certain great powers, it was described as a 'spoiling tactic' by France, the UK, and the US (Singh, 2020), as "nothing more than a procedural roadblock" by the US, UK, and Germany, and was even outright rejected by some NATO state representatives (Welsh *et al.*, 2013). India had not endorsed the concept, but during the visit of the Brazilian President to India in March 2012, Indian government expressed its consent for further discussions at the UN (Singh, 2020). In South Africa, the concept did not lead to further discussion and did not become a point of reference (G. Carvalho, personal communication, March 15, 2022).

The proposal prompted debate on the misuse of R2P (by interpreting and implementing actions according to self-interest) as well as on the need to ensure the accountability of those authorised to use force. However, Brazil's efforts did not change any decision-making processes at the UNSC. This led to questioning whether and to what extent Brazilian attempts at norm entrepreneurship would be successful (Serbin, Pont, 2015). The case also illustrates the difficulty of implementing new ideas that question or oppose the concepts and interests of the major powers. Moreover, the diplomatic commitment of Brazilian authorities declined when the country left the UNSC, and the relevance of RwP has since faded away (see Kotyashko et al, 2018).

Brazil has actively pursued alternative methods to leverage influence through norm entrepreneurship (awkward pathways). However, the country's efforts have either lacked external acceptance or obtained only partial acceptance (power frustration), reflecting the difficulties of dealing with the UNSC's asymmetry (power asymmetry).

This case also resonates with what Malamud (2011) calls 'a leader without followers', highlighting the mismatch between the regional and global performance of Brazilian foreign policy. According to the author, although Brazil is a regional power, it has been unable to translate its structural and instrumental resources into effective leadership at the global level. Despite Brazil's pursuit of higher status through initiatives such as seeking a permanent seat at the UNSC, assuming the directorship of the WTO, and holding the presidency of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), it has encountered growing resistance from South American and Latin American countries. Malamud (2011) argues that Brazil's lack of success can be explained by insufficient military and economic power, a reluctance to build common institutions, and a fear of being perceived as a hegemonic neighbour.

Leveraging Influence Through Regional Organisations

In 2012, the group *Mouvement du 23-Mars* (M-23), composed of former members of the rebel National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), took control of Sake and Goma, the capital of a North Kivu province of the DRC (UN, 2013c). South Africa assumed a leading role in the AU and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to deal with the crisis. Thanks to negotiations sponsored by the ICGLR, in early December the M-23 withdrew its forces from these cities but failed to honor the agreed-upon 20km retreat from Goma (UN, 2013c). The worsening situation led the African Union (AU) to hold a meeting, resulting in the signing of the Framework for the DRC by representatives of 11 regional countries, the AU, the ICGLR, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the UN on 24 February 2013, which proposed the creation of an intervention brigade composed of the SADC countries (UN, 2014). Three days later, the UN Secretary-General issued a special report proposing the same (UN, 2013a, 2013b). On 28 March 2013, UNSC Resolution 2098 created the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) as part of MONUSCO, granting authorization to neutralize certain armed groups operating in the Eastern DRC. For the first time, the UNSC authorised a peace operation to use force to combat specific armed groups (UN, 2013d). Operations conducted by MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces led to the M23's surrender in November 2013.

The concept of the FIB was conceived by the ICGLR (Cammaert, 2013), and South Africa was a determinant for the approval of the force and its operationalization. South African decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, and the FIB continues to be seen as an exception to the country's foreign policy. Historically, South Africa's approach to the DRC has centred on bilateralism and implies a mixture of economic diplomacy and strategic vision of the conflict. Decisions are taken with input from the MIRC, the Ministry of Defence (MD), and the embassy in Kinshasa. Although the M23's area of activity is marginal to South African economic interests, the government understood that it should act to stabilize the conflict. Negotiation usually is a priority to the country's foreign policy, however, since negotiating with the M23 proved impossible, the solution implied the use of force. Moreover, the M23 case indicated the potential for increased significance of the MD internally and of the MIRC externally, contributing to the strengthening of African regional organizations (G. Carvalho, personal communication, March 15, 2022). In addition,

as a member of the UNSC, South Africa was aware of the difficulty of approving such an unprecedented peacekeeping mandate. South African efforts to ensure the FIB's regional approval was a way of pushing for a resolution in the UNSC. Furthermore, inserting this force into MONUSCO addressed the deployment's cost, budgeted at $100 million (Cammaert, 2013). The case also clearly evidenced the more assertive posture of the Zuma administration in responding to human rights violations. Thus, this case demonstrates how an elected member was able to pressure the Council through regional collaboration to decide on an issue of its direct interest, exemplifying awkward pathways and strategies. Even though the crisis began during its UNSC membership, South Africa continued working towards resolution (and yielding results) after its term ended.

Conclusion

Brazil, India, and South Africa understand their membership in the UNSC based on the premise that the UN remains the most appropriate forum for addressing the challenges of peace and security through collective cooperation. Given their status as 'awkward powers', they do not view national interests in parochial terms. Consequently, both their proactive engagement in UNSC agendas and their pragmatic adjustments to certain situations can be expected.

All three countries sought ways of overcoming difficulties faced within the Council. Although individually they reacted differently to situations in order to equilibrate their principles and strategic interests with the shifting contours of reality, they were generally aligned on more complex issues.

These countries have clearly shown preferences for negotiation as well as for incorporating the security-development nexus into peace operations. Engaging in armed intervention without properly exhausting other options first makes them uncomfortable; however, they all accepted the use of force in certain situations. In general, they advocated for the establishment of precautionary principles prior to the authorisation of the use of force and attempted to raise the bar for armed interventions in the name of the protection of civilians by the great powers. They contested certain intrusive norms of humanitarian intervention, such as the implementation of human protection measures seen in Libya, as well as practices of the UNSC, such as country-specific resolutions and pen-holding monopolized by permanent members.

They swayed across the P3, P2, and other regional groupings by adopting positions on a case-by-case basis. In certain situations, they challenged the P3 when they perceived politicisation within the Council machinery and, in decisive moments (e.g. Libya and Syria), they opposed the P3 together with Russia and China. These three countries desmonstrate diplomatic prowess compared to most other countries of the Global South. The period under examination, particularly 2011, presented certain favourable conditions as BRICS and IBSA countries were members of the Council for the first time. This alignment facilitated debates and collective agreements on specific situations. Moreover, in some situations, coalitions were built to leverage their position, while formal and informal mechanisms were used to make a difference. Nevertheless, what were their achievements in terms of influence as elected members of the UNSC? The cases presented in this paper allow us to draw up some conclusions regarding their influence and the dynamics of the UNSC.

In general, the majority of initiatives resulted in presidential statements. However, although such statements reflected the consensus of the UNSC and, therefore, constitute a significant reflection of the members' position, their concrete outcomes are questionable.

Brazil attempted to exert influence by allying with Turkey on the Iran issue and by modifying norms through the concept of RwP. In both cases, it suffered setbacks, mainly because they challenged positions already decided upon by the biggest powers. Similarly, Brazil, India, and South Africa tried to exert influence by allying with the P2 within the BRICS group in the case of Libya. However, they did not block the decision to apply enforcement measures, which had already been determined by P3 members. The negative result of the intervention, in their view, led the group to oppose attempts by the P3 to apply the Libyan model in Syria. However, although the P2 exercised its veto power, Brazil, India, and South Africa abstained on certain draft resolutions and voted in favour of others, especially when presented by countries representing regional organisations. Notably, South Africa had more success when using regional organisations to garner support for the approval of an unprecedented decision of the UNSC in the case of the DRC.

Finally, during the period discussed, all three countries appear to have harboured power ambitions, either in the international system (Brazil and India) or regionally (South Africa). Thereafter, there was an adjustment of foreign policies, mainly in Brazil and South Africa. The former has

clearly retracted its international stance of the last ten years, while the latter now accepts that it is not so big and has targeted its consolidation to countries of immediate interest. This adjustment can be interpreted as a more pragmatic decision in the face of the constraints imposed (e.g. economic and internal), but also the result of the evolution of the respective foreign policies.

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