

Sept/Oct 2005



# SAIIA

Published by the South African Institute of International Affairs

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## Developing IBSA into A Coalition of the Willing

THE India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Forum, launched two years ago to nurture tangible links between leading countries of the South, has rejuvenated South-South co-operation. Unlike past coalitions, which emerged from the colonial and Cold War eras, IBSA has skirted away from ideologically loaded anti-western rhetoric. It has focused on constructive home-grown development initiatives and captured the attention of countries from both the industrialised North and the marginalised South.

Nowhere is 'IBSA-fever' more evident than in Brazil. Under the leadership of President 'Lula' da Silva, IBSA has become a priority and forms the core of Brazil's South-focused foreign policy. Conferences are held every month on topics ranging from HIV/AIDS and security to technology transfer to inform the public and gain a better understanding of IBSA through perspectives from India and South Africa. Brazil is preparing itself for engagement on every level and has incorporated the views and interests of neighbouring countries in IBSA and other multilateral initiatives.

Across the Atlantic, South Africa has pursued a different approach and risks marginalisation in IBSA unless it can replicate Brazilian-style involvement of other regional players and demonstrate an assertive commitment to development and leadership in Southern Africa.

IBSA activities in South Africa and India pale in comparison to those in Brazil. The two appear less engaged with their regions on IBSA-related initiatives. Brazilian efforts to include or at least consider the broader interests of the region in the IBSA initiative have exposed political differences among IBSA members and tested the very foundation on which IBSA is built.

Trade and investment between the IBSA countries has never been significant. Though trilateral trade has grown substantially in recent years

– with more than a 600% increase in the past 10 years and totalling \$3 billion in 2004 – it is still relatively small when compared with traditional partners in Europe, North America and Asia. More reciprocal exchanges with tangible benefits are needed to galvanise the trilateral political alliance that exists.

The IBSA development fund, established to assist impoverished countries in the developing south, exposed some differences in political and development priorities among the three members. IBSA identified certain countries that would benefit most from small projects targeted at social upliftment. Haiti, which has suffered years of gross maladministration, civil unrest and is the most impoverished country in the western hemisphere, was number one on that list.

With troops already in Haiti, Brazil proposed that IBSA launch a 'clean-up' campaign in the capital of Port-au-Prince that would directly address problems of poverty and crime. India immediately expressed its commitment to the project, but South Africa – at first – rejected the proposal saying it conflicted with its policy toward Haiti. The policy is to deny recognition to the transitional government in Haiti, opting instead to support ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is residing in South Africa.

Following widespread criticism toward its Haitian policy in Brazil, which was perceived as undermining the development objectives of IBSA in the developing world, South Africa appears to have retracted from its initial position and is supporting the initiative in Haiti, along with others in Guinea Bissau, Laos and possibly even Palestine.

It is hoped that IBSA's development agenda in these countries will earn it recognition in the developing world, where it has been severely criticised. The so-called 'emerging powers of the south' are often seen by their neighbours as 'regional imperialists'. Brazil is constantly challenged by

## Developing IBSA continued

Argentina, its traditional rival in economic and political matters, and even Colombia resists Brazilian dominance in certain security issues. India is engaged in a power struggle with Pakistan and rivalry with China is growing. In Africa, South Africa is the undisputed economic power and its political influence is demonstrated in its approach to continent-wide development initiatives. But there is still resistance to its dominance, especially from African elites.

If IBSA is to succeed and establish real political cohesion in the developing world, far more needs to be done to include countries on the periphery. Development strategies need to target struggling countries. These should not be hijacked by divergent political agendas that have prevented aid from flowing to these countries in the past. The role of IBSA members in their respective regions needs to be recognised and accepted. This can be done through improved communication, consultation, inclusion in various initiatives and confidence building.

This does not imply a broadening of the IBSA membership. Rather it is a more realistic approach of addressing some of the pressing issues in the region by simultaneously using IBSA with first and second tier leadership in their respective regions.

South Africa should look to include other countries in Africa in IBSA initiatives on the continent in much the same way Brazil considers the interests of Argentina and others. The enthusiasm and active participation around IBSA in Brazil should be replicated in South Africa with greater participation from civil society and input from neighbouring countries to instil a sense of ownership in these development initiatives.

Finally, South Africa should continue to actively support the leadership roles of Brazil and India in their respective regions. They need to continue to align their foreign policy priorities to allow for the implementation of broader development objectives. The established political proximity between India, Brazil and South Africa should not be taken for granted. This requires ongoing efforts to improve their relationship and IBSA's influence in the developing world.

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## Will Burundi Finally Achieve Lasting Peace?

THERE are hopes for a lasting peace in Burundi following the successfully held peaceful elections. An historic event took place on 26 August when Pierre Nkurunziza, the leader of former Hutu rebel group *Conseil National pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie* (CNDD-FDD) was sworn in as the democratically-elected president. These progress happened after more than a decade-long civil war that claimed about 300,000 lives.

But it is too early to celebrate as there are major challenges that are still facing the country.

Firstly, the exclusion of civil society, in particular women, from a role in government is a concern. Talks have been held between rebel leaders and political elites, but the interests of Burundian citizens have been largely ignored. The marginalisation of the broader society has resulted in power struggles linked to the personal interests of the leaders. The first task of the new government should be to ensure that all the marginalised groups are drawn into the process.

Secondly, the new government should ensure that it addresses the issue of land-ownership in this small, land-locked country. Many people lost their land during the conflict when they became displaced. Given the limited availability of agricultural land, it will be difficult to accommodate the growing population. The government needs to put in place a proper legal framework to ensure that all the citizens receive fair treatment.

Thirdly, the government should ensure that it engages in talks with the *Forces Nationales de Liberation* (FNL) led by Agatha Rwasa, the sole rebel force still not part of the peace process. Ignoring this group could jeopardise the progress made.

Fourth, the government should revive the country's economy; introduce sound economic policies; and ensure that the high levels of corruption are curbed. That will attract foreign investors.

Lastly, democratic elections do not eternally guarantee an end to the war. The conflict in

Burundi started in 1993 after the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu. The roots of the conflict are found in the issue of Hutu and Tutsi ethnicity which became politicised. It is for this reason that there is concern about the political agreement made in terms of the Arusha Accord, giving Hutus and Tutsis representation in government of 60% and 40%, respectively. There is no representation for the minority group, the Twa, who have been marginalised for decades. It is essential that the new government ensures that all marginalised groups are given a role in the process of nation-building and rapprochement.

South Africa has played a major role in mediating in the Burundi conflict. Former President Nelson Mandela and former Deputy President Jacob Zuma played a pivotal role in bringing the warring parties together for the peace negotiations. Mandela's efforts led to the signing of the Arusha Accord in August 2000, which paved way for a transitional government. Zuma replaced Mandela as a mediator and he managed to bring together the parties who were not part of the Arusha Accord to sign, despite the reluctance of the rebels. South Africa was the first country to send military forces to ensure the safety of political leaders returning from exile to take part in the transitional government. Burundi can learn lessons from South Africa's experience of a smooth and peaceful transition from apartheid regime to democratically elected government. However, the fact that there are differences in terms of the dynamics of the two conflicts has to be acknowledged.

Finally, will Burundi achieve lasting peace? Only if all Burundians unite in addressing challenges and obstacles will peace be assured. The government and civil society have demonstrated their eagerness for peace and one hopes the wrong decisions taken after 1993 will not be repeated.

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# Simple Solutions to Poverty Alleviation And Development in China

CHINA has captured the world's attention. There are two key reasons for this: 1.3 billion people and a rate of economic growth doubling every five years since 1980.

In 2004 the economy surpassed \$1.6 trillion. Economic growth – averaging more than 8% annually since free market reforms were instituted in 1978 – is driven by the rapid development of the eastern seaboard feeding Japan and the Asian tigers.

It is a land of extremes. Beyond the tallest structure in Asia, the smallest microchip and the world's fastest train, China's socio-economic challenges are monumental. As one moves westward, lagging economic development is in stark contrast to the glitz of glass skyscrapers that now dominate the Shanghai and Beijing skyline. Problems of dire poverty, unemployment, insufficient healthcare and lack of education are endemic to China as elsewhere in the developing world. The difference is that in China there seems to be a plan in place to deal with them. More importantly, it is working.

Economic development is Beijing's top priority. But China is a harder place to be if you are not in Beijing, Shanghai or the eastern coastal cities. The legacy of Mao's disastrous initiatives like the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward divided the country and prevented rural workers from seeking work in urban centres. Government support in the western region at the time was non-existent and production was undermined by exorbitant farm taxes. The lack of basic services like running water and electricity, confined the rural poor to the harsh western regions of China.

The reform process post-1978 brought about change in the west. The government realised the shortcomings of a nation divided along socio-economic and ethnic lines and set out to reverse the atrocities of the past.

Over the past 25 years the west has been awarded preferential policies to attract investment and the government has introduced a number of poverty alleviation programmes in an effort to target the upliftment of the 300 million

people living there. This is an effort to integrate the entire population and ensure that the benefits of China's economic boom reach the most remote areas of the country.

Examples of decentralised development abound. For instance, in Ningxia Province, a dry arid region and totally reliant on the Yellow River, 5.9 million people – of which 34% are of the Hui minority group – are engaged predominantly in primary activities such as small-scale agriculture, animal husbandry and spin-offs from large coal deposits.

Local officials and ordinary citizens proudly recall Ningxia's achievements over the past 15 years. The economy is growing at above 10% per annum and average per capita income, at \$940, is edging closer to the national average of \$1100. Yet, poverty alleviation remains the most gruelling challenge. Reduced from an estimated 70% in the early 1980s, the level of poverty is now around 30%. While this is still uncomfortably high, Ningxia's fight against poverty reflects the impact in global terms of China's poverty alleviation.

Overall, the number of those defined as poor has been reduced from 500 million in 1980 to less than 90 million in 2000. This has been achieved through a combination of localised pilot projects throughout China, which compliment the investment incentives and policies of centralised government.

In Ningxia, projects are both ambitious in scale and far-reaching in effect. One such project, launched in 1986, has relocated 400,000 poverty-stricken people from the remote mountainous regions of southern Ningxia to villages surrounding cities such as the provincial capital, Yinchuan. The government is facilitating urbanisation by concentrating the sparse population of Ningxia in and around the commercial centres of the province. This generates a more productive population. It also assists government with service delivery, healthcare and educational obligations.

Around Yinchuan the government has flattened desert dunes, laid down a layer of fertile soil and created 5,000 hectares of grazing land. Such a mammoth task may seem bizarre

to many parts of Africa where there is an abundance of arable land. But in China – and Ningxia province in particular – such land is scarce. Feeding China's massive population with so few natural resources is probably the greatest challenge the country faces.

Government also subsidises the construction of horticultural greenhouses. These allow farmers to grow crops year-round and have proven 30 times more productive than previously used methods.

Yang Chun Yun, a maize farmer who was relocated with his family 15 years ago, laughs when asked if he would like to move back to his homeland 400km south of Yinchuan. Subsistence farming barely kept his family above the breadline. Now Yang earns a steady income and the government has helped him build a house. Regular access to water through canals that branch off the Yellow River and reliable infrastructure such as roads and electricity allow Yang to gather his produce with other small-scale farmers in his area and collectively sell to nearby markets. Government has even facilitated Internet access, allowing farmers to sell their products through the most modern channels.

While relocation has been the primary instrument to poverty alleviation in Ningxia, officials maintain that sustainable poverty relief and development is the result of hard work and the creation of a self-sustained economy. In the spirit of China's 'socialist market economy', government provides the support that encourages the poor to help themselves. Each community assumes ownership of the project and is collectively responsible for its success, instilling a strong work ethic and healthy competition among the newly-established villages.

Such a simple and pragmatic approach toward development and poverty alleviation on a localised level provides a valuable lesson for other developing countries with acute rural-urban wealth divides and rural poverty not dissimilar to Ningxia.

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# The US Africa Education Initiative: Investment in Education Never a Bad Idea

JUST prior to the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, President George Bush delivered a speech at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The speech was entitled The United States is Africa's Partner and Friend. In it he outlined the upcoming discussions due to take place at the summit regarding, *inter alia*, debt forgiveness, poverty alleviation and international efforts to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Bush used the occasion to announce three White House initiatives for Africa.

The first was a doubling of funding, to \$400 million, for the US African Education Initiative (AEI). The other two initiatives directed \$55 million toward increased justice and empowerment for women, and \$1.2 billion over five years toward an anti-malaria campaign.

Some analysts wondered at the apparent change of regional priorities on the part of Bush, in view of the signals from his campaign in 2000 that put Africa at the bottom of the foreign policy agenda. Then he stated that Africa was not one of the 'areas of strategic importance' to the US. Yet, at the Smithsonian five years later, he was clearly stating that a focus on Africa was critical 'because our interests are directly at stake' and also 'because conscience demands it.'

No doubt, the events of 11 September 2001 have greatly influenced the priorities in US foreign policy. Indeed, Africa, as a potential 'hotbed of terrorism', is now increasingly noted on the US foreign policy elite's radars. In addition, Africa's unexplored riches are attractive in view of the continuing conflict in the Middle East and recent fluctuations in the global oil market threatening to stymie the economic recovery just taking off in the US. Even if one decries the quest for US military bases and additional sources of friendly oil that may lie behind the administration's initiatives in Africa, certainly greater investment in education in Africa can never be a bad idea.

The AEI grew out of the Strengthening Basic Education in Africa initiative of the US Agency for International Development

(USAID), first announced in July 2001 and offering \$100 million to bolster education in Africa. A basis for AEI was laid by USAID's Education for Development and Democracy Initiative (EDDI) during the Clinton period, in response to an invitation from Mali President Konare in 1998. Initially, EDDI efforts were to be focused in seven nations, including South Africa.

Primary school enrollments and literacy rates in Africa are among the lowest in the world, with 42 million school-aged children in sub-Saharan Africa not enrolled in school at all. Many children in Africa cannot afford to pay tuition, and girls, especially, are unlikely to complete school due to social norms and the pressure of scarce resources. To exacerbate this situation, the HIV/AIDS death toll among teachers is expected to be 20% by the end of this year.

In the next four years (2006-2010), the \$400 million intended for the AEI would, according to the White House press release, go toward:

- Training for 500,000 teachers and administrators;
- Scholarships for 300,000 pupils, with an emphasis on educational opportunities for girls;
- Development and distribution of 10 million textbooks and learning and teaching materials;
- Improved access to education and training for out-of-school youth, orphans and other vulnerable children; and
- Improved access to productivity-increasing jobs skills training and development.

As always with presidential announcements regarding funding, nothing is certain until the bill is passed by both houses of Congress, and the actual programme might only be rolled out in 2007.

Education for the next generation in Africa is a priority for US foreign policy, in view of several findings. Among these is that 'educated young women have lower rates of HIV/AIDS, healthier families, and higher rates of education for their children.'

While there has been no official South African response to the increased AEI funding, there have been increased calls for the types

of educational opportunities the AEI foresees. As Elizabeth Sidiropoulos wrote in the introduction to a recent SALLA report: 'The development of a well-educated population is the one long-term state investment for which there can be no shortcuts and no surrogates. All African states have pledged to meet the Millennium Development Goals, which include attaining universal primary education by 2015. Ten years from that goal, not only is it looking increasingly difficult to attain, but Universal Primary Education is not the educational panacea for the developmental challenges of the continent.'

Basic literacy does not provide a population with the minimum requirements for skilled employment or the ability to set up businesses beyond the subsistence and informal enterprises common on the continent.'

At the recent launch in Johannesburg of the Nelson Mandela Institute of Science and Technology, incubated by the World Bank Institute, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and his Nigerian counterpart, as well as a leading expatriate African academic, spoke of the need to train engineers and scientists in Africa and called on the business community to make it possible for them to remain here to contribute to the development of the continent. As has been pointed out, one engineer is able to open a number of jobs just around himself.

In the *Saturday Star* of 3 September 2005, Nelvis Qekema, spokesperson of the South African Science and Technology ministry is quoted as saying: 'We must be cautious. Currently the unemployment rate is high, yet there are 500,000 jobs available. But they are only for skilled personnel.'

If the US's AEI can meet some of these needs for skilled and educated members of the workforce in South Africa and beyond, it will be helping by reducing Africa's poor and undereducated from becoming easy prey for terrorist recruiters.

*Martha Bridgman, SALLA Western Cape Branch Chairperson, and Tom Wheeler*