

2015/2/4: The dialogue forum IBSA

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The South-South-Cooperation between India, Brazil and South Africa

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In the course of the last two centuries new forms and ways of the South-South-Cooperation have developed. The best known of these dialogue forums is BRICS, the cooperation between Brazil, Russia, India, China and - since April 2014 - South Africa. Another group - BASIC, consisting of Brazil, South Africa, India and China - attracted attention with their common attitude of nonacceptance at international meetings several times, especially at climate conferences. Apart from BRICS and BASIC, the cooperation forum IBSA represents a further platform of mutual interchange, a group consisting of the important newly industrializing countries, and probably future great powers, India, Brazil, and South Africa. These three states consider themselves as preservers of democracy and human rights, stand up for free market economy, and have large populations with young demographic structures as well as ethnical and cultural diversity. From a geopolitical point of view, they represent the leading powers in their respective world regions already today - in South Asia, South America, and in (southern) Africa. Aside several regional organisations exist for Africa, Asia and Latin America, such as the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Common Market of South America MERCOSUR, as well as many less common ones, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) or the Mekong Ganga Cooperation Initiative (MGC). Intercontinental cross connections arrange meetings between Africa-South America (ASA) and the Arabian States-South America. Nearly all these manifold South-South-Cooperations were started because of economic considerations in order to extend and consolidate trade relations. Consequently, the approach of mutual and complementing support in production and consumption, exchange of resources, technological and scientific cooperation developed, in short, the establishment of a win-win-situation by synergy effects between the participating economies of the South. This new axis is generally assessed positively, especially by experts of the World Bank or the World Trade Association (WTO). Critics, on the other hand, consider the amplified South-South-cooperation to be a remake of the North-South-Relations, if Brazil, India, and above all China, mutate into new great powers which, in turn, impose their requirements upon the weaker developing nations. The competition of these three states for the resources and markets in Africa apparently confirms it. For the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) of the South, however, one assumption is alluring: that the economical unbalance - when accepting assistance - will not be additionally made difficult by Western sensitivities such as democracy and human rights. This essay picks up the dialogue forum IBSA between India, Brazil and South Africa, whose capacity is assessed controversially at the moment. Whereas some people predict slow and quiet death by merging in BRICS, others see a brilliant future for IBSA because of the adherence to common values and orientations (such as democratic-pluralistic regimes, multicultural inclusion, South-South-Cooperation), although the only commonality of BRICS (due to fundamental differences between its members) presumably is its position opposing the hegemony of the West. In the German-speaking area IBSA - as opposed to international reception and to BRICS - has been hardly investigated. For this reason, the authors first want to outline the origins and the present state of IBSA, and then they address profile and organisation. Concerning its activities, the innovative development fund of IBSA as well as the mutual extension of trade relations are examined more thoroughly. Another chapter deals with the relationships between IBSA and BRICS, which at the moment represent the most striking balance to the established powers on international stage. With the successful arrangement of common navy manoeuvres in the compound structure IBSAMAR (India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime), finally, in addition to the trilateral cooperation, a new balance of global geopolitical future scenarios is looming.