Network Powers: Strategies of Change in the Multipolar System

Daniel Flemes

_German Institute of Global and Area Studies_

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**Introduction**

_Prima facie_ the current global order shares its principal defining characteristic of multipolarity with the international system existing at the beginning of the twentieth century. Since then, the leaders of the modern nation-state drove us through two world wars and several other conflicts into the bipolar power structure of the Cold War era. Thereafter, the collapse of the Soviet Union gave way to a short period of unipolarity with one dominant power—the United States—and a few established major powers anxiously trying to preserve their prerogatives. Nowadays, as these efforts have seemingly not been successful, it appears that a century of wars and diplomacy has brought the international system right back to where it was at its inception. This circadian view is appropriate in terms of the system polarity, reflecting structures of international oligarchy, where power rests with a small number of powerful actors who determine the rules of the game.

This regressive tendency is even more accentuated upon viewing the nature of the dominant actors of current global politics; with the exception of the ceasing political integration of Europe, the situation is clearly indicative of the way being paved back to Westphalia. This path is paved by such rising powers as China, India, and Brazil, who are staunch guardians of the principle of national sovereignty, foremost because of their national weaknesses and territorial vulnerabilities (Tibet, Kashmir, the Amazon). The last time these states had to make a practical choice regarding the principle of national sovereignty was on U.N. Resolution 1973 on the Libya intervention in March 2011 under the premise of the “responsibility to protect;” China, India, and Brazil (and Russia and Germany) abstained from that Security Council vote. And, even though there has been written a lot on nonpolarity and the empowerment of non-state actors,¹ it is still powerful states and state coalitions that allow multilateral trade negotiations and climate conferences to fail.

According to this perspective, it seems that statesmen have merely spent the last hundred years treading water. But that would be to articulate only half of the truth. The multipolarity of the twenty-first century is fundamentally different from that of its harbingers in at least three ways. First, the geographic scope of multipolarity has been extended beyond the
European or Western concert of the previous century. As a consequence of the accelerated economic globalization, the new order is much more global with new power poles in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Second, the patterns of behavior and means of foreign policy enactment within the international system of states have changed dramatically. Great power wars or clashes of superpowers are no longer the dominant vehicles of global power shifts. In the past decade change and innovation in the meshwork of global politics have been induced through both formal and informal sites of negotiation and by the establishment of intergovernmental foreign policy networks. And, consequently, third, the procedural culture of international relations has changed fundamentally. The diplomatic culture of the networked world order is marked by an informal multilateralism, through which situational, policy-specific coalitions determine the outcomes of global bargains.

Foreign policy networks such as the G20 are characterized by the different roles of their member states. Some states might build coalitions located in the center of the foreign policy network; others might be marginalized and thus forced into outsider roles. If global decision-making is increasingly a matter of bargaining and coordinating divergent national interests in different global issue areas, the status of single states as agenda setters, brokers, and coalition builders is pathbreaking for the outcomes of those bargains. Brazil, China, India, and South Africa have gained relative weight in the international system during the first decade of the twenty-first century. I will discuss three major points in this essay: First, what are the primary strategies that make rising powers influential forces and veto players in global bargains, under the conditions of multipolarity? Second, different foreign policy networks such as India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA), Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC), or Brazil, South Africa, India, and China (BASIC) seem to be crucial vehicles for their ascension. Therefore, I will analyze the role and characteristics of these networks. Can we distinguish different kinds of foreign policy networks? And, third, it can be asked what the United States and other established powers might learn from the foreign policy strategies of Brazil, China, India, and South Africa?

I will tackle these questions through the lens of a network approach, which so far has been applied mainly to the transnational level of analysis, focusing on economic and other non-state actors. I will shed light on its capacity to also help us explore intergovernmental relations, which up until now has rarely been reflected upon. Hafner-Burton, Kahler and Montgomery brought network analysis into International Relations, challenging conventional views of power by defining network power in three different ways: access, brokerage, and exit options. Drawing on this seminal study that raises among other questions that of how
(state) actors increase their power by enhancing and exploiting their network positions, I will propose a typology of foreign policy networks. Three types of foreign policy networks play important roles in today’s shifting global order: mediation, advocacy, and substitution networks. These three overriding categories are characterized by different origins, memberships, and objectives. I will analyze how the different network types relate to each other and how particular actors have adopted better to the new environment than others by pursuing foreign policy strategies that strive for beneficial network positions.

**Strategies of Change**

The U.N. Security Council, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the G8 no longer represent the global configuration of power. Established powers that are in relative decline—in particular the United States—are confronted with the ever-increasing ambitions and demands of rising powers. Nevertheless, we can neither expect the complete decline of the dominant power, nor the outright appeasement of the rising powers, any time soon. Global power shifts will be expressed through three parallel processes: first, the gradual reform, if possible, of outdated formal institutions; second, the subtle decrease of their significance, if they prove to be resistant to reform; and, third, the emergence of network patterns resultant from the strategies and behaviors of state actors who have become discontent with the formalized status quo of the international system. For these reasons, the rising powers have no interest to disrupt—only to modify—the current order, so as to improve their own systemic position. Instead, then, of the international order being prone to conflict, in fact innovation pressure, accompanied by some atmospheric turbulence, will be generated by the activities of those dissatisfied actors who can effectively cut across established boundaries.

The primary strategic choice made by rising powers has been that of soft balancing, which does not directly challenge U.S. military preponderance, but rather uses non-military tools to delay, frustrate, and undermine any unilateral policies. Soft balancing involves the use of institutional strategies such as the formation of limited diplomatic coalitions or ententes—like IBSA or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—to constrain the power of the United States and other established powers. This institutional strategy is also referred to as buffering and aims to extend the room for maneuver of weaker states vis-à-vis the stronger states.

Soft balancing also involves the strengthening of economic ties between rising powers—through trading blocs and other types of sector cooperation—to shift relative economic power,
which as a result increases the economic growth of its members, while also directing trade away from non-members. However, the possibilities for bi- and multilateral trade among Brazil, China, India, and South Africa are limited by several key constraints. For instance, their different geographic sizes and the varying degrees of global integration of their economies lead to different degrees of trade benefits. On one hand, the rising powers are very competitive in different specific sectors, such as Brazil’s agro-business, India’s service sector, and China’s low- to middle-tech products. On the other hand, the vulnerable sectors that each of them wants to protect before opening their markets also differ and lead to divergent interests in the WTO negotiations. The limited complementarities that exist between the four economies are reinforced by the fact that they compete for access to the OECD markets.

The most important soft balancing instrument employed by rising powers has been their “entangling diplomacy”: that is, the use of the rules and procedures of international institutions in order to influence the established powers’ foreign policies and effect emerging norms in ways that are congruent with the interests of the rising powers. In addition, rising powers use global governance institutions and summits to build new coalitions and networks for the pursuit of common interests. Just two examples are that the IBSA Forum was launched at the 2003 G8 meeting in Evian and the G3 was established during the U.N. General Assembly of the same year. Two key demands of IBSA/G3 are the reform of the U.N. Security Council and the establishment of global market conditions that allow developing countries and emerging economies to benefit from their comparative advantages in agriculture, industry, and services. However, while the WTO negotiations have hardly progressed in terms of content or resulted in greater representation for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the IBSA states have been able to improve their own individual positions in the international trade hierarchy. In essence, the global approach of rising powers is much more pluralistic than universalistic. At the 2004 WTO conference in Geneva, Brazil and India were invited to form the G5 preparation group at the heart of the WTO trading system, together with the EU, the United States, and Australia. And, at the German G8 Summit in 2007, Brazil, China, India, and South Africa (as well as Mexico) were invited to formalize their dialogue with the elitist club of the world’s richest industrialized countries through the so-called Heiligendamm or O5 process.

The SCO summit in Yekaterinburg in June 2009 was simultaneously held together with the first BRIC summit, where state leaders advocated for the institutionalization of the G20 into a more democratic framework of global decision-making. Only three months later, the Pittsburgh G20 summit established the protagonist roles of Brazil, China, India, and South
Africa, as well as of six other countries from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East (Indonesia, South Korea, Argentina, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Turkey). Most scholars of IR agree that the G20 is the new permanent council for international economic cooperation and will essentially replace the G8, which will continue to meet on major security issues but which will in future carry less influence.11

The invitation of the rising powers to the G5 and O5 already reflected the increasing acceptance and recognition by the established powers of the former’s (prospective) major power status. Moreover, the gradual reform of the IMF reform and the official parity of places at the table of the G20 demonstrate that the system is responsive and that the established powers are willing to accommodate the demands of the newcomers. It is my contention that the systemic repositioning of Brazil, China, India, and South Africa cannot, though, only be explained by their evident—and increasing—material capabilities. Their relatively rapid rise is also a consequence of the successful foreign policy strategies that have been pursued by those rising powers. So far, their global approach has roughly consisted of a discursive strategy that stresses their representative function and role for the developing world in general, and for their regions in particular, while their strategic approach has simultaneously been aimed at them becoming equal members of the great powers club. The rising powers now play key roles in a multiplicity of global institutions. They are highly integrated in the global order and also operate within single global institutions in order to enhance incremental power shifts.12 Ultimately, this course of action is intended to transform the global order in such a way that allows for the realization in the medium term of the power gains that have long been aspired to.

To accomplish this goal, Brazil, China, India, and South Africa—in contrast to the relatively static behavior of the established powers in this regard—have been innovating new cooperation processes such as BRIC or BASIC. The rising powers thus pursue a strategy of “latent multi-institutionalization”, which is reflected in their omnipresence on the global stage in flexible coalitions, all of them characterized by low degrees of institutionalization (G3, G5, O5 etc.). This network strategy guarantees a maximum of national sovereignty, flexibility, and independence to the rising powers’ foreign policy-makers. The soft balancing behavior of those state actors discontent with the status quo institutions has brought forth an incremental reform of the international order. One of the most fundamental changes that has been induced by these innovators was a change of the procedural culture of international relations. What has, consequently, emerged is a zeitgeist of multilateral informality, which will mark the networked world order of the twenty-first century.
Building a Networked World Order

It is my assumption that powerful states are, and increasingly will be, the most important nodes of the networked world order, and that, accordingly, regional institutions and cooperation processes will subsequently play a more subordinate role in multipolarity. While rising powers who have already reached the great power status\(^1\) (namely China and India) place less emphasis on regional institutions, those who still strive for that status continue to stress, at least rhetorically, the importance of regional cooperation processes. These concentric networks consist of the MERCOSUR, the UNASUR, and the CALC in the Brazilian case\(^1\), and the SACU, the SADC, and the AU in the case of South Africa\(^1\).

In their roles as regional powers both players have initiated most of these concentric processes and have successfully preserved their positions as their fulcrums. However, instead of building democratic and participative regional institutions, they mainly provide to their regions the specific public goods that are necessary for their own economic development—such as relative stability and regional infrastructure. Even though the Brazilian and South African foreign policy discourses suggest the opposite, their strategic approaches rest on the assumption that regional acceptance and legitimacy do only matter to a very limited extent for their path to great powerhood. They believe that they can ultimately make it alone on the global stage, as China and India are already doing.

As a result, in this instance only global foreign policy networks will be reflected upon. On the base of what Podolny and Page\(^1\) understand by network organizations, foreign policy networks are defined as a collection of more than two state actors that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange.

Rising powers that are located at the crossroads of various foreign policy networks—such as BASIC, BRIC, or IBSA—can be termed as network powers. Because of their strategy of latent multi-institutionalization network powers lie at the very heart of the new world order. Within this reality, their network diplomacy may aim at a further increase of their influence in the multipolar order and/or at functional foreign policy goals that are connected to issues of security or climate. In the following analysis, I will distinguish between mediation, advocacy, and substitution networks.

In spite of their relative success, rising powers continue to be mostly excluded from mediation networks that tackle global security issues, such as the Middle East Quartet\(^1\).
(consisting of the EU, Russia, the United Nations, and the United States). Mediation networks are ad hoc mechanisms that temporarily bring states together in order solve a specific security problem. The participating powers do not necessarily share values or interests (besides the resolution of the conflict), and often favor different ways of handling the respective security crisis. With the exception of China, which—due to its permanent UNSC seat and its broker position—is part of the P5-plus-1 group on Iran\(^{18}\) and of the Six-Party Talks on North Korea\(^{19}\), the established great powers have so far successfully defended these last exclusive domains of high politics. However, the inclusion of Germany in the P5-plus-1 group and the mediation initiative of Brazil and Turkey regarding the Iranian nuclear program portend the demise of these prerogatives.\(^{20}\) We can assume that the new powers’ interest in participating in mediation networks stems not at least from the connected increasing international prestige and authority, the rise in the global security hierarchy and, in particular, from their UNSC ambitions.

Even though, at first glance, the Iran initiative of the Turkish–Brazilian tandem fell thorough, both players successfully managed to nevertheless secure their place on the chessboard of the Middle East and as such will continue to offer their mediation services in the region. The “amateurish conduct” of the Turkish–Brazilian mediators, as many political observers put it, can be turned into an argument for their future inclusion into a network of more experienced negotiators. Furthermore, as UK Prime Minister David Cameron said, in a speech delivered in Ankara in July 2010, Turkey is the European country with “the greatest chance of persuading Iran.”\(^{21}\)

With a view to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Brazil’s former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, offered his mediation services and said on his Middle East tour, in March 2010, that the peace process requires “someone with neutrality” to speak to all sides.\(^{22}\) And, a few weeks before he left office, he added, “I am convinced that there will be no peace in the Middle East as long as the United States is the tutor of peace there.”\(^{23}\) Political analysts proposed to expand the membership of the current Middle East Quartet suggesting to include China and India to form a Middle East Sextet.\(^{24}\)

During the second Indo-U.S. strategic dialogue in July 2011, Secretary of State Clinton stated for the first time that the U.S. is looking toward India to partner with in the transition process in Afghanistan.\(^{25}\) India’s soft power approach with its emphasis on capacity-building has been well received and appreciated in Afghanistan, and by directing most of its aid through the Afghan government, India has gained legitimacy and credibility. From the perspective of the United States, the active inclusion of rising powers in mediation networks
that tackle the world’s crucial security crises might be the litmus test of its future foreign policy. Balanced network diplomacy might be the key to overcoming the hitherto historical failure of peace-building initiatives in the Middle East because the shortfall in Washington’s legitimacy in the Middle East, which is partly a result of its lack of neutrality, in the networked world order can no longer be balanced by its hard power.

To justify the inclusion of rising powers in mediation networks, one might expect them to bring in novel ideas and approaches to overcome long-standing conflicts. The aspiring powers have yet not lived up to these expectations. In addition, the aforementioned orthodox stance on national sovereignty most rising powers have, along with their subsequent unwillingness to intervene into the internal affairs of conflict parties, are albatrosses around their necks on the way to gaining more prominent roles in mediation networks.

Advocacy networks are foreign policy networks among peers linked by common interests in global politics. The origins of such networks mostly stem from soft balancing coalitions; their membership consists exclusively of non-status quo powers. Advocacy networks are relatively horizontal clusters characterized by flat hierarchies and small memberships. Their members have built relatively strong ties based on common interests. The network powers’ common foreign policy objectives, on the one hand, consist of their quest for the major power status. On the other, they share issue-specific interests. Two examples will further highlight these defining characteristics and relative success of the network powers’ advocacy networks.

First, the BASIC countries act jointly in climate affairs, adhering to the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” since the Copenhagen summit, where they threatened their unanimous walkout if their commonly held minimum position was not met by the established powers. At their Cape Town meeting of April 2010, the BASIC network announced the possibility of them providing financial and technical aid to poorer countries, an action apparently intended to shame the established powers into increasing their own funding for the mitigation of climate change issues in developing countries. Accordingly, the Cancun agreement includes a “Green Climate Fund”, proposed to be US$100 billion a year by 2020.

Second, the BRIC format has so far mainly pushed for the reform of global financial institutions. At the first summit in Russia in 2009, the BRIC countries advocated for a reform of the IMF voting quota system. In 2010 at the G20 meeting in South Korea the finance ministers and central bank governors of the G20 agreed on a shift in country representation at the IMF of six percent in favor of dynamic emerging markets, which moved the BRIC countries up to be among the top ten shareholders of the IMF.
With regard to another question of the global financial order the BRIC states have been less consensual: particularly Russia had stressed the need for a new global reserve currency to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar. In their summit communiqué the BRIC states urged, in more general terms, the necessity for the creation of a “diversified, stable, and predictable” international monetary system. Even though the Chinese representatives also advocated for an alternative international reserve currency, they were not interested in the Kremlin’s “dollar-bashing” and enforced their more cautious approach. This incident demonstrates that the influence of network members can vary and that alternative common stances of the BRIC network may have different distributational implications for the member states, for instance the negative impact of a devaluation of the U.S. dollar on the Chinese economy in view of the PRC’s great dollar reserves.

In addition to their convergent interests, some advocacy networks share a wide range of norms and values, such as democracy and human rights. Their member states are connected by “we-feelings”, which are reinforced by common processes of socialization that occur as by-products of their continuing collaboration; also, some of them—for instance the IBSA states—are building nascent cross-regional security communities, as defined by Karl W. Deutsch. Value-driven networks are a subtype of advocacy networks, and are more suitable for the diffusion of norms and values in the international system. It is true that the global justice discourse projected by the IBSA Dialogue Forum defends the principles of equality among states and the universality of human rights. But when its governments had to weigh human rights protection against the principle of non-intervention, they have often not been able to convert their discourse into political practice. The IBSA states are also committed to democratic multilateralism and the promotion of sustainable social and economic development. Likewise, the G4 based its claim to permanent UNSC seats on a civilian power discourse that advocates good global citizenship, peace, solidarity, and the diffusion of equality, justice, and tolerance. This kind of value-driven networks have been formulated and nurtured among many who share the common historical experience of exclusion or relative marginalization from the global decision-making processes.

Both issue-driven and value-driven advocacy networks contribute to trust building and also succeed in generating and consolidating solidarity among their exclusive membership clientele. Further inward functions of advocacy networks include policy coordination and the production and the exchange of knowledge among rising powers. The most important outward functions of advocacy networks consist of agenda setting in global bargains, lobbying in formal institutions, and the diffusing of norms and ideas of the network members into the
global political milieu. In a revision of world polity theory, Beckfield argues that “states […] with privileged positions in the world polity are able, to a significant degree, to set agendas, frame debates, and promulgate policies that benefit them.” As demonstrated above, advocacy networks can successfully deploy processes of innovation at the systemic level, induce new procedural cultures, or even challenge the entire structure of the global order itself.

Substitution networks are the product of the systematic pressures generated by rising powers. These foreign policy networks—such as the G20—have a mixed membership of established and rising powers and stake the claim of being universally representative. Substitution networks have as their aim the replacement of formal institutions. Until then, the former continuously threaten to substitute or overrule the latter through their mere existence, if the status quo institutions should prove to be immune to being reformed. Substitution networks are established for the long run, and might eventually come to follow the path of formalization, once the previously status quo institutions have become completely outdated.

Because of their more numerous and more diverse membership, substitution networks tend to be more hierarchical than the aforementioned network types. As a result, they are not only platforms for discussion and negotiation, but also might serve as sites for the cooption and/or subtle coercion of weaker states. It is my contention that substitution networks will become increasingly instrumental in global policy coordination and in the management of global crises and public goods. As long as processes of institutionalization do not get under way, then the necessary decisions will be made by way of both tough bargaining and complex consensus building.

Within substitution networks, the rising powers benefit from their additional memberships in a variety of advocacy networks. Their multiple network links result in holding privileged roles as bridge-builders and agenda-setters, which are the structural foundations of influence in the networked world order. As an example of this, one might point to when the finance ministers of the BRIC formulated a joint communiqué at the G20 meeting in September 2009 in London, which called for a major revision of the quota distribution of the Bretton Woods institutions.

Advantages of Network Strategies

Foreign policy networks represent a specific mode of international interaction, which is grounded in three principles: their member states are mutually dependent; the ties between
them can be channels for the transmission of both material (for example, weapons or money) and non-material products (information, beliefs and norms); and persistent patterns of association among them create structures that can define, enable or restrict their foreign policy behavior. All three principals are most distinct in advocacy networks, whose member states are connected by more stable ties than the other network types. Knoke defines network power shortly as “prominence in networks where valued information and scarce resources are transferred from one actor to another.”

Hence, the competitive advantages of network powers arise, in part at least, from their privileged access to information that is a consequence of their trust-based ties to various other powerful states. In addition, the experiences of cooperation and shared learning processes among network powers allow them to relate to each other on the basis of greater credibility and predictability in their reciprocal behavior. Higher levels of mutual trust result in a comparatively greater reliability in the actions and expectations initiated among such interest alliances. Network powers have also become more familiar with the foreign policy interests and the strategies of their peers in global bargains. Sociological findings suggest that highly central actors in networks possess high social capital. These comparative advantages are most pronounced—and the position of the broker state is most beneficial and influential—when it is the only actor that can connect several clusters of states and resolve interconnected problems of multilateral coordination.

These information asymmetries give network powers much room to maneuver in negotiations at the G20 summits and elsewhere. The more network links that state actors build, then the more powerful and autonomous from single actors they will potentially be; however, the network opportunities decrease with an increase in the number of hostile relations that exist with single major powers. In this regard, Brazil and South Africa are on good terms with all established great powers, a situation that might partially compensate for their hard power deficiencies as compared to China and India, who maintain a competitive relationship with each other (besides the several further constraints existent in the Asian security cluster). However, because of their multiple instances of friendly relations with their peers, network powers are actually relatively independent from single great powers—even though these great powers might command superior material resources. This point is also true in the case of neighboring states or secondary powers, who might not be willing to endorse or follow the rising power’s claims to regional leadership.

In the current order these comparative advantages increase not only with the number of network memberships, but also with the dissimilarity (clubs of established powers, emerging...
powers, developing countries, and clubs of mixed membership) and the looseness of the different foreign policy networks. From this perspective, India and Brazil are the champions of the networked world order. They are part of all the aforementioned advocacy networks of the rising powers. India and Brazil are also the only rising powers that have joined the foreign policy networks of both established and rising powers. Through the G4 they maintain “special relationships” with Germany and Japan, and in the G5 preparation group of the WTO they negotiate face-to-face with the United States and the EU. The perspective of network analysis suggests that in particular, midlevel, open and connected powers like Brazil and India, skilled at building and exploiting their position in multiple networks may gain global influence. Therefore, the asymmetry in influence (decision makers versus decision takers) vis-à-vis their regional neighbors that are mostly excluded from global advocacy networks will further increase.

And even though China has based its rise to a great extent on its material power (potential), Beijing successfully projects network power in many ways. First, like the other network powers, it participates in many of the aforementioned advocacy networks. Second, along with Brazil and India, the PRC is a key peace-broker in the mediation networks on Iran and North Korea. Third, China is an influential broker in trade and financial affairs because it is the most important geo-economic hub of the Asian and Trans-Pacific spheres. And fourth, Beijing strives for central network positions in external regions like Africa and Latin America that can be exploited in order to build up cross-regional follower networks to gain support for its position in global bargains.

The networked world order is still hierarchical, even though far less so than the bi-, uni-, or even multipolar orders of the past. As a matter of course there exist hierarchical relations within this order, particularly inside substitution networks. The hierarchy of foreign policy networks is influenced not only by the relative material resources of its different members but also to a large extent by their institutional capabilities—such as diplomatic professionalism and effectiveness of negotiation. The structural power of state actors depends, for instance, on their effectiveness in constructing new, and cultivating already-established, diplomatic ties. In this regard, effectiveness means the necessity of indirectly fostering many different relations, by investing fewer capabilities directly only into exclusively bilateral channels.

Even though hierarchy continues to be a helpful category for the understanding of foreign policy networks, their stratification can ultimately be better understood as consequential patterns of center and periphery. While it is true that the center–periphery pattern—in a way similar to the nature of the hierarchical structure—is characterized by the center holding high
status, the relations between the center and the periphery in foreign policy networks are, however, marked more often by reciprocity than they are within formal institutions. The hierarchy of the shifting global order is increasingly defined by the degree of centrality that state actors achieve.

Currently the center of the G20 comprises of four established powers—France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and four rising powers—Brazil, China, India, and South Africa. The civilian powers Germany and Japan are in a category of their own; marginalized from global decision-making after the Second World War, they nevertheless managed to jump on the bandwagon of the rising powers’ soft balancing coalition, even though they exist as (second-rate) members of several established clubs, such as the G8. As a result, similar to Russia, who as a declining established power now participates in rising powers’ advocacy networks, Germany and Japan are located in advantageous network positions, with great opportunities for brokering and bridge-building between their G8 and G4 partners in the substitution networks.

Hafner-Burton and her colleagues compare the power of network brokers with imperial systems drawing on Nexon and Wright: “Most accounts of empire emphasize bilateral relations between the imperial metropole and its peripheral possessions as the core of the empire’s definition. Network theory suggests an equally important characteristic: power claimed by the metropole because of the weakness of network ties among nodes on the periphery. The metropole creates bargaining power vis-à-vis its colonial possessions, not only through its intrinsic military and economic capabilities, but also by its ability to construct and maintain exclusive [...] links to societies on the periphery.”

The semi-periphery of the G20 consists of two further potential network powers—the European Union and Turkey. The EU suffers from its lack of actor status, and the absence of a harmonized Common Foreign and Security Policy. The EU’s ‘capability–expectations gap’ persists because of a lack of decision-making procedures capable of overcoming dissent. As long as the consensus–expectations gap exists, the EU is likely to remain a partial and inconsistent foreign policy actor. These deficiencies undermine its potential role as a peace-broker in the Middle East or as a bridge-builder into Africa, with South Africa as its central gateway. Turkey is both culturally and geopolitically predestined to be a mediating bridge between the established Western powers and the Muslim world.
The World Ahead

In general, three factors might explain the influence of state actors in the multipolar order: relative material, ideational, and institutional capabilities. Foreign policy strategies are the vehicles by which to convert these capabilities into political influence. The relative wealth of a country is a precondition for large-scale military capabilities and coercive strategies. In the same way, relative legitimacy and credibility can be converted into discursive strategies. The innovative perspective of the network approach challenges conventional views of power in International Relations. It is true that relative material power still is—and for the foreseeable future will remain—the precondition for major influence in the international system of states. But power is no longer derived solely from individual attributes, such as material capabilities.

It has been demonstrated here that, for the definition of the global status of states in the new order, military and economic resources lose ground to institutional resources; in particular, to network capabilities such as information advantages and brokering capacities. Distinct diplomatic abilities of coalition and bridge building bring about new patterns of asymmetry. The power of a particular state actor depends on its network position, defined by its persistent relationships with other powerful states. Central network positions with high levels of prestige become foreign policy objectives in their own right because they entail more visibility and attraction on the global stage. Powerful states in prestigious network positions incrementally become the destination guiding cooperation proposals and information exchange. Consequently, network powers have to bear lower searching and bargaining costs than others.

In this regard, the United States—as well as the EU and Germany—have engaged in so-called strategic partnerships with Brazil, China, India, and South Africa in recent years. On initial scrutiny, this bilateral approach seems quite beneficial because, as a Canadian free trade negotiator remarked, “negotiating with the United States is like sleeping with an elephant.” But the rising powers’ advocacy networks reflect a superior approach because, as detailed above, in the networked order diplomatic effectiveness is conditional upon the ability to indirectly fostering many different relations, as opposed to the channeling of diplomatic capabilities directly into bilateral endeavors. Thus, the central player in the networked world order will be the one with the most connections. However, the view that the United States has a “clear and sustainable edge” because of its position in the Atlantic hemisphere and its deep ties to the Asian hemisphere might be more a potentiality than an actual fact.
Nye confuses the logic behind building counterbalancing blocs and foreign policy networks when he proposes the enhancement of the net position of the United States by building an interest alliance with Japan and Europe, so as to undermine an allied East Asia.\textsuperscript{57} The impacts and outcomes of strategies of balancing and exclusion are very limited in the networked world order because divergence and convergence of national interests do not depend on belonging to certain regions or to “the West”; the composition of advocacy networks shifts according to the interests and needs in each global issue area. To paraphrase the immortal words of Bill Clinton, “It’s the policy, stupid!” As states form security alliances with some states and trade with others, they will have to form distinct networks to pursue their climate and currency-related interests. In this regard, it even might be possible to conceive of different major power hierarchies across various issues areas. For instance, both Brazilian and Japanese foreign policies have aimed at achieving a major power status in climate change politics.\textsuperscript{58}

It is a situation that will become more complicated, as we can realistically expect an extension of the G20 agenda beyond purely economic and financial issues.\textsuperscript{59} At the 2010 summit of the G20, held in Seoul, global problems such as corruption, energy, and food security were also discussed. In the post-Copenhagen context, analysts and diplomats have looked to the G20 as an alternative forum in which to break the current deadlock between the United States, the EU, and the BASIC network. Global health and trade are further possible issue areas that might, in the medium term, be negotiated through the G20. An extended G20 agenda can turn the summits into locations of highly complex cross-issue bargaining (for instance, the reductions of agricultural subsidies in return for the reduction of CO\textsubscript{2} emissions).

In the course of cross-policy negotiations, states, as such, have to meet two preconditions for not being taken advantage of by their counterparts. First, there is an increasing need for the coordination and the formulation of competence guidelines for foreign policies at the state level, because ministries of environment, health, foreign affairs, and trade have to coordinate their specific interests so as to not be played off against each other in the course of multilateral cross-policy bargaining. And, second, before being able to build cross-issue coalitions a state has to find those players that share issue-specific interests and to ally with them; not least because cross-policy deals will not always be necessary and/or possible.

The objective of statecraft has changed from managing the balance of power to managing global interdependence; therefore, established powers such as the United States have to build advocacy networks by convening different clubs for different purposes.\textsuperscript{60} The same rallying cry is pertinent to Germany and Japan as well, potential network powers that have not yet
used their network opportunities. Instead of building new advocacy networks, though, Germany stoically stresses the priorities of the European integration process and the cultivation of the historically rooted transatlantic relations, and Japan its transpacific relations, as the central pillars of their respective foreign policies. German foreign policy-makers in particular seem to fear that the United States and European major powers might interpret innovative partnerships between Germany and rising powers as a turning away from them and the heading towards a new *Sonderweg*. However, examples such as the Indo–US nuclear deal\(^6\) and the strategic armament alliance between France and Brazil\(^6\) in place since 2008 demonstrate the extended room to maneuver existent in the multipolar order.

Failure to explore these new corridors of autonomy and flexibility will not only lead to the missing of the train back to Westphalia, but also, more crucially, the missing of the opportunities offered by the networked world order. Peter Wittig, German Ambassador to the United Nations, stated upon Germany’s election as a non-permanent Security Council member (2011–12) that while a permanent seat for the EU was a long-term project, a German seat was the greatest immediate priority. Hardeep Singh Puri, the top UN representative of India, which was similarly elected for a two-year term, decisively emphasized that India “will never leave the Security Council again.” Even though the reform of the U.N. system remains highly uncertain, the current non-permanent Security Council seats of Brazil, Germany, India, and South Africa underscore a relative responsiveness of the status quo order. But most likely, this cheap way to accommodate the rising powers will not pay off in the long run.

With regard to the role of the United States in the process of reforming the global order, a deep misunderstanding undermines the constructive collaboration with the rising powers. When the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, addressed the Council on Foreign Relations in September 2010,\(^6\) she stated that the solving of foreign policy problems today requires “linking nations, regions, and interests as only America can. [...] The United States can, must, and will lead in this new century. [...] And countries like China and India, Turkey, Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, as well as Russia having to accept [...] abiding by a set of the rules of the road.” The strategy of picking and choosing certain rising powers to integrate into institutions such as the Security Council—if they have proved, from the perspective of the United States, to be responsible global stakeholders—does not seem a very promising one in a networked world order.

The rising powers do not, and are not obliged to, grant the United States the legitimacy and sole authority to define either the rules of the game or what responsible behavior is. On the contrary, many leaders of rising powers argue that there are alternative forms of burden-
sharing and assuming global responsibilities than supporting or participating in military interventions. A dominant leadership style that partially neglects the principles of justice and relative equality of states is not likely to pay off because the networked world order is more transparent, horizontal, and reciprocal than its predecessors. The United States is the most visible player, as it still resides at the center of the current order and also because it is the preferred target of criticism, often fueled by anti-Americanism. A selfish style of leadership would make the needed soft power gains extremely difficult to obtain. And, most strikingly, the United States is no longer in the position to be able to appoint new global decision-makers. If the rising powers do not perceive that they are being treated as equals, they can exert leverage from their privileged network positions to replace in the medium term formal institutions with substitution networks.

1 As one example, see Richard N. Haas, The Age of Nonpolarity - What will follow U.S. Dominance, Foreign Affairs 87: 3, May/ June 2008, pp. 44-56.
13 For the discussion of what makes a great power in the contemporary system of states, see Thomas J. Volgy et al., Major Power Status in International Politics, in Volgy, ‘Mayor Powers and the Quest for Status ‘, pp. 1-26.
14 On the Brazilian regional strategy see Daniel Flemes, Brazilian Foreign Policy in the Changing World Order, South African Journal of International Affairs 16: 2, 2009, pp. 161-182; and Sean Burges, Consensual Hegemony: Theorizing the Practice of Brazilian Foreign Policy, International Relations 22: 1, 2008, pp. 65-84
1. From the perspective of network analysis homophily can be a mechanism in the formation of networks, a tendency for actors to form ties based on common attributes; on homophily, see Howard F. Taylor, *Balance in Small Groups* (New York: Van Nostrand Reilhold, 1970). But as argued above structural homophily (such as similar economic structures) can also lead to competition (for market access) instead of cooperation.


3. Turkey can stop Iran getting nuclear bomb, says Cameron, Guardian, 27 July 2010.


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10. Brazil, Russia, India and China also agreed to invite South Africa to the 2011 BRIC summit in Beijing, where the network was renamed into BRICS.

11. The BRIC summit communiqués are available at the website of the Kremlin, [http://eng.kremlin.ru](http://eng.kremlin.ru).


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For the argument that nodes positioned between different network clusters in structural holes (high ‘between centrality’) have high social capital, see Mark Granovetter, The Strength of Weak Ties, American Journal of Sociology 78: 6, pp. 1260-80.


Hafner-Burton, ‘Network Analysis for International Relations’, p. 574.


For networks and hierarchy, see Martinez-Diaz and Woods, ‘Developing Countries in a Networked World Order’, p. 12-3.


Gregory Treverton and Seth Jones, Measuring National Power (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2005).


For empirical empirical evidence of pre-existing network connections forging more additional ties than less-connected nodes (preferential attachment), see Albert L. Barabási and Réka Albert, Emergence of Scaling in Random Networks, Science 286: 5439, pp. 509-12, cited in Hafner-Burton, ‘Network Analysis for International Relations’, p. 568.

Slaughter, ‘America’s Edge’, p. 11.


Council on Foreign Relations Address by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, see the transcript at: http://www.cfr.org/diplomacy/council-foreign-relations-address-secretary-state-hillary-clinton/p19840