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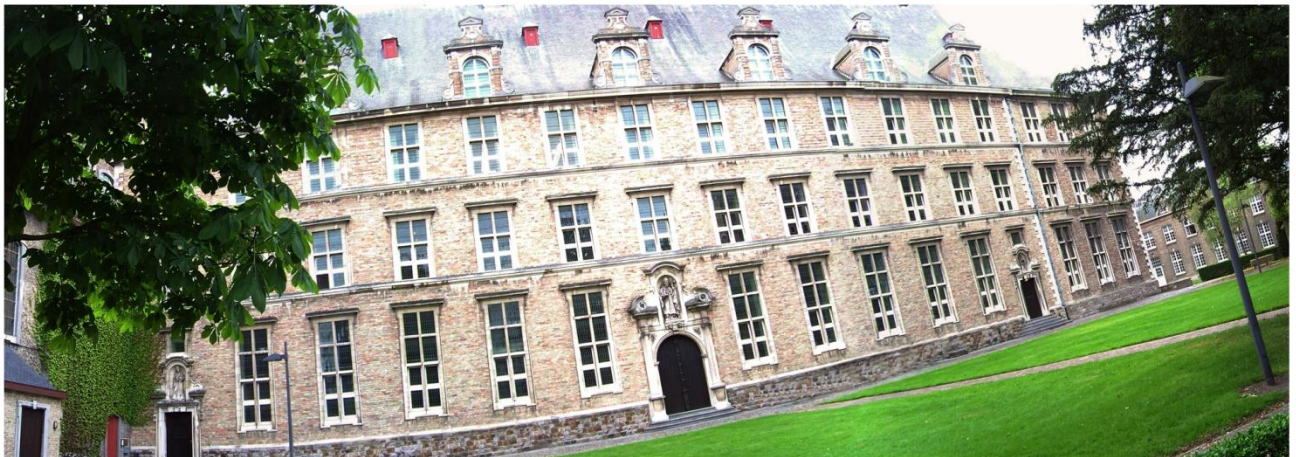
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Institute on Comparative
Regional Integration Studies

UNU-CRIS Working Papers

W-2014/10

Determinants of Regional Leadership: IBSA in Perspective



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Abstract

The role of regional leadership in multi-polarity is the core focus of the third work package of the EU funded project known as Global Re-ordering: Evolution through European Networks (GR:EEN). Within this framework, the desire of Brazil, India and South Africa to solidify their position as regional leaders through IBSA Forum offers a potential for meaningful comparative analysis on different expressions of regional leadership. In order to effectively analyze this area of inquiry, a cluster concept consisting of three determinants – willingness, capacity and acceptance – is used. We find that an actor's regional leadership increases the more the three determinants are affirmed: notwithstanding the limits in fulfilling all of the elements, the IBSA countries still show traits of leadership status in their regions. We go beyond the ambitions of a comparative overview to propose a systematic research programme which may serve as an engine for a cross-fertilization of our findings.

KEY WORDS: regional leadership, determinants, willingness, capacity, acceptance, IBSA, Brazil, South Africa, India, GR:EEN project

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our very great appreciation to our research supervisors - Professor Luk Van Langenhove, Director of UNU-CRIS, and Ms. Marieke Zwartjes, Project Researcher at UNU-CRIS – for their patient guidance, enthusiastic encouragement and for their valuable and constructive suggestions and critiques during the planning and development of this research work. As well, we would like to thank Dr. Stephen Kingah for his assistance in the final preparations of this work.

Introduction

At first glance, the three states, India, Brazil and South Africa appear to be worlds apart, each located on a different continent and sharing no meaningful historical relationship. But, despite these perceived differences, and as a result of their 2003 decision to create a trilateral diplomatic forum known as the IBSA Forum¹, scholars² have begun drawing attention to the fact that these three societies do indeed share a high degree of similarity, and thus a potential for meaningful comparative analysis. Speaking of the IBSA countries, Paulo Sotero points out, “all are emerging democratic states that exert significant regional influence, yet still face internal social challenges typical of developing nations.” Sotero continues by adding that, “each has demonstrated its capacity to act beyond its national and regional interests and all three display a growing willingness to assert their presence and increase their participation in global affairs” (Sotero, 2009, p.2). The argument aptly highlights the desire of Brazil, India and South Africa to further solidify their position as regional leaders and draws attention to how IBSA hopes to help facilitate this process. As Daniel Fledes explains, “IBSA can therefore be characterised as both a strategic alliance for the pursuit of the common interests of emerging powers in global institutions, and also as a platform for bilateral, trilateral and interregional South-South cooperation”. For Fledes, “In the long term, IBSA’s soft balancing strategy is geared to the formation of a multi-polar system based on the rule of international law. These three countries want to become power poles of that prospective multi-polar world” (Fledes, 2010, p.15).

Established by the Brasilia declaration, IBSA can be considered as a coordinating mechanism which aims at contributing to the construction of a new international architecture, bringing its members’ voice together on global issues and deepening their ties in various areas, as well as taking part into concrete projects of cooperation and partnership with less developed countries. The principles, norms and values underpinning IBSA Forum are participatory democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, strengthened by a shared vision of democracy and development as mutually reinforcing key drivers of sustainable peace and stability.

IBSA’s structure is not like that of most other regional or international organizations: it does not have a branch, a permanent executive secretariat, a headquarters or a formal

¹ India, Brazil and South Africa Forum.

² See Alden & Vieira (2008), Sotero et. al. (2009) and Fledes (2010).

document promulgating its organizational chart. At the highest level, it counts on the Summits of Head of State and Government, started in 2006, which traditionally have as an outcome the public communiqués: these are “the testimony of evolution of positions and approximation among the IBSA countries” (Sotero, 2009, p. 4) and further evidence of their increasingly shared opinions. Additionally, IBSA hosts Trilateral Joint Commissions at least twice a year presided over by the three Ministers of External Affairs. IBSA also organizes focal point meetings where Vice-Ministers exchange best practices and collaborate on issues of common concern. These sectorial working groups are practical examples of South-South cooperation. Moreover, IBSA has developed a Facility Fund, managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): its main objective is to benefit through poverty alleviation other developing countries, particularly Least Developed Countries (LDCs)³ and Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) countries⁴ around the world. Therefore, IBSA underscores the importance of capacity-building impact of its projects, favours local procurement and promotes the use of Southern expertise.

For the analysis of determining regional leadership presented in this paper, the diverse democratic societies that comprise the IBSA Forum should best be seen as a laboratory for exploring the future of regional leadership and international cooperation in the Global South. By investigating the different expressions of regional leadership displayed by these three countries typologies will be drawn to help illuminate this area of inquiry. Both developed and developing countries alike could well be informed on how regional leadership – understood as an holistic concept, not related only to an economic or security aspect of power - had taken shape, and how the IBSA countries, collectively and individually, have helped set examples for other emerging countries throughout the world.

In order to effectively analyse regional leadership, a conceptual framework consisting of three determinants - willingness, capacity and acceptance – is used. As far as applicability is concerned, a state is more likely to be positioned as a regional leader the stronger its leadership willingness to act, the bigger its leadership capacity and finally the greater its leadership acceptance. The capacity of regional leaders needs to be analysed as their “power to impose leadership status” (Van Langenhove et al., forthcoming 2014, p. 10) and the “political and cultural capital they enjoy in the international/regional

³ The list of LDCs, according to United Nations, comprises 34 African countries, 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Haiti in the Americas.

⁴ Among others, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and Somalia.

arena" (ibid.) which implies material resources, rights and duties that enable or limit action. The will of a state to lead regionally is highly dependent on its interests, norms, values and perceptions of its international position, which all have to be treated as a constructed reality. Furthermore, examining acceptance is crucial because leadership needs to be viewed as a relationship based on the mutual perceptions of its actors, as well as cultural and historical aspects between leaders and followers.

The three leadership determinants should not be viewed as 'necessary and sufficient' conditions but are better described as a cluster concept. This means it should be questioned to what extent effective regional leadership might be possible if one particular determinant is not fulfilled or is lacking.

The methodology used here to analyze regional leadership across different cases has been the comparative perspective typical of meta-analysis. The literature review used, draws on work presented as part of the GR:EEN research project⁵ (Global Re-ordering: Evolution through European Networks). The project's third work package, on which this study is heavily based, focuses on *The Role of Regional Leadership in Multi-Polarity: the EU, the Americas, Asia, Africa & the Pacific*. The published and unpublished works, as well as workshops organized from March 2012 to February 2013, were analysed with the aim of facilitating debate on a wide range of regional leadership topics.

In addition to the GR:EEN literature review, the study also used findings from qualitative research⁶. Thus, the aim was to broaden the study and to echo the goals of the third work package. As with any qualitative research, the issue was not to measure phenomena from representative samples, but rather to collect concepts, elements of discourses and cultural referents that would help to understand the actors' perspectives.

⁵ Deciancio (2012), Degli Uberti (2012), Destradi & Gundlach (2012), Edwards & Jenkins (2012), Pinheiro & Gaio (2012), Quiliconi (2012), Saguir (2012), Soko & Balchin (2012 I +II), Tussi (2012).

⁶ Amongst them: Alden & Vieira (2008) & (2005), Flandes (2010), Flandes & Wojczewski (2011), Malamud (2011), Prys (2013), Sotero (2009)

Brazil – A Stand Alone Leader?

Capacity to be a Regional Leader

Brazil's capacity to lead is largely determined by its territorial size, population, economic and development indexes and peaceful environment. Bearing in mind that "leading a region is not a precondition for global emergence" (Malamud, 2011, p. 4), Brazil shall be analysed as regional leader who provides its capacities within its regional sphere to strengthen its role in the global context.

Brazil's active role in international, regional and multilateral organizations since the Second World War⁷ was put into practice in both soft and hard power measures. The implementation of credit lines for infrastructure projects and the technical cooperation for social development policies are strong power resources which can be described as indicators for Brazil's position as a regional leader (Pinheiro, 2012, p. 3). It could be argued that Brazil as a reference model for development leadership in South America is driven by strategic interests. The country perceives its institutionally based actions for sustainable development grounded in its capacities to deliver technical assistance, integrate human resources, provide public goods and transfer skills based on its own experience. This material capacity comes with ideas of inter-state partnership and regional solidarity (Hirst, 2011, p. 33). Brazil's macroeconomic stability has made its enhanced economic position possible, as well as its position as a donor towards other countries in the region reasonable. During the period 2003-2010 the National Bank for the Economic and Social Development (BNDES), together with Banco do Brazil, lent 10 billion USD to South American countries. The BNDES offers credit lines with an interest rate of only 6 per cent and is regarded as an economic tool for strengthening South American integration. Therefore, Brazil's support for most infrastructure projects in South America⁸ can be interpreted as the provision of public goods to the region which helps to boost development (Pinheiro, 2012, p. 12). In supporting the region in improving its infrastructure, and thereby strengthening its development, Brazil attempts to consolidate ties of South-South cooperation.

Brazil is also deeply involved in the IBSA Forum. IBSA, since its inception, has developed further into a South-South cooperation forum which concentrates on common values, goals and the fight to alleviate poverty and hunger. The IBSA Forum has shown an active interest in democratization and has sought to better involve emerging powers in global

⁷ Brazil is founding member of the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

⁸ Major beneficiaries: Argentina, Venezuela, Bolívia, Chile, Paraguay.

fora, such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF)⁹ and the World Bank. IBSA has become a strong advocate of the interests of developing countries, aiming to change international rules and structures (Deciancio, 2012, p. 3). The Forum can be seen as one of the most important partnership agreements of southern countries to be involved in changing the international order. Brazil's engagement in South America reflects its national interest in collective regional development. As well, the high involvement in global *fora* has also increased Brazil's bargaining capacity.

During the period 2003-2011, the Brazilian government's main goal was the creation of a community of South American Nations aimed at positioning themselves influentially in the international arena through presenting Brazil as leader of the South American states (Deciancio, 2012, p. 11). In 2007, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was founded, helping Brazil to realize its ambitions for regional integration, as well as serving to strengthen its regional and national interests. Within the framework of UNASUR the member states implemented the South American Defence Council (SDC) in 2008, which Brazil's former Defence Minister Nelson Jobim promoted as an instrument of consultation, cooperation and coordination in defence affairs among all South American countries. The main objectives are transparency, consensus and confidence-building measures. To strengthen Brazil's regionally leading role¹⁰ it gained operational experience in regional conflicts like the Bolivian Crisis (2008) and the crisis in Honduras (2009). The SDC mechanism, which was useful for South America to be regarded as speaking with one voice in security issues, and Brazil taking over responsibility in regional crises highly supported Lula's claim on a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

In addition to the economic support and security engagement, Brazil provides funding for almost 210 cooperation projects on social development, health, agriculture, energy, industry and education. Brazil is one of the only three Latin American countries counted among the G-20 in the World Trade Organization (WTO), with membership in the Trade G-20 and the Finance G-20. This strengthens Brazil's argumentative force to lead coalitions and articulate the interests of other South American countries, as well as to give substance to issues regarding the South American needs in international negotiations (Deciancio, 2012, p. 16). At the G-20, Brazil worked to confront and balance the interests of developed countries with those of the developing countries, acting as an intermediary between the weak and the powerful. The capacity to influence the international bargaining processes is an outcome of Brazil's extensive regional development efforts.

⁹ Brazil is one of the major contributors.

¹⁰ Lula da Silva tried to undermine Chavez's ambitions to position Venezuela as military leader in the region.

In the following section, Brazil shall be analysed as a regional leader who has expressed a willingness to assume a role of leadership within its regional sphere in order to strengthen its leadership position within the global context.

Willingness for Regional Leadership

To begin this analysis, it is important to draw attention to the difficulties Brazil has experienced within the South American region in gaining regional leadership, particularly from its largest regional challengers, Argentina and Venezuela. As a method to circumvent these obstacles, Brazil has shown a strong willingness to engage with other emerging regional powers, particularly in the developing South, as a means to position itself as the global representative in South America. This strategy is best expressed through such actions as Brazil's participation and contributions to the G-20 meetings, through its conduct in the UNASUR, and in its part of the 2003 *Brasilia Declaration*, which provided for the creation of the IBSA Forum, sending a clear message that Brazil was willing to assume a more comprehensive leadership role.

Riding on the back of bolstered support from outside their region, Brazilian foreign policy leaders have now begun to turn their attention inwards in an attempt to position Brazil as a regional leader within South America. (Deciancio, 2012). The increased outward leadership recognition from the international community has been effectively utilized as a powerful tool from which to leverage negotiations among their other regional members. This leadership strategy again was expressed in Brazil's willingness to create, lead and coordinate regional organizations and to provide for regional public goods (Lazarou, 2012, p. 9).

Turning attention first to regional institutions, for example MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market), the Brazilian government's willingness to assume a position of leadership within these organizations has offered better economic opportunities to the region overall, but it has also allowed Brazil in particular an ability to create favourable economic conditions for itself, build liberal free trade agreements, be granted access to vital continental energy resources, and encourage foreign direct investment for Brazilian companies (Burgess, 2007, p. 1344). This policy, which could be described as a loose 'hub and spoke' arrangement, displays Brazil's aim of establishing itself as the focal point of the region.

Looking now at the provision of public goods, Brazil has been willing to contribute significantly, particularly in the infrastructure sector, to improving economic development throughout the South American region. As already stated, this function is executed mainly through the funding provided by its BNDES. The Bank offers important

opportunities for development that may not otherwise be available, but it also needs to be noted that it still maintains a 50 per cent stake in the operation and is driven by motives of profit rather than sustainability. While this situation has offered short-term development solutions, it could have long-term negative consequences for the acceptance of Brazilian regional leadership, as will be discussed further in the following section.

When support for internal regional leadership wanes, Brazil has shown a willingness to return focus back to its relations with large developing economies to further its strategic aims. As argued by Diana Tussie, the essential goal of the Brazilian foreign policy strategy is to ensure peace in the South American region to the extent that it allows for an extension of its own interests (Tussie, 2012). This strategy is achieved in a cyclical manner, by gaining support externally, building strength within its region, and then reinforcing its position again globally.

Before concluding this section, it is important to again highlight the complex multi-actor nature of regional leadership assessment. In the case of Brazil, not all the actors involved in the process have expressed the same degree of willingness for leadership; this is due in large part to the private sector's perception of having to assume the responsibilities it could entail. This dimension should not be discounted when crafting an accurate assessment of the dynamic situation.

Taking the evidence together it becomes clear that by a willingness to position itself as a regional leader foremost on the global stage, Brazil has now been working towards strengthening its internal position within the South American region. In turn, this favourable position is then being used once more to strengthen its leadership position within the global context. From this stand point, Brazil shall now be analysed from the perspective of a regional leader who has been positioned with a limited degree of acceptance, a fact attested by the growing mismatch between the regional and global performance of its foreign policy.

Acceptance as a Regional Leader

The lack of regional acceptance could strongly influence the future of Brazil, which could either stay the course engaging with the region and face the world as a single voice, or go alone. It is interesting to observe how many contradictions – that could be addressed as the main reasons of its performance's divergence – can be found in Brazil's foreign policy.

First of all, Brazilian diplomats and academics alike have long regarded regional legitimacy as a springboard to global recognition of the country, an aspiration that

perfectly fits its self-perception as a “big country” (Lima & Hirst, 2006, p. 21). Its leaders have always tried to build on some specific characteristics – as the fact of being a peace-loving, law-abiding and benign soft power (Lafer, 2001), conducting the quest for regional influence with velvet gloves – to achieve a preeminent role on the regional and global stage; but this is only part of the story. Brazil has also deployed tougher – though not military – means to gain acceptance as regional leader, stressing above all on its market size, export capacity and investment weight. Therefore, in the 1970s, the country started “a slow but steady warming of relations with neighbouring countries” (Malamud, 2011, p. 6). This activism crystallized in 2000 into the ‘brand-new regional concept of South America’, a term immediately substituted with Latin America: in this way, Brazil tacitly recognized its inability to exert a significant influence on the whole continent and chose a much easier way to gain regional acceptance, both excluding its most potential rival – Mexico – and disengaging from the countries that were more dependent on the giant power of the United States. In this way, Brazilian politicians failed to translate the country’s structural and instrumental resources into effective regional leadership benevolently accepted and followed.

Secondly, despite the ever-green acknowledgment of the importance of followership to reach individual and collective goals, Brazil’s potential followers have not aligned with its main objectives. As far as the quest for a permanent seat on the UNSC is concerned, in 2004 Brazil, together with Germany, India and Japan – the so-called G-4 – joined efforts to create and grab one of the new seats. This turned out to be a wild-goose chase, steadily held back by the so-called Coffee Group – later renamed Uniting for Consensus – that brought together the G-4’s regional rivals: its leaders were Argentina and Mexico, together with Italy, South Korea and Pakistan. As a result, “aspiring UNSC members could not persuade their home regions to support their bids for international recognition” (Arraes, 2006, p. 38). This is one of the most striking instances of Brazil’s lack of acceptance and also represents a heavy blow to Brazil’s image as a regional leader. Moreover, looking back at the power struggle regarding the post of Director-General of the WTO in 2005, it can be highlighted how MERCOSUR was unable to agree to a joint candidate¹¹ and that Brazil could not gather majority support for its position, as Argentina supported the Uruguayan nominee; to add insult to injury, the Brazilian candidate João Sayad was eliminated during the first round. This quarrel showed that the prospects for building a regional consensus to support its global goals were bleak. Just a couple of months after this sound defeat, Brazil suffered another blow to its aspirations in the run for the presidency of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), where

¹¹ Besides the European candidate and the one from Mauritius, a third was from Uruguay and the fourth was Brazilian.

Colombia's ambassador to the United States Louis Alberto Moreno won the support of both Central American and Caribbean countries, contrary to any obvious expectations.

Finally, it is note-worthy to mention that Brazil's acceptance as regional leader is ceaselessly challenged by Argentina and Mexico, two significant Latin American countries relentlessly pursuing the diplomatic goal of impeding any single country from representing the whole region, a fact that could deeply undermine their bigger neighbour's aspirations.

At a global level, Brazil has gained increasing recognition, being acknowledged as an emergent global player by the established world powers, such as the G-8 Members and the European Union. Brazil's strategy, aimed at gaining acceptance at a global level, is based on strengthening ties with developing countries outside the region and on increasing with a strong activism its participation in international organizations and in multilateral *fora*, which have now become the cornerstones of its role at the global level.

For all these reasons, it can be stated that there is a mounting mismatch between the regional and global acceptance of Brazilian status. Due to lasting cleavages, divergent interests and power rivalries in South America, this divergence is not likely to be bridged anytime soon. In other words, it can aspire to a leading role as long as it goes alone.

South Africa – More Ambitious than Effective?

Capacity to be a Regional Leader

South Africa's outstanding strength lies in its relative economic power in the region and also in its efforts to improve regional integration by means of intra-regional trade and investment. The country has worked to boost infrastructure projects, provide financial support to Swaziland and Zimbabwe, and has increased its exports and direct investments threefold between 1990 and 2007 (Trachler, 2011, p. 3). The South African economy makes up 80 per cent of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) region domestic product, making it the economic leader in Southern Africa. However, as Soko argues, South Africa's dominance in the export of regional products only exposes the grave imbalances and a lack of linkage to the other SADC countries. (Soko, 2010, p. 56). Furthermore, as a powerful actor in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), South Africa's main goal was to renegotiate the 1969 agreement to reform trade provisions and deepen cooperation concerning Southern African trade issues (Soko, 2012 I, p. 3). But the revision of the agreement imposed tight restrictions on South Africa and its interests, thereby undermining its position. If South Africa aims to enter into free trade agreements, which would foster its integration into the global

markets, it is obliged to reach a consensus from the BLNS Countries¹² first (Soko, 2012 I, p. 12). Therefore South Africa is not strong enough to impose its interests against the united will of its African neighbours. Furthermore, in terms of economic power, the country can hardly compete against the other BRICS states¹³, but gains its global status from the powerful position it has compared to its neighbouring countries on the African continent (Trachler, 2011, p. 3).

With regard to South Africa's capacity to take over a leading role in security issues, the South African Defence Forces (SADF) are one of the best equipped and most powerful forces in Africa (Trachler, 2011, p. 2) and the country has temporarily been one of the main donors to the African Union (AU) (Kingah, forthcoming 2014, p. 4). South Africa supplied troops for AU's peacekeeping efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and the Ivory Coast, where the AU benefited from the country's negotiating capacity as well as from its military clout. But one should take into account that Pretoria's military strength as well as its economic capacity is two-sided. On the one side the financial and material superiority could strengthen South Africa's position as a regional leader, but on the other side its partly self-announced role is hampered by the countries' operational weakness.

From this perspective South Africa will now be analysed as a regional leader whose lack of capacity is largely outweighed by its willingness and ambition to effectively act as such.

Willingness for Regional Leadership

The willingness of South Africa to assume a position of leadership, as expressed by its government, can be traced back primarily from the country's chequered historical past. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union a space was created from which the end of apartheid could find expression. This aspiration was realized in 1994, when racial segregation finally ended officially and Nelson Mandela assumed the seat of the South African presidency. However, with this new opportunity for leadership came a new set of expectations. South Africa found itself in a position to become an active agent in the transformation of Africa, as well as in world affairs, by increasing its diplomatic representation in many major *fora* and conferences. This gave birth to its ambitions of becoming a norm entrepreneur, in the fields of democracy promotion, respect for human rights and promotion of good governance principles (Zondi, 2012, p. 12), and as a model

¹³ BRICS is the acronym for a grouping of five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Since 2010, when South Africa was admitted into the group, several high-level summits have been held between these states.

for responsible African citizenship (Lewis 2001, p. 2). While these actions clearly displayed a strong willingness for helping to shape global policy and initially contributed immensely to South Africa's international reputation, they also raised expectations for the country as well as for the continent more generally. In consequence, South Africa became positioned to take up responsibility for assuming African leadership, using its power to the benefit of all of Africa (Zondi, 2012, p. 10).

The logic behind South Africa's willingness to play an active role in ending conflict and political crisis, as well as in rebuilding post-conflict societies, is two-fold. First, it is thought that it is in South Africa's self-interest to promote a stable region for development, as this situation serves to attract foreign investment and would be less likely to prompt massive waves of refugees into the country. Second, and perhaps more importantly, many within government believe that helping to stabilize the region was a noble goal in and of itself (Zondi, 2012, p. 10). This notion has been perpetuated largely through a dynamic socially constructed storyline, in which South Africans feel guilty for their past actions and seek to atone for the sins of apartheid, thereby creating a greater sense of African independence and solidarity and building hope for the future.

If we look first within its geographic region, South Africa's willingness for leadership can be observed in its robust enthusiasm to engage with the other influential regional players from across all corners of the African continent¹⁴. Indeed, this open engagement with many of its competitors for regional influence has helped expedite the creation of many regional institutions such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as well as the evolution of the SADC. Similar to the other actors investigated in this project, South Africa faces several challenges to its leadership attempts. Upon analysis, the central issues for this country appear to be related chiefly to its historical context and its regional relativity. Seen from within the perspective of the storyline created from the African historical context, which has been plagued by violent colonial oppression and massive enslavement, any perceived infringement on state sovereignty is fiercely opposed. In this regard, overenthusiastic willingness for leadership, however good intentioned, can actually damage perceptions. For South Africa, the economic, diplomatic and military pressure that was exerted on its neighbouring states during the apartheid period has not been forgotten (Trachler, 2011, p. 3). Even if Pretoria did wish to impose or enforce its political will on its neighbours it severely lacks the military and economic resources to do so. Finally, it can be argued that an overtly forceful willingness to lead may actually be limiting South Africa's leadership potential. These conditions for regional leadership acceptance have been extremely difficult to manoeuvre.

¹⁴ With Nigeria in West Africa, with Algeria in North Africa, with Kenya in East Africa, and with Angola in Southern Africa

Acceptance as Regional Leader

South Africa enjoys a notable degree of legitimacy and acceptance as an African leader, particularly in the eyes of those outside of the continent, and presents itself assertively as a representative of its continent and of the South in general. In the post-apartheid era, South Africa has emerged as a middle-power in the global system, boasting soft power stemming from its successful democratic transition and progressive Constitution. At a global level, South Africa benefits from goodwill based on the country's successful handling of its past, its undisputed economic preponderance in the African context and the recognition of collaboration, cooperation and building partnerships as means to overcome conflicts. Another sign of its international acceptance has been its admission – forerun by a formal invitation – by the BRIC countries to join their group in the spring of 2011. Since that moment, “SA is ranked together with the emerging powers Brazil, Russia, India and China. Also, the country is [formerly] a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council” (Trachsler, 2011, p. 1). On this basis, Pretoria is widely accepted by the international community as Africa's “primary representative in discussions involving the industrialized world and in multilateral forums” (Soko & Balchin I, 2012, p. 6). These achievements bring evidence to South Africa's outward regional leadership, which can be defined as the capacity to lead regional partners in global matters.

As far as the inward regional leadership is concerned, which is the capacity to set formal or informal rules and patterns of behaviour within the regional sphere, we could follow Prys' methodological proposal to analyze the speeches and statements of regional governmental leaders and other primary and secondary sources in order to demonstrate South Africa being accepted (2008). The findings of its analysis are that South Africa's neighbouring States have to position themselves in a particular way towards this hub. Millions of Zimbabweans are currently seeking refuge in South Africa, a far greater number than in any other southern African country. South Africa might, arguably, simply be the best of many bad options.

On the surface, these factors would seemingly suggest that South Africa meets the third criterion for regional leadership – acceptance. Despite these successes, South Africa has been unable to this day to leverage its potential as a regional power and global advocate of African interests as expected. Further afield beyond the Southern African sub-region, South Africa's status as a regional leader of the African continent remains contested. As Alden and Soko attest, “though South Africa's growing presence on the global stage and on the continent does point to an emerging hegemony, it is only truly realized in its near abroad” (Alden, 2005, p. 389). Beyond that immediate terrain, where acceptance of South African leadership is largely driven by domestic factors, it often depends on the issue at hand. For example, in terms of migration – “an important lens or way through

which a country can be a regional leader” (Degli Uberti, 2012) – South Africa has been seriously criticized for its approach towards African and especially Zimbabwean immigrants. Legitimacy could therefore depend on its capacity to ride over the political impasse in implementing its migration policy.

The main reason why “South Africa’s dominance in Africa is contested, contingent and remains far from complete” (Soko & Balchin I, 2012, p. 2) is that ‘old habits never die’ and the prevailing fear, due to the fact that prior to the collapse of apartheid, South Africa frequently exercised leadership in the region through force. Other factors limiting regional acceptance are its neighbours’ perception of an un-African and pro-West attitude, countervailing foreign and domestic factors and Pretoria’s indifference to collective goals fostered by a shift – under Mbeki (1999-2008) and the current President Zuma (since 2009) – of emphasis away from a value-driven policy to one guided more by national interests. Moreover, South Africa continues to face resistance from many African élites who fear that South Africa may abuse its role as a regional superpower, especially for its relationship with China. Taken together, these factors have meant that acceptance of South Africa’s regional leadership remains limited across the continent.

For this reason, South Africa is eager not to be seen as a dictatorial, domineering and ruthless regional power and has abstained from expressing an aggressive claim to leadership at a regional level. This caution in gaining acceptance, however, does not translate into a complete denial of a leadership role: “South Africa cites a need to take responsibility in pursuing a strategy that is more targeted towards generating assent than aimed at an aggressive enforcement of interests” (Trachsler, 2011, p. 3). However, on the political level, there is a tension between resistance to and endorsement of South African leadership.

At the same time, we can find that there is an implicit and – at times – explicit acknowledgement of the potentially beneficial impact of South Africa in regional relations which is also reflected in calls by the leading figures of southern Africa upon South Africa to take up its responsibilities as a larger, more resourceful State. This kind of acceptance seems to be very needs-driven: on the one hand, most African countries are not in a position to reject South Africa’s offers of both financial help and mediation between the government and opposition forces; on the other hand, neighbouring States generally seem to recognize that they benefit not only from South African involvement in political negotiations with global-level actors but also, regionally, through investment by South African businesses.

To sum up, South Africa’s current stance is characterized by sustained insecurity about its role. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the leadership position that Pretoria claims on the global stage is not backed up securely in the region itself: South

Africa should carefully approach its continent in order not to alienate other key players (Dube, 2013, p. 4).

India – A Reluctant Engagement?

Capacity to be a Regional Leader

Apart from India's outstanding economic power, which is considered to advance the whole South Asian region, it has gained powerful clout in world politics. This notion was perpetuated primarily through strategic partnerships with great powers, such as the power centres located in Brussels and Washington (Tripathi, 2012, pp. 3-6). In the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)¹⁵ India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives and Afghanistan agreed to a free trade area which revealed the immense economic asymmetry in the region (Flemes, 2011, p. 15). Compared to the other member states of the SAARC, India surpasses all of them in its military expenditure, oil production, economic competitiveness and population (Flemes, 2011, p. 16, Table 2). In addition to India's holding almost 80 per cent of the regional GDP, markets are rather incomplete and the regional infrastructure insufficient. India's dominance also becomes clear through the facts that it covers 65 per cent of the South Asian area as well as 75 per cent of the region's population. "India's defence budget exceeds Pakistan's military expenditure by almost six times and the number of its armed forces by more than two times" (Flemes, 2011, p. 15).

As far as nuclear weapons count as a decisive strategic power in international relations, India was not willing to abstain from developing its own weapons programme. After the decision in the 1980s to extend the programme to nuclear weapons, India improved quickly and today has 50 operational warheads. Both essential capabilities had been available to successfully enhance the programme and it was perceived as a necessity for the countries' national security with regard to being surrounded by nuclear weapon states. The high strategic value of the weapons, besides their regional balancing effects, is India's increasing bargaining capacity in negotiating non-proliferation and disarmament issues in the international arena. But to put words into deeds, India might be supposed not just to agree on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguarding its civil programme¹⁶ but also to sign both the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (Carnysh, 2009, p. 3). This would signal India's good

¹⁵ Founded in 1985.

¹⁶ US-India Nuclear Deal 2005.

intentions in not intending to threaten its neighbours and consequently could be decisive for Pakistan's ratification of the contracts (Kamath, 1999, p. 1943).

Concerning Indian relations with neighbouring countries, Tripathi argues that, "maintaining a cordial relationship with Pakistan was a prerequisite for India in order to achieve its regional and subsequently its global objectives" (Tripathi, 2012, p. 7). After more than six decades of a difficult coexistence of Pakistan and India, New Delhi showed interest in moving towards an Indian-Pakistani-cooperation. This effort has shown results in the creation of a mutual trade and travel route in 2007, when the Attari-Wagah border allowed the crossing of goods and travellers. Reconciliation of India and Pakistan may improve the economic prospects of the whole region. India's main strength to stand as capable leader in the region lies in its economic growth, its military and nuclear power, its skilled workforce and its geographical position (Tripathi, 2012, p. 18). However, Pakistan is still the only South Asian country India does not offer assistance to or share its technologies.

Dealing with India's normative capacity in international relations, Mahatma Ghandi's foreign policy had its main emphasis "on the norms of self-determination, decolonization and development". The traditional focus on self-determination, and therefore also the paradigm of non-interference, brings India close to China and Russia. Now India is also showing itself to be the largest democracy in the world and strives for extolling peace, human rights and democracy to its neighbours in the region (Manners, 2008, p. 309).

As a final point, due to the complexity of bilateral relations, it should be stated that India might have strong normative capabilities but also tends to abandon its proclaimed ideals when strategic interests could be at stake (Manners, 2008, p. 309). In respect to India's material and normative capabilities, it would be able to stabilize the region and to be counted as overwhelming regional leader, but it begs the question, is India willing to do so?

Willingness for Regional Leadership

India shall now be analyzed from the perspective of a regional leader who has been positioned with a limited degree of willingness and largely by external international discourse as a regional leader.

Since its inception, the notion of regionalism in South Asia has been fraught with apprehension. The rise of the South Asian region came with British India's independence in 1947. The partition of British India opened the door for greater conflict between Islamic Pakistan and Hindu-dominated India, as well as laid open India's dominant role in the region and its self-recognition as a "regional hegemon and emerging great power"

(Flemes, 2011, p. 14). In its relations with the smaller states in their region, India's willingness for engagement was often expressed through the use of force or coercion, intervening in Bangladesh in 1971, in Sri Lanka in 1987, in the Maldives in 1988, and in Nepal in 1989 (Tripathi, 2012, pp. 4-5). As a result, leading up to the 1990s, India had gained a reputation as a belligerent bully toward its neighbours and displayed little willingness to engage in any meaningful regional leadership activities.

Following the end of the Cold War, with the rise of multi-polarity and a rapid increase in the integration of the global economy, Indian foreign policy was forced to fundamentally change. As Indian policy expert Harsh V. Pant explains, "the impact of the end of the Cold War has been evident in almost all spheres of Indian foreign policy" (Pant, 2012, p. 115). No longer able to rely on the Soviet Union, New Delhi began to form a new foreign policy strategy which sought to bolster ties with the US and Israel, gain nuclear power status, extend its relations with Southeast Asia, and most importantly, integrate the Indian economy into global markets (Pant, 2012, p. 115). As a result of their surprising success, expressed in a rapid expansion of the national economic growth rate for more than a decade, India was thrust into the lime light of the international stage, joining other fast emerging states such as Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa. From this standpoint, the discourse on India's regional leadership status began to gain momentum.

There have been many allusions to India's rise, including US President Barack Obama stating that, "India is not just a rising power; India has already risen" (Obama quoted in Ganguly, 2012). Statements such as this, help show that the powerful Western developed states have put their support behind India as the clear leader of the South Asian region. However, upon analysis the discourse within the country seems to be much less enthusiastic. As Manjari Chatterjee Miller convincingly argues, "within India itself, foreign policy elites shy away from any talk of the country's rising status" (Miller, 2013, p. 14). Miller points out further that, "the prime minister does not have one speech where he talks about the rise of India but not about the need for growth" (Miller, 2013, p. 18). This reflects the reality that for Indian politicians to be successful they need to first exert their efforts and influence towards domestic issues, such as the economy, rather than leaning on their potential foreign policy clout (Miller, 2013, p. 18). The rationale for this lack of discourse within India about its rise, or what could be described as a limited willingness to position itself as a regional leader, is related to two main factors: (1) the domestic actors influencing foreign policy within the country and (2) the perceptions about what responsibilities India would have to assume if it were to further embrace its role as regional leader.

First, looking at the domestic actors involved in guiding Indian foreign policy, it can be said there are three main influences: the prime minister's office, the National Security

Council and the foreign ministry, of which the latter is the most active. From this, as argued by Miller, New Delhi's foreign policy decision making can be characterised as often highly individualistic, with provincial officials granted individual responsibility and autonomy for a particular policy area, rather than the implementation of a top-down national strategic plan. As a result, it is nearly impossible for India to engage in meaningful long-term planning about its foreign policy goals, which in turn prevents it from outlining the role it wishes to play in global or regional affairs. This situation is further amplified by the lack of influential think tanks in the country (Miller, 2013, p. 14). As a final point on the domestic nature of Indian foreign policy, there is also a fear among the Indian elite that the notion of the country's rise is a Western construct which will unrealistically inflate expectations about both Indian economic growth and the country's international commitments (Miller, 2013, p. 14). In sum, the procedure and inability to have a coherent framework has led to less willingness for engagement with the region. While perhaps this may be flattering to Indian officials, the international discourse on India's rise has also created anxiety. This trepidation has resulted in limiting India's willingness to engage with its neighbours in any area directly related to its narrow strategic interests.

Moving now to outside perceptions, India's willingness for regional leadership is closely tied to the perception of assuming responsibility for the wider South Asian region. As Miriam Prys explains, the perceived responsibilities of a regional leader can be classified into two levels of analysis: (1) the localized regional political level and (2) the overarching international system which is determined by the global distribution of power and by international institutions (Prys, 2013, p. 7). While each level holds a unique set of responsibilities they need to be considered as complementary and should not be analysed in isolation. Looking first at the international perspective, if India were to indeed embrace the discourse about its rise, there is a fear that it would be pressured to abandon its status as a developing country and "could be forced to make concessions on environmental issues, such as carbon emissions, and on trade, such as opening up the Indian market further to US exports" (Miller, 2013, p. 18). For Indian officials this situation is unacceptable. As the country that is fraught with many of its own domestic development issues, such as widespread poverty, as well as weak or overburdened institutions, any additional responsibility could have a crippling affect.

Turning now to the more localized regional level, there are many instances where India has deliberately avoided assuming regional responsibility even when it has been directly called on to act. Two apt examples of this, as Prys cites, are "India's reluctance to intervene in Sri Lanka's civil war despite the willingness and active demand by the Sri Lankan government for India to do so and despite the imminent threat of a closer involvement of external forces, above all China, in Sri Lanka". As well, "India's lack of

support for Nepal's democratization process and its lack of a clear positioning against the authoritarian tendencies of the King Gyanendra in a time, when much of India's global reputation rested on its status as democracy in a region characterized by internal stability and unrest" (Prys, 2013, p. 2). These examples give a strong indication of what could be described as 'followership' within the South Asian region towards India, but also strongly highlight the country's lack of willingness in assuming any greater regional leadership responsibilities.

Acceptance as Regional Leader

The broader international community seems to be affirming the leadership role that India merits. Evidence of this can be found in the fact that the State's leaders are often invited to multilateral *fora* of the advanced, industrialized countries (such as the G8 and the World Economic Forum), where they are regarded as spokespersons not only for their individual State, but also for their region and the developing world in general. The powerful countries of the West have also looked towards this pivotal State to be at the forefront of resolving regional crises regarding the members of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This is confirmed by the Director of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Patrick Cronin, who states: "The world would like India to play a more active role in global affairs. India can blend a mixture of hard and soft power" (Chand, 2007). Especially powerful States like the US have the ability to construct a State's identity: this is partly why a State's relationship with the US is so important for its international standing – a strategic fact that India seems to be aware of, in light of its nuclear deal with the United States.

While internationally this State seems to be recognized as a regional power, its acceptance as regional leader by its immediate neighbours has, however, been less than forthcoming. While some might argue that, "by conferring regional leadership status on this State, the international community plays an important role in fostering recognition of this regional dominance amongst the otherwise recalcitrant neighbouring States" (Alden & Vieira, 2005, p. 5), the other side of the coin – that international recognition may in fact undermine claims to regional leadership by India – could be equally true. A close relationship with the US and other western powers can, for example, be seen in a negative light by developing world neighbours and counterparts.

It is thus not surprising that India's regional power status takes on an ambivalent position in the literature. In the words of Prys "There, it is, for instance, sometimes described as 'obvious' and sometimes, however, questioned due to its apparent 'inability' to provide stability and democracy in the region" (Prys, 2013, pp. 10-11). Destradi

asserts that "India faces hostility among South Asian countries and, in the past, has not been able to contribute to the development of effective forms of regional integration" (Destradi, 2012, p. 1). It is always trying to establish its hegemony. Hence, it is no surprise discovering that the first call for establishing a South Asian regional organization was aimed at counterbalancing India's power.

India's position has consistently been challenged by Pakistan – whose "non-followership is founded on its fear of India's overwhelming power capabilities and on the nuclear bipolarity, which allows Islamabad to pursue a balancing strategy" (Flemes and Wojczewski, 2011, p. 22) – and, as a result of the regional power distribution being heavily skewed in favour of India, smaller States in the region have also been very ambivalent in their attitude towards this country. China also questions India's assumed leadership position in South Asia. Further challenges include the division of the subcontinent along religious lines, as well as deteriorating relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

If one keeps in mind that identities are socially constructed, and that the identity of States are as much a product of national variables – such as geographic locations, culture, natural resources, population, form of government and so forth – as it is of external perception, it becomes clear why India requires external recognition to pursue its regional and global agendas.

The far-reaching implications of regional acceptance are outlined by *Financial Express* columnist Vivek Bharati, who argues that India needs the support of its neighbours both for positioning itself as a global leader and for obtaining a permanent seat at the UNSC. Regional powers lacking the secondary powers' support will not be able to build the power base needed to reach their foreign policy goals both in regional and global affairs. So one of the greatest challenges facing India in its quest for increased regional and global power would thus seem to be achieving acceptance and legitimacy from less powerful regional neighbours, especially from secondary regional powers.

India is currently making all efforts to obtain a respectable position in international relations. "New Delhi has adopted a sensitive approach, abandoning its earlier belligerent policy; the intimidating big brother of the past is ready to accommodate other's concern and is willing to open its purse for extending financial help" (Tripathi, 2012, p. 18). This is also an approach to create a space for itself amongst the citizens of South Asia and to bring down and reduce the prevailing hostility for India.

Interestingly, Ramachandran holds that India – as birthplace of four of the world's major religions – is trying to exert its soft power over the region also through Buddhism: "As the Sino-Indian battle for influence in East and Southeast Asia intensifies, India is backing its political and economic diplomacy with soft power-diplomacy. To counter

China's efforts to keep India out of the region on the grounds that it is an 'outsider', India is drawing attention to its solid Buddhist credentials" (2008). The thinking behind this is that by "underlying the multi-millennia-old bond of Buddhism that it shares with these regions, India is quietly clarifying that it is not a gatecrasher" (Indian Ministry of External Affairs official, quoted in Ramachandran, 2008) and that, on the contrary, it is their cultural hub.

Thus, in all respects, India can be considered as significantly committed to the aim of gaining both global and regional acceptance: it appears now that this emerging country has humbly recognized that the method used in the past to impose itself as regional leader was incorrect and full of mistakes, and that it has courageously started to engage with its neighbours rectifying its earlier policies and making significant adjustments.

Conclusions

Central to the paper's theoretical argument is the claim that an analysis of regional leadership needs to account for the distinction between the relational and the structural level on which leadership operates, as well as for the interplay between the two levels. To account for this, the article used a conceptual tool – and corresponding model – labelled 'determinants of regional leadership'. Rather than being a theory, the determinants have provided a conceptual framework that serves to broaden and, arguably enhance, our understanding of the process of establishing a regional leadership status. The concept is an analytically eclectic device, which has served to assess the degree to which, in today's globalized and interdependent world, the IBSA countries' influence over third States derives from a constitutive mix of material, institutional and ideational factors, making it difficult for India's, Brazil's and South Africa's neighbours to resist their initiatives or reject their offers.

The paper's goal has been to present a structurally comparative approach that might guide future research on regional leadership. First of all, whilst assuming that structures provide an enabling environment, the determinants' model has defined leadership as context-shaping. One of the major findings was to confirm the previous research¹⁷; in that an actor's regional leadership increases the more the three determinants are affirmed. Taking the analytical framework as a cluster concept, has allowed us to stress the desire of Brazil, India and South Africa to foster their position as regional leaders and to observe how these countries are using multilateral *fora*, particularly the IBSA Forum, to pursue regional leadership. It was interesting to discover that IBSA countries all perform more weakly – or strongly – in different determinants, thus serving as an ideal

¹⁷ Kingah and Van Langenhove (2012), Zwartjes et al. (2012).

sample set for investigating regional leadership. Not only this confirms the above outlined thesis, that IBSA Forum may be seen as a laboratory for exploring the future of regional leadership, but also fosters the research on our conceptual framework.

One of the challenges encountered during this research has been overcoming perceived areas of overlap between the three determinants. Indeed, while capacity, willingness and acceptance are the material, institutional and ideational structures in their purest forms, in practical terms they are often found to interact with each other. It is important to note that it is not always straightforward to grasp distinct patterns of overlap between the determinants, as it may be difficult to detect their exact boundaries, which is not a hindrance to the framework but only serves to reconfirm their interdependence.

The first area of overlap in the study is between capacity and acceptance. One way in which a regional leader attempts to diffuse ideas, principles and norms is by coupling them with, or channelling them through, the provision of such material incentives as market access or financial assistance. The second area of overlap, between willingness and acceptance, encompasses modes of rule transfer and norm diffusion based on a regional leader's initiated processes of communication and social learning. Overlap between willingness and acceptance largely follows a 'logic of appropriateness', capturing how third country actors internalize regional leader's norms not because they calculate the consequences of norm adoption but because they feel that norm conformance is 'the right thing to do'. The final area of overlap observed in this study concerns the determinants of capacity and willingness. When assessing a state's capacity to position itself as a regional leader, it is common to conceive of capacity in purely material power terms rather than including political power elements which can be used to create the ability to structure goods, mutual actions, institutions and ideational perceptions. This State power to 'establish' or 'impose' a leadership status through capacity, inextricably links the term to willingness.

Taken together, the fact that the determinants are an analytical tool which focuses on social situations and interactions, it has been necessary to adopt a qualitative research approach. Furthermore, it must be noted that regional leadership is a relative and fluid concept, with changes occurring from one policy, administration or time period to the next. With this in mind, it should be useful to say that when considering regional leadership the evaluation may strongly depend on a specific area or topic, such as economic or security, under consideration.

With the understanding that every emerging regional and global leader will always face questions on its leadership claims, Brazil has been taken as an example of a regional leader lacking acceptance and that – in order to fulfil its strategy of what we have coined as 'a stand alone leader' – needs to tackle, at a regional level, the resistance by local

communities on specific environmental issues and, at a global level, the realization of a permanent seat at the UNSC. It has been noted that South Africa, which is 'more ambitious than effective', is lacking both operational and economic capacity to be an efficient regional leader as it is struggling to compete against the other BRICS States and it also failed in the role of peacekeeper in its region. Finally, India has displayed a lack of willingness and 'a reluctant engagement' by its detachment from the responsibilities generally associated with regional leadership and has demonstrated how positioning itself as such is not a top priority on India's political agenda. Notwithstanding these limits in fulfilling all of the three determinants, the three IBSA countries have demonstrated important leadership traits in their regions.

Appendix I

Summary of Leadership Determinants¹⁸

	Capacity	Willingness	Acceptance
South Africa 'More Ambitions than Effective'	Low Capacity	High Willingness	Limited Acceptance
India 'A Reluctant Engagement'	High Capacity	Low Willingness	Limited Acceptance
Brazil 'A Stand Alone Leader'	High Capacity	High Willingness	Low Acceptance

¹⁸ Note: our aim in presenting this table is not to definitively quantify or qualify the determinants but make our findings clearer for the reader.

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