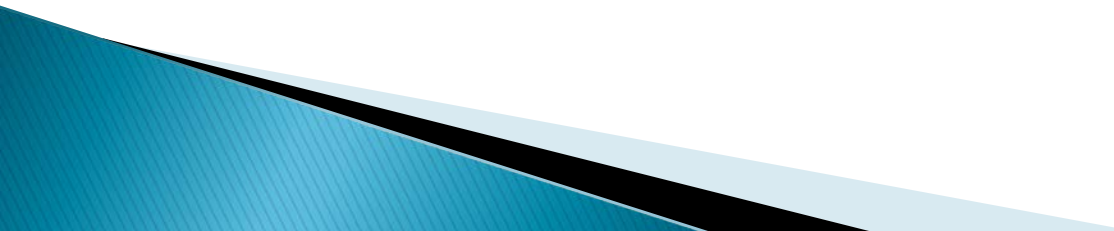


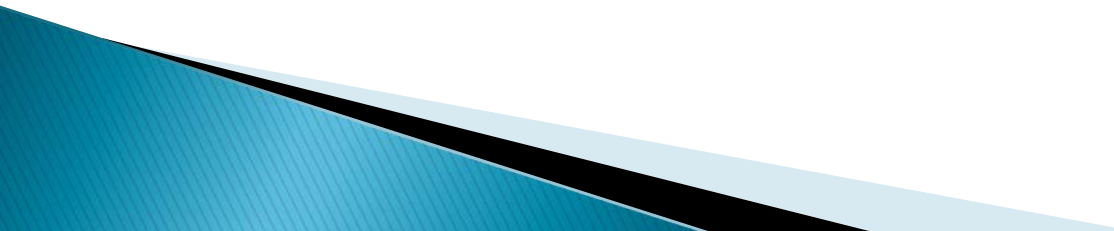
STATES AND REGIONS IN A MULTIPOLAR ORDER

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VU University,
Amsterdam, Jan.16, 2012.

Major Issues

- ▶ I – WHAT MULTIPOLARITY?
 - ▶ II – WHO ARE MAJOR PROTAGONISTS: STATES OR REGIONS?
 - ▶ III – THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL ALLIANCES
 - ▶ IV – IMPLICATIONS FOR POWER RELATIONS
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Core assumptions:

- ▶ Multipolarity must not be regarded solely from the perspective of international politics.
 - ▶ Multipolarity in a highly interdependent world entails important changes in the nature of power and power relations;
 - ▶ The functionality of regions reflects incentives and the ability of political actors to forge regional identities and their willingness to work together under the aegis of regional policies and institutions.
 - ▶ Regional alliances are important for emerging powers but international coalitions and multilateralism have become more relevant as immediate options.
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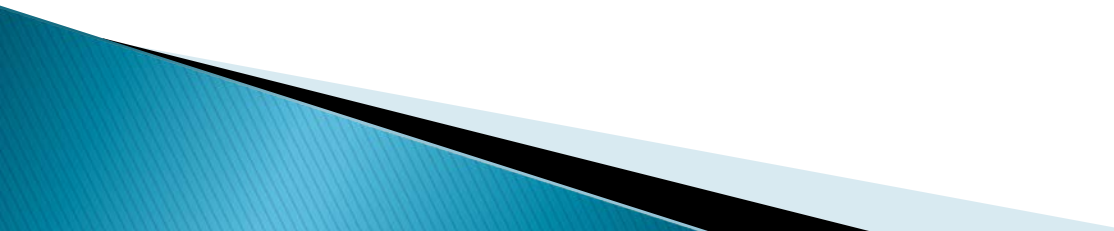
I – What Multipolarity?

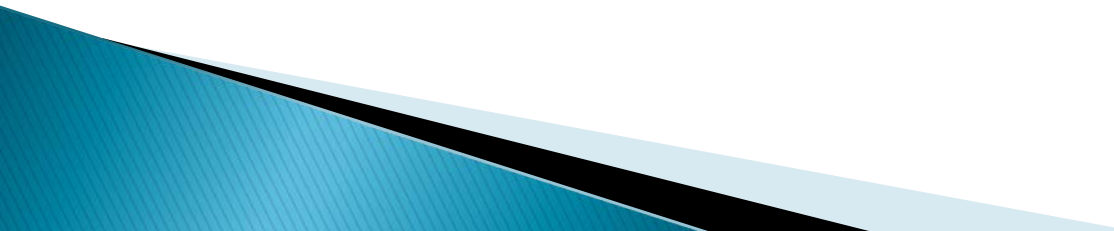
- ▶ Power is diffuse but there are concentrations of power decisively shaping and influencing events and outcomes on different issues.
- ▶ The rise of multipolarity is not a matter of distribution of power among states any longer, but a matter of the exercise of power by a wider array of actors in global affairs.
- ▶ the need to reduce risks and vulnerabilities reinforces the roles and political capabilities of states and might lead to *regional protagonism* and, eventually, to the *international protagonism of regions* in a multipolar world.

Multipolarity and Stability

- ▶ Multipolarity and stability: a controversial relationship; multipolarity is associated to a more stable, equitable order; soft and hard balancing of power providing stability.
- ▶ However, historical experience suggest that multipolarity entails conflict and instability;
- ▶ Current emergence of multipolarity coincides with a significant decrease of inter-state conflicts;
- ▶ forces that might trigger inter-state conflicts: control of and access to natural resource;, the control of sensitive and strategic areas vital for the flow of goods in the quest for energy and food security.

II – WHO ARE THE MAJOR PROTAGONISTS: STATES OR REGIONS?

- ▶ States as central actors, but increasing reliance on interaction with non-state actors for the accomplishment of nationally defined interests and objectives and for the successful pursuit of national, regional and global policies;
 - ▶ State initiatives as basic requirement for the construction of political and economic regionalism.
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- ▶ Most regions have failed in developing a political identity and policy instruments that enable them to perform actively as such in the world economy and in global affairs.
 - ▶ Important referents for policies but not relevant agents or actors;
 - ▶ their actual importance as constitutive elements of multipolarity is relatively smaller than expected.
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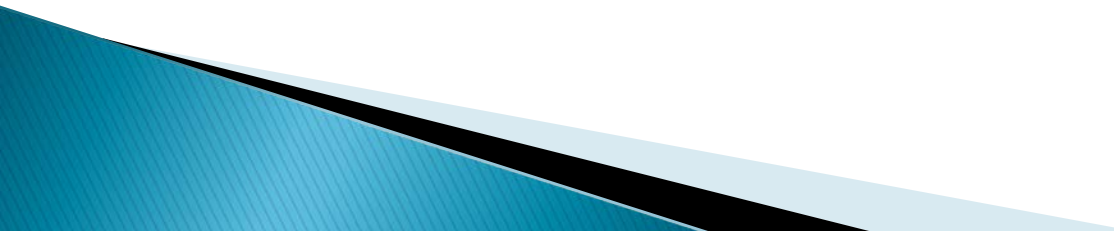
III – THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL ALLIANCES

- ▶ Regions have become spheres of asymmetric multipolarity:
- ▶ Regionalism has actually become a component of the economic order but a lesser important one than expected.
- ▶ International groupings based on shared interests and attributes tends to prevail;

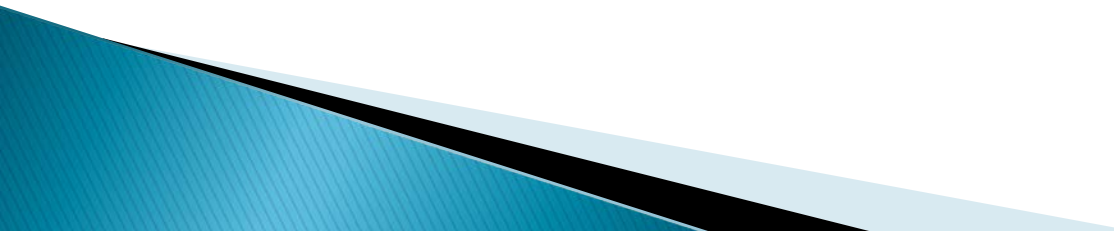
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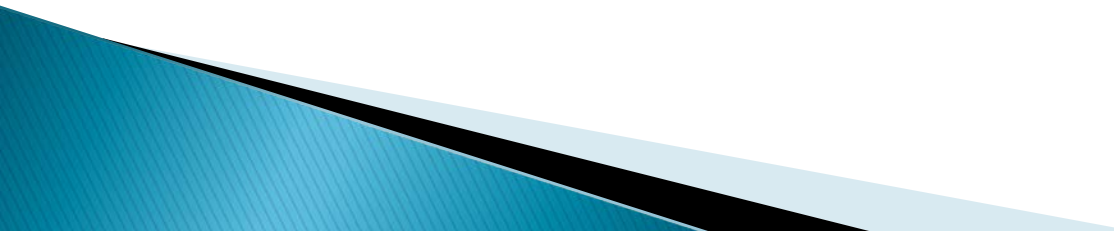
- ▶ Multilateralism (not necessarily on a regional basis) emerges as a corollary of multipolarity.

However

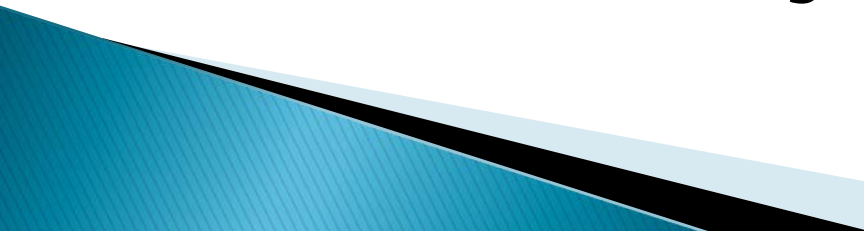
- ▶ Regionalism is required in many issue areas; global governance will rely, in many aspects on regional governance initiatives, policies and mechanisms in key areas like environmental management, economic infra-structure, foreign direct investments and security;
 - ▶ Geopolitical importance of regions is bound to increase but it does not meet adequate regional institutional frameworks to allow policy coordination and convergent responses among constituting actors.
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Is it in the interest of emerging powers to seek political alliances with their neighbors?

- ▶ In normative terms, yes. But reality displays a different and more complex scene.
 - ▶ Emerging powers like Brazil, South Africa and India are recognized as regional powers and regional leaders but they face different conditions and difficulties in leading and forging regional political identity.
 - ▶ The needs and incentives for greater reliance on regionalism differ and so do the place and relevance of regionalism in their international strategies.
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- ▶ **Brazil:** intends to forge a regional south American identity as a political asset to legitimate and underscore its international assertiveness. However, the exercise of political leadership has been difficult; greater reliance on coalitions at the international/multilateral levels rather than on its regional prominence.
 - ▶ **South Africa:** entangled with regional affairs but also faces difficulties in the management of regional affairs ; also resorting to international coalitions and multilateralism to support its international performance.
 - ▶ **India:** directly exposed to a more competitive regional environment. Active in strengthening its own political, economic and military capabilities; key actor for regional balance of power.
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IV – IMPLICATIONS FOR POWER RELATIONS

- ▶ Enhancing stability as a primary political task. Hard and soft balancing will not suffice if distributive issues are not effectively regarded.
 - ▶ Political relevance of regions associated to demands of governance in diverse issue areas;
 - ▶ The importance of regional powers should not be assessed primarily by their ability to lead or to stabilize their own regions, but to set patterns of international relationships that contribute to global stability and help forge governance mechanisms at regional and global levels.
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THANK YOU!

