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Abstract

This article offers a complementary analysis to the prevailing literature on soft power by addressing the issue of multilateral soft power. While the prevailing literature on soft power tends to look at how soft power manifests itself within individual nations, this article attempts to analyze the manifestations of collective soft power in the vehicle of a multilateral organization. This can be referred to as *compound soft power*. Such an analysis looks at a macro-level class of soft power. In doing so, it looks more broadly at the configuration of the forest, in contradistinction to the prevailing research on soft power, which looks predominantly at individual trees (i.e., individual country analysis). While this analysis of compound soft power is

undertaken specifically within the context of the BRICS, it is intended to be generalized to all international organizations.

Author Biography

Giulio M. Gallarotti is Professor of Government and Tutor in the College of Social Studies at Wesleyan University. He has also been a Visiting Professor in the Department of Economic Theory at the University of Rome. He is the author of *The Anatomy of an International Monetary Regime: The Classical Gold Standard 1880-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), *The Power Curse: Influence and Illusion in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), and *Cosmopolitan Power in International Relations: A Synthesis of Realism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). In addition, he has published numerous articles in leading journals across five disciplines: economics, politics, law, history, and business.

1. Introduction

How do international organizations affect the soft power of their member states? This question has been little explored by existing studies on soft power. Indeed the most extensive discussions of soft power and international organizations have suggested that joining such organizations is a means of attaining greater influence through the creation of a better image (i.e., the influence one garners as being perceived to be a “good international citizen”). There has also been some discussion of the creation of political capital within an organization as a result of attaining agenda control.¹ But aside from discussions of these few multilateral manifestations of soft power, little has been said about other more fundamental processes by which membership in an organization can in fact modify a nation’s soft power. Moreover, little has been said about the soft power which emanates from the multilateral organization itself, a soft power that is fundamentally different from the unilateral power enjoyed by its members, and hence qualifies as a completely different power dynamic. The analysis of soft power has been largely restricted to the power that emanates from the unilateral characteristics, actions, and policies of individual nations themselves. A multilateral dynamic is especially interesting when we see it playing out among a group of very different nations, like the BRICS. This article offers a complementary analysis to the collection of articles in this special issue, as well as to the prevailing literature on soft power, by addressing this specific issue of multilateral soft power. While the other articles in this issue look at how soft power manifests itself in each individual member nation of the

¹ Rothman (2011) and Nye (2002) posit agenda control in the vein that Bachrach and Baratz (1962) have envisioned it. While it is no doubt softer than more direct diplomatic coercion by larger powers, it could still involve a conflict of interests. In fact Bachrach and Baratz have envisioned agenda control in such a harder power context. Softer diplomatic power would work through the unifying power of legitimacy and respect, hence taking place in a context of far fewer conflicts of interest. On this debate, see Gallarotti (2010b). On soft power and international organization, see Nye (2002 and 2011) and Gallarotti (2010b and 2011).

BRICS, this article attempts to analyze the manifestations of collective soft power within the vehicle of a multilateral organization created among the BRICS members. This can be referred to this as *compound soft power*. Such an analysis looks at a macro-level class of soft power. In doing so, it looks more broadly at the configuration of the forest, in contradistinction to the prevailing research on soft power, which looks predominantly at individual trees (i.e., individual country analysis). While this analysis of compound soft power in this article is undertaken specifically within the context of the BRICS, it is intended to be generalized to all international organizations.²

Summarizing the principal argument of this article, the BRICS as an international organization modifies the soft power of its member states through four fundamental processes: augmentation, layering, transitivity, and compensation. Each process enhances the soft power of each of the BRICS members in ways that have not yet heretofore been explored in the context of power analysis applied to any international organization. The findings in this analysis suggest that these processes are able to enhance soft power in the context of blocs made up of even extremely diverse memberships. In fact, diversity can sometimes make the power augmentation all the greater. Indeed these processes create new types of soft power that modify the individual soft power resources of the member nations in ways that make the soft power of the bloc different from the sum of its individual parts. In this respect, the creation of this *compound soft power* is most definitely not a purely additive process, and must be evaluated as an entirely new power dynamic. While this compound dynamic has raised the soft power of the BRICS nations in a number of ways, the members have still failed to achieve the organization's full potential as a vehicle for soft power. A number of strategic alterations on the part of the membership could enhanced the BRICS potential influence in world affairs.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 identifies the four major processes of compound soft power, Section 3 issues prescriptions for strategic changes in managing the activities of the BRICS organization so as to enhance its effectiveness as a vehicle for soft power, and Section 4 offers brief concluding remarks.

2. The Components of Compound Soft Power

2.a. Augmentation of soft power through amalgamation: Not so strange bedfellows

The creation of a multilateral organization creates a completely new kind of soft power resource (i.e., different from indigenous domestic resources) for member nations because the act of

² Aside from country studies, the rest of the prevailing research on soft power has largely addressed broader theoretical issues. The contributions in this special issue are typical of soft power country studies. This article will not cover fundamental theoretical issues about soft power, since it is done elsewhere in this special issue (Chatin and Gallarotti 2016).

multilateralization itself is a source of soft power. In this respect, there is a non-differentiation effect among nations in the formation of compound soft power. i.e., it does not matter who the countries are, there is a natural augmentation of soft power for each individual nation when an international collective is created.³ Just joining a multilateral organization generates its own independent soft power for each individual nation. But the organization must show a willingness to pursue national and bloc objectives within a greater multilateral context, and consequently eschew incontinent unilateral and bloc dispositions. Existing studies on soft power have vigorously made this point.⁴ Playing by widely embraced international rules and norms places a nation within a certain circle of compatriotship based in legitimate principles of foreign relations. Of course the *soft power dispersion* (i.e., the international dispersion of a nation's soft power) will be less to the extent that the new bloc behaves with pronounced impunity or inconsistently with universal norms and laws. Surely the creation of an openly confrontational organization such as a hostile alliance would garner soft power dispersion among the other member nations and nations hostile to the target nations (i.e., Russian response to the NATO's "open door" policy), but would garner little dispersion among nations that are neutral, and likely generate a retraction of soft power with target nations. This might also apply to regional economic blocs that are geared toward competition against super-economies or other blocs (like MERCOSUR or ECOWAS). Such organizations as alliances and economic blocs are examples of international organizations with a specific function and restricted membership. Many of these will indeed generate less soft power dispersion than international organizations that have a universal membership, with or without specific functions. This latter type of organization would generate the most soft power dispersion, since the goals of such organizations tend to be universally accepted and pursued.

The creation of the BRICS as an organization is especially geared toward greater soft power dispersion since it purports a multilateral initiative grounded in many universal functions, laws, and norms. The BRICS function as a bloc that meets at the margins of major universal international organizations (UNGA, IMF, World Bank, WHO, WTO), and overtly embraces the general goals of those organizations in the objectives expressed at their independent summits, hence the soft power dispersion extends to the entire world since almost all countries are members of these same organizations and hence espouse the general principles of these organizations.⁵ Points two and three in the communiqué generated from the first formal meeting

³ In other respects, however, identity does matter, as will be evident below.

⁴ On this issue see especially Gallarotti (2010b) and Nye (2002). Gallarotti (2004 and 2010a) explores the possibilities for disempowerment from foreign policies that are pursued with unilateral impunity: i.e., a vicious cycle of unilateralism.

⁵ While prompts for reforms of the UN, UNGA, and IMF have been consistently issued in the organization's 8 year history, they are compatible with reform plans that have garnered wide and diverse appeal (e.g., making them more democratic and efficient). See BRICs Foreign Ministers' Communique (2008 and 2015).

of BRICS foreign ministers in Yecaterinburg, Russia in 2008 express a commitment to universal principles of multilateralism.

2. The Ministers ... reaffirmed the commitment of the BRICs to work together and with other states in order to strengthen international security and stability.

3. The Ministers reiterated that today's world order should be based on the rule of international law and the strengthening of multilateralism with the United Nations playing the central role.⁶

In this respect, BRICS strategy is geared toward maximizing compatriotship, both formally through the venue of international organizations, and informally in the dispositions underlying the foreign relations of non-BRICS nations with BRICS member nations.

A principal vehicle of soft power augmentation for this international organization is comprised of the principals and objectives laid out in communiqués, joint statements, declarations, action plans and media notes from BRICS meetings; proclamations which exude universal norm reinforcement.⁷ There is a credo that permeates these global announcements aside from a commitment to multilateralism. The principal components of this credo were established in the BRICS first official statement in 2008 and have been consistently repeated in most all official summit communications from that year until the present time:

*"dialogue based on mutual trust and respect, common interests, coincidence or similarity of approaches toward ... pressing problems"

*" building a more democratic international system founded on the rule of law"

* "ensure equal opportunities for development to all countries" so as to create "a just global economic system"

*"support for political and diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve disputes in international relations"

* condemnation of "terrorism in all its forms and manifestations"

*collectively addressing problems of "energy security, socio-economic development and environmental protection"

*"strengthening international cooperation to address climate change"

⁶ BRICs Foreign Ministers' Communique (2008).

⁷ Rothman (2011) underscores this norm reinforcement as a principal means of generating soft power.

*intensifying the dialogue to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, primarily the Millennium Development Goals, on the basis of global partnership”

*promote “South-South cooperation”⁸

Non-differentiation is especially important because in terms of individual soft power profiles the BRICS are indeed strange bedfellows.⁹ Brazil’s soft power emanates from a confluence of a history of pacifism (few armed conflicts), hard-power deficiencies (a relatively modest military and no WMD) and a vigorous foreign policy of leadership in multilateral organizations (Chatin 2016). South Africa boasts one of the most liberal constitutions in the world (one of the few to allow same sex marriage) and a liberal democratic transformation consecrated with the ascent of an international icon (Mandela) in a nation formerly reviled as a pariah among modern states. Its political transition in the 1990s coincided with a foreign policy, like Brazil, of extensive multilateral engagement in order to achieve a status as an important soft power broker on the global stage (Van Der Westhuizen 2016). India’s soft power is cultural and political. It boasts an epic culture and a birthplace of four religions. It’s Bollywood is the largest entrepot of filmmaking in the world. Its diaspora is 25 million strong. And it has persisted as the world’s only stable democracy in a nation that is ethnically and politically fractured (Thussu 2016). China has built the most elaborate and systematic mechanism for marshaling soft power: the “charm offensive” covers everything from globally promoting Confucian thought to building networks of friendship with African nations from whom it imports raw materials. But even more than the other BRICS, the role of soft power (which is intended to feed the economic machine— i.e., secure sources of energy and markets for exports) is purposefully integrated with a hard power initiative that is intended to raise the stature of China as a great power (i.e., also feed the military machine). The Sun Zi (*Art of War*) dualism of “zheng” (direct means) and “qi” (indirect means) represents opposing strategies which synthesize into a strategy of smart or cosmopolitan

⁸ See especially the various official communications from BRICS Leader’s Declarations and Action Plans (2016).

⁹ Soft power aside, the BRICS show great diversity across social, political, geographic, and economic dimensions; such that they do *prima facie* appear as strange bedfellows. The importance of non-differentiation in building soft power challenges arguments (such as in Armijo 2007) that political diversity within the BRICS compromises its abilities to function effectively as a soft or even hard power bloc. Indeed, history has shown that when common interests arise, even the strangest bedfellows make effective allies or compatriots. One recalls Churchill’s famous quote about aligning with the devil if it meant fighting Hitler.

The acronym “BRICS” in fact was never originally self applied, but emerged from a set of studies by Goldman Sachs in the early 2000’s. The studies suggested greater attention to investment opportunities in the larger emerging market nations as rising powers in the world economy, hence there appeared in these studies a perceived commonality within this group of nations in the eyes of the financial community. See O’Neil (2001).

power.¹⁰ Hence the Chinese do not conceptualize soft and hard power as occupying distinct spaces, an ideological value no other BRICS nation shares to the same extent. The investments in soft power on the part of China are likely greater than the investments in soft power by the entirety of the other BRICS nations. Every instrument purposefully used by each the other BRICS is used by China, and most in greater quantity by China--China is even trying to build a film production capability that could compete with India and the U.S.. Presidents Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping have fully embraced a soft offensive as a cornerstone of attaining a superpower status. In fact Presidential references to Chinese soft power dwarf similar references in the other BRICS.¹¹ Moreover, no BRICS nation has been as perspicacious and thorough in coordinating a comprehensive and integrated strategy of soft power.¹² But more than the other BRICS, China envisions its soft power initiative as principally spearheaded by an ideological offensive, hence the central important of the proliferation of Confucian Institutes throughout China and the world. This is an augmentation of a domestic initiative to fill the void left with the ideological decline of Communism by promoting Confucian values, which themselves also serve to underscore the roles of family, obedience, and authority; thus giving the CPC a greater buttress of ideological support (Zanardi 2016 and Kurlantzick 2007).

Russia shares many similarities to China in the nature of its soft power with respect to source. Both nations have long histories of cultural and political distinction: with great contributions on all dimensions of human endeavor. Both have also made rare revolutionary transitions to Communist orders. Additionally both nations have had much experience in information dissemination through their propaganda machines during the Cold War period, with Russia having had a far more extensive program of information control. More recently, since both nations have been less integrated in global society, non-state actors have been less visible as chariots of soft power. Consequently, the state has been largely responsible for the soft offensive in both nations. And like China, the Russian centralized state has found it easier to organize such a program than have the less centralized BRICS nations. Like Chinese leaders, Russian leaders have underscored the importance of soft power in their foreign policy. Much of this soft power offensive has been to compete with Western soft power, and deliver a superpower image akin to that of the US. The Russian state has engineered a great many institutions and initiatives that would expose the world to Russian society, from the international TV station Russia Today to mega events like the Sochi Olympics in 2014 and hosting the World Cup in 2018. Russia has also been distinct in its attempts at regional soft power dispersion through the

¹⁰ On smart and cosmopolitan power, see Nye (2011) and Gallarotti (2010b).

¹¹ The principal Confucian value of *ren* (benevolence or power of attraction) coincides perfectly with the modern concept of soft power (Zanardi 2016).

¹² This is no surprise, since the Chinese state is the most effectively centrally managed nation of the BRICS. Central planning is an administrative manifestation of their Party model in all its activities. A clear reflection of this in the context of soft power is the establishment of a leadership council to coordinate the activities of the many Confucian Institutes spread around the world (Zanardi 2016).

Russotrudnichestvo, an agency dedicated to the promoting the endearment of the 125 million ethnic Russians and Russian speaking people residing in the former Soviet Union (Rutland and Kazantzev 2016).

Interestingly the diversity and geographic spread of the BRICS actually enhances soft power dispersion. If the members were more similar and/or geographically contiguous, such commonalities would often work against it.¹³ The membership is so diverse with respect to the composition of foreign relations of each BRICS nation that it is difficult to see the organization itself as menacing in the way a more restricted organization like a regional alliance or economic bloc might be. The membership of Brazil, India and South Africa tone down the menacing aspects of two Cold War rivals with the U.S. Regional rivalries in Africa, South Asia and South America are diluted by the association with large power brokers outside of these regions.¹⁴ Conversely, geographic spread creates an organization that can be embraced by the regional and non-regional allies of each of the members, which in this case creates a soft power dispersion that is truly global. The platforms they have chosen for overlap meetings and statements, universal international organizations, have compounded that global appeal. The fact that the BRICS contains both developing and developed nations, as well as Communist and democratic nations, renders it more appealing to groupings of countries that share each characteristic. In this case, you also have developing and developed nations demonstratively promoting development.¹⁵ But you concomitantly have large regional developing players promoting a capitalist agenda in supporting continued success in the coordination among the G-20. This promotes a pitch toward non-capitalist nations in transition as well as toward developed nations. Moreover, the BRICS have disassociated the organization from any specific military objectives aside from promoting international security.¹⁶ This last point makes it appealing to virtually all nations struggling against external or internal security threats, which in this age of terrorism means virtually every nation.

¹³ In a sense, this process brings to mind Rosenau's (2003) concept of fragmentation. Rosenau's term reflects the opposing properties of fragmentation and integration which exist in the present globalizing world political economy. In the context of the BRICS, there is at the same time great diversity, but this diversity actually enhances the multilateral effectiveness of the organization.

¹⁴ There is strong beneficial cross-over for China in Africa with China's soft-power offensive on that continent. See Nelson (2003) and Kurlantzick (2007).

¹⁵ In fact the very first point of the first official communiqué by the organization underscored the importance of development. The ministers touted "the prospects of the BRIC dialogue based on mutual trust and respect, common interests, coincidence or similarity of approaches toward the pressing problems of global development." See BRICs Foreign Ministers' Communique (2008).

¹⁶ Point 5 in the BRICS communiqué from their first formal meeting states, "The Ministers expressed their strong commitment to multilateral diplomacy in dealing with common challenges to international security." See BRICs Foreign Ministers' Communique (2008).

The non-additivity aspect of soft power dispersion from augmentation can manifest itself in a number of ways. The membership mix creates ample opportunities for complementarities, so that soft power arsenals are far more complete through amalgamation in a bloc. Each member brings a soft power profile that can serve to complete the profiles of other nations. Admiration of the great superpowers Russia and China mixes nicely with the endearing empathy that India and Brazil garner from their developing status. The traditional great civilizations of India, Russia and China nicely complement the positive ingénue effects of Brazil and South Africa as young nations (ingénue effects are further discussed below). In this respect the BRICS generates admiration for polar opposite soft traits. Additionally, the admiration that Brazil and South Africa attain by becoming role models of domestic democratic practices and values complements the international charm offensive of China. Hence there are manifold possibilities for complementarities with and between both domestic and international components of soft power. But complementarities go beyond traits and show themselves in other ways. There is also temporal complementarity, for which diversity of membership is especially fortuitous for the bloc. Soft power profiles vary according to current policies and outcomes. At times nations may find their soft power waning (such as Russia and China at present, due to territorial disputes), but it is unlikely that the changes in soft power will be perfectly correlated, especially among a group as diverse as the BRICS. The more positive images of present domestic politics in South Africa and India serve as temporal counterweights to Russia and China's regional disputes and authoritarian regimes. In terms of financial portfolio theory, the best possible combination of risk and return on investments occurs when portfolios are composed of very different types of assets (i.e., extensive diversification is always best). Similarly, a diverse bloc such as the BRICS offers the best complementary mix of soft power profiles: their images are less likely to be correlated due to completely different geo-political environments (Thussu 2016).¹⁷

Beyond the statements, the bloc's creation of the New Development Bank (NDA) and the Contingency Reserve Fund (CRF) in 2014 has generated an institutional manifestation of soft power. While the capitalization of the two, although significant at one billion dollars each, is still modest with respect to the organizations they mirror (World Bank and IMF), the creation of development lending institutions outside of Western purview has served to reinforce a normative paradigm shift. While there will be some overlap in lending procedures, the NDA is not devoted to the politics or the economic models of the West in issuing or supervising infrastructural lending. Similarly, the CRF's governing principles reflect little of the Washington consensus, which suggests a rigid management of short term balance of payments relief. The guiding principles of these two institutions embrace a model of lending that is far more South-friendly and consequently opposed to the shackles of the Western model which undergirds the

¹⁷ On what constitutes deep soft power and on diversification among power assets, see especially Gallarotti (2010b).

IMF and World Bank.¹⁸ This is of immense importance in terms of image for the BRICS since the Western model has been vilified in the South. Also in this vein, the cumulative effect of a bloc creates compound hard power. And as has been made clear, hard and soft power are not incompatible, in fact they can compound and complement one another (Chatin and Gallarotti 2016). It is no surprise that nations that rank highly on soft power indexes also have the most hard power resources. This is because hard power provides the resources, presence and impact to enhance the foundations of soft power. In terms of hard power as a bloc, the BRICS collective possess: 30% of global land, 43% of global population, 21% of the world's GDP, 17.3% of global merchandise trade, 12.7% of global commercial services, 45% of world's agriculture production, and 22% of global military spending (BRICS Strategy 2015).

Also in the context of hard and soft power complementarity, each member of the BRICS now has a diplomatic support group within each of the organizations in which it is a member. This bloc can be useful in setting agendas, creating a voting bloc, and/or generating a diplomatic wedge that can be used to promote the interests of each BRICS nation. This bloc empowerment works through different forms of power associations. Surely superpower backing gives Indian, Brazilian and South African diplomats greater diplomatic capital. But so too does the backing of developing nations generate diplomatic capital for the superpowers through legitimation. In terms of soft power dispersion this mix can work best when there is greater diversity, since the possibilities for complementarities rises as diversity grows. For example, joining Brazil and South Africa brings two leaders in the fight for cotton trade into the same diplomatic circle. Brazil has done much unilaterally to break down cotton subsidies that a group of African nations have been historically keen on. In this respect, Brazil has functioned more as a leader in the African agricultural cause than South Africa, which has been relied upon to fill such a role for African nations in all organizations (Nelson 2016).

The BRICS Strategy for Economic Partnership (2015) also nicely reflects the means by which disparate and diverse actors can consolidate efforts to build a global power bloc. The Partnership aspires to a single presence that generates diplomatic and economic weight on the global scene. It is envisioned as working through extensive initiatives that coordinate policies and interests across both state and non-state actors. The document announcing the partnership mirrors an insightful view into the process of compounding power among disparate nations. The collective goals place large international issues in the purview of the bloc (especially development, free trade, financial transparency, sustainable growth, poverty relief, human rights, and health), hence the bloc is making the business of the larger global community its own

¹⁸ Fourcade (2013) sees the formation of the BRICS as symbolically important in terms of the world economy. Its existence signals the importance of nations that were heretofore excluded from the core (G-7), and it also builds soft currency for the challenge of the Beijing Consensus against the Washington Consensus.

business, thus entrenching it more firmly as a key diplomatic force in larger global debates.¹⁹ But at an even greater level of engagement the BRICS are positioning the bloc as a leader in important international reform efforts that cover all major international issues: international financial regulation, IFI management, pushing regional solutions to global problems, trade, development programs, food security, and environment.²⁰ This engagement is showing a vigorous institutional augmentation in the form of engineered mission creep. This manifests itself in an expansion of bloc cooperation into a variety of governmental and non-governmental fora: informal meetings, sherpa meetings, research centers, seminars, think tank symposia, business forums, law forums, statistical cooperation, cultural forums, and greater cooperation in sports.²¹ Moreover, the Strategy underscores cooperation in energy, agriculture, innovation and natural resource production. While hardly oligopolistic, still the collective impact which the BRICS could muster in all four areas represents a large chunk of global share, hence the bloc assumes a greater ability to marshal diplomatic power as a result of collective influence in such areas. Other initiatives on intra-bloc export credits and innovation set up financial institutions to promote trade and innovation within the bloc, hence aside from the potential pooling of resources, there is a possibility of increasing some resources through joint financing (BRICS Strategy 2015).²² On a more regionally focused issue, the bloc initiative on solving the problem of political instability in the Middle East and North Africa has also demonstrated the power of amalgamative involvement in crucial international issues. A recent communiqué on the situation pushes solutions to problems in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Israel/Palestine that well reflect one voice within a body of widely respected multilateral solutions (BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers Meeting on the Situation, 2015).

Finally, augmentation effects are promoted through slingshotting or piggybacking. This is a process whereby important domestic soft power initiatives are publicized, promoted and/or consecrated by the entire bloc, thus augmenting soft domestic dispersion of each individual nation.²³ The bloc has served to slingshot numerous unilateral initiatives: Russian involvement in the Middle East Quartet negotiations on an Israeli/Palestine solution, Russian ascension to the WTO, Indian and Russian victimization from terrorism, Brazil's leadership initiative in global cooperation in hosting the 3rd Global Forum in 2010, the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, the 2010

¹⁹ The BRICS as a bloc was especially influential in constructing broad financial planning in the G-20 in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis (BRICS Strategy 2015).

²⁰ This disposition toward leadership roles is apparent in the Joint Statement of the BRICS Second Summit in Brazilia in 2010 (BRICS Second Summit 2010).

²¹ See especially the Sanya Declaration and Action Plan in BRICS Third Summit (2011).

²² Once more, we see the natural interaction of soft and hard power. In this case greater control over hard resources places the BRICS in superior diplomatic positions over important issues within which it can utilize its softer resources (accommodation, cooperation, leadership, etc).

²³ The ideas of piggybacking and slingshotting are taken from Putnam and Bayne (1987), where they identify a tendency within the yearly major power summits among the G-7 for the members as a whole to lend support for controversial domestic political initiatives of the individual member leaders so as to enhance the leaders' political standings at home.

Commonwealth games in Delhi, the 2013 World Student games in Kazan, the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, and the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio (BRICS Second Summit 2010 and BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers Meeting on the Situation 2015).

2.b. Transitivity

There is a natural modification of unilateral soft power when nations join into a multilateral bloc or organization through a transitivity effect (i.e., benefits from the composition of associations). This modification generates two types of processes: soft power creation and soft power diversion. The members themselves experience soft power creation within and outside the bloc. Inside the bloc, new partnerships create greater bilateral and multilateral bonds among the members themselves, thus enhancing soft power dispersion among bloc nations, which both diffuses competition and generates enhanced bonds among nations that were not heretofore as closely linked. The rapprochement process is most visible in a “bilateral reconciliation effect.” So Russia and China break down barriers of contention and distrust that date back over a century of territorial disputes, war, mutual insecurities and friction over differing paths to Communism. India and China inject some measure of detente into historically tumultuous security relations. But there is also the multilateral “creative” effect of new alliances as a process soft power dispersion. Super powers Russia and China find a more endearing place among some regional leaders of emerging economies. Every BRICS member boasts four new compatriots and supporters of domestic and foreign policies. Brand new multilateral bonds are formed among nations that had no strong or even existing bonds outside of large universal international organizations: Brazil-South Africa-China, India-Russia-Brazil, India-Russia-China and other new sub-bloc permutations. For smaller powers, this coalition represents a common international strategy on the part of less powerful nations to create wedges of power both in their bilateral and multilateral initiatives. A very good microcosm by which to evaluate this strategy is in the context of Africa nations and their various multilateral initiatives across major international organizations (Nelson 2013 and 2016).²⁴

Outside the bloc, transitivity augments this soft power dispersion regionally and internationally for the members. In joining with South American, South Asian and African nations; China and Russia are now more strongly endearing themselves to the developing world as kindred spirits, and of course this enhances rapprochement with the US and West Europe.²⁵

²⁴ Brazil’s support for African nations in pushing European nations and the U.S. to dismantle cotton subsidies over the past 12 years has provided an interesting window into the diplomatic power which small nation coalitions can generate when working toward similar goals in existing international organizations. On cotton diplomacy, see Nelson (2016).

²⁵ Brazil has been especially valuable as a wedge into Southern hearts, as it has positioned itself as a “Southern development partner” and has achieved a reputation as a “role model” among developing nations (Chatin 2016).

Brazil, South Africa and India are positioning themselves as global power brokers by associating with super powers, thus enhancing their image as international players. In bringing superpowers into more unions with developing nations, the Southern coalition is bolstered across international organizations. In this respect, economic diversity serves the BRICS well in terms of soft power dispersion: the dispersion is generated paradoxically by both strength and weakness. In joining weaker nations, Russia and China gain legitimacy as Southern champions; while India, South Africa and Brazil augment an image of rising powers. China's championing of South African inclusion into the BRICS in 2010 was undertaken largely to engender greater influence with third world nations, especially on the African continent (Zanardi 2016).

In terms of diplomatic swagger and agenda power in international organizations, both the stronger and weaker members of the BRICS lock into a stronger negotiating bloc: China and Russia lock into a bloc of very large numbers, which carry weight in UN voting. Similarly, South Africa, Brazil and India lock more firmly into big-power blocs in international organizations with asymmetrical structures of decision-making (IMF, WTO, Security Council). China expands its "charm offensive" in Africa by joining a major leader of African states in international organizations. Russia soothes over a Cold War history in which it has generated insecurities both in the regions of South Asia and South America. Transitivity engenders extensive dispersion in promoting organizational and regional cross-over. The joining of a geographically dispersed bloc generates a truly global network of diplomatic interconnection. Each nation has now found a wedge into all of the international and regional organizations in which the other BRICS nations are members. In this respect, an old adage applies: "the friend of my friend is my friend," and this expansion of compatriotship offers countless opportunities to protect national interests in every corner of the Earth.

Transitivity also maintains wedges of influence within organizations in which influence has been weak or is waning. This process has been especially valuable for China and Russia. China was late in joining the WTO (2001) and has not been included in the G-8 until a recent invitee-observer status was offered at the G-8 meeting in Scotland in April of 2016. Russia only joined the WTO in 2012 and its invasion of Crimea caused it to be removed from the G-8. The BRICS has represented a back door into these organizations as other members of the BRICS have had access to the negotiations. This has helped assure that China and Russia's interests are being represented in such diplomatic fora (Van Der Westhuizen 2016, Kurlantzick 2007 and Nelson 2016).

Much of this soft power dispersion within and outside the bloc is generated by an infant innocence or ingénue effect. Kurlantzick (2007, p. 114) notes that soft-power creation can be more easily generated by initiatives that have no previous history. Much of China's success in its charm offensive outside its region, he argues, comes from the fact that it has not historically had much to do with nations outside its geographic sphere. This tabula rasa effect in South America and Africa means that most Chinese initiatives are new in those regions, and not weighed down by a history of competition or antagonism. In this sense, international organizations that pair

strange bedfellows regionally appear to have a comparative advantage over organizations that pair up nations into blocs that have bilateral or multilateral axes to grind; again, the advantage that emanates from BRICS diversity. The BRICS is only 8 years old, and like many children has not had sufficient time to create enemies as an entity. This endearing infant effect carries advantages for the BRICS as a group and each individual member in the various regions across the globe. Brazil's own history of limited incursions and regional pacifism, having been historically a regionally contained and non-belligerent nation, has especially enhanced transitive soft power benefits to the other members of the bloc (Chatin 2016). In China's case, its soft power offensive is markedly augmented by this infant advantage, as the BRICS offers another wedge that China can use to endear itself in new regions of Africa and South America (Kurlantzick 2007 and Nelson 2013). So too in the case of South Africa, which only emerged out of its regional shell under Mandela's multilateral initiatives of the 1990s. Its limited reach beforehand left few pernicious footprints that might limit its potential for positive engagement outside its region (Van Der Westhuizen 2016).

With respect to each BRICS member nation and their foreign relations with non-member nations, transitivity dynamics are compelling in diffusing erstwhile antagonisms. While cooperation between China and Russia has historically been disconcerting for the US, both pre and post 1990, cooperation in a regionally diffuse bloc tempers any menacing tones that Sino-Russia cooperation may create for US foreign policy. And moreover the U.S. enjoys new indirect diplomatic tools (working through India and South Africa) by which to deal with China on Taiwan and the South China Sea, as well as to deal with Russia on Syria and the Ukraine. In fact joining with erstwhile allies such as India and South Africa not only tempers the superpower tension, but in fact brings formerly antagonistic nations closer together. Brazil's union with two Communist superpowers places it in a stronger diplomatic position in a region in which Leftist politics had been strong until recently declining. South Africa's leadership on the African Continent is strengthened all the more as African nations see it as increasing its influence in international diplomacy through association with superpowers. Even among nations that have had a tumultuous history of foreign relations, joining into blocs with allies of their erstwhile enemies takes an edge off any existing antagonisms: again, the friend of my friend is my friend (Nelson 2016).²⁶

In terms of negative consequences of transitivity, there is the issue of soft power diversion, i.e., the soft power compromised with erstwhile competitors of BRICS members. This generates negative transitivity. In joining with erstwhile competitors of existing allies, member nations alienate those very allies. In other words, "the friend of my enemy is my enemy" (i.e., adverse alliance effects). For example, South Africa and India may lose some soft power with the U.S. by aligning with China and Russia. The same might be said of Brazil. Recent conflagrations in US bilateral relations with both super-power nations amplify this effect. An especially confrontational consequence in this respect is the soft balancing which the three weaker BRICS nations promote for China and Russia vis a vis the U.S. Moreover, there are

²⁶ On transitivity and perception formation in international politics, see Jervis (1976).

opportunity costs in pursuing bloc diplomacy. The time spent in BRICS negotiations represents time lost in developing other multilateral capital. And there is always the possibility of inconsistencies in a nation's foreign relations unraveling diplomatic ties (e.g., pushing trade relations within a bloc might conflict with global free trade initiatives elsewhere). While significant, these diversion effects are diluted by several factors. With respect to adverse alliance dispersion, there are three mitigating factors. The first is that the BRICS as an organization shuns particularistic military and strategic objects, and even its other objectives are largely universal. In this sense the organization does not constitute a menacing bloc, nor one that targets specific nations or alliances. The second is the fact that a brief life has established no tract record for the bloc being used as a diplomatic wedge to undermine America's foreign objectives. Finally, the U.S. welcomes bilateral and multilateral wedges of influence into blocs that comprise super-power competitors.²⁷ With respect to opportunity and conflicting interest costs, the diplomacy of BRICS is usually complementary to that of universal organizations, as it takes place in the shadow of meetings of these larger organizations. The shadowing of universal organizations is compounded by an agenda and principles which embrace universal principles within a regional and unilateral context, hence making the BRICS far less confrontational as a bloc (Van Der Westhuizen 2016).²⁸

With respect to transitivity, diversity especially enhances soft power in terms of diplomatic strength. Expanding compatriots and the transitivity effects this creates (i.e., friends of my friends) expands the number of international blocs that can be brought inside the circle of compatriotship. The BRICS can now vote as a bloc in international organizations, and create favorable voting patterns in the other blocs that each BRICS member is associated with. Those that suggest agenda control to have soft elements (i.e., nations follow soft power nations out of trust and respect) would embrace this as a true expansion of soft power. But even in the case where agenda control is not considered very soft, there is a voting effect that brings other constellations into agreement on issues of importance to the BRICS. In this latter respect, the BRICS soft diplomatic dispersion from transitivity creates ripple effects because the BRICS are now more of a focal point for coalition building. As a focal point, if the BRICS engender trust and respect, which in turn lends legitimacy to issue preferences, then this focal role is squarely in the arsenal of soft power.²⁹ In fact Tsebelis and Kreppel (1999) find that coalition formation in the European Parliament is often strongly grounded in converging ideology. At a more general level, Wendt (1994) underscores how processes of collective identity can emerge that overshadow considerations of rationally-driven behavior. The literature on regime formation and

²⁷ See Point 5 in the BRICS communiqué from their first formal meeting, quoted above (BRICs Foreign Ministers' Communique 2008).

²⁸ Other adverse transitivity effects can come in the form of ambivalence on universal principles resulting from new compatriotships. For example, South Africa under Zuma stepped back from its leadership in the international LGBT movement due to tensions that would cause with Russia and other African states (Van Der Westhuizen 2016).

²⁹ Agenda control offers both harder and softer qualities (Chatin and Gallarotti 2016)..

epistemic communities underscores how groups of actors or nations can be transformed through mutual adaptation based in the emergence of consensual knowledge. All of these studies embrace the power of soft dispersion in the context of the transformative power of ideas (*International Organization* 1992).

Transitivity offers some important piggybacking and slingshot opportunities. For example, the BRICS offers Brazil a platform for its aspirations to fulfill its promise as the “country of the future.” With the world’s 7th largest economy, a large landmass, abundant resources, and a diverse eco-system; Brazil has stood on the precipice of large power status for some time. Joining a more elite bloc with two superpowers more vigorously fulfills its ongoing foreign policy to gain greater international clout through expanded diplomacy. In this case, the two super power bloc gives it greater credibility as a rising power, as it does for South Africa and India. This piggybacking to stardom nicely complements its membership in the Security Council and the G-20. The narrative in the BRICS communiqués underscores an equity of status among members in pursuing their common goals. This generates a major player image for Brazil, South Africa and India. Brazil is an especially fortunate recipient of soft dispersion through transitive links. Brazil over the past decade has emerged as a natural “bridge builder” among developed and developing nations. Under Ignacio (Lula) da Silva, Brazil undertook what was referred to as a “frenzy of diplomatic activity” geared toward creating networks of cooperation with African and Middle Eastern states. Brazil in fact outpaced Britain in its number of African embassies. Brazil itself can be said to have a strong presence in each club. This dual identity has helped Brazil build more inclusive clubs through what is referred to as “regime deepening” or “southern diversification” (Chatin 2016).

But the slingshotting and piggybacking cut both ways. The weak may stand tall on the shoulders of giants, but the giants can elevate their standing by propping up upon the shoulders of the weaker. While association with super-powers raises the image and diplomatic clout of Brazil, South Africa and India by association, so too do China and Russia enjoy the diplomatic clout and image by standing with their weaker brethren. While the global system is not a democracy, many powerful nations are subject to the sentiments of the larger community of nations. In international organizations it is more difficult to engineer initiatives if a large group of nations contests those initiatives. Developing nations far outnumber developed nations, hence endearing oneself to the larger global populace is an important wedge of influence. The circle of compatriotship is tightened by overlapping experiences with development and colonialism. China, like and developing nations, was imperialized, and the Communist ideology in the Soviet Union held strongly against such imperialism. Moreover, in their friction with the U.S., Russia and China have also shared a kindred sentiment against Western imperialism that helped form closer bonds with other developing nations.

2.c. Layering

Layering relates to, but is different from augmentation. Augmentation has to do with creating new soft power; layering is a compounding of already existing unilateral soft power resources that nations enjoy. This process compounds a nation's domestic and international soft power by adding another layer of international soft power dispersion through the vehicle of the BRICS organization.

Brazil enjoys a natural layering effect through this organization. The BRICS objectives and normative narrative follows upon the heels of one of the most aggressive soft power foreign policies in the world. Two principal components of this soft foreign policy are commitments to pacifism and multilateralism. Brazil identifies itself as a "pacifist" nation through its notion of "Peace With Responsibility" and its overt demonization of the use of force. Its relatively meager military expenditures, which comprise 5% of U.S. and 8.9% of BRICS' military budgets, accord with this posture, one that reflects a defensive orientation in its security policy. Its pacifism has also manifest itself in a number of both global initiatives in NPT negotiations and offering mediation in Middle East disputes; and regional initiatives in creating nuclear-free and security zones in South America through the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the ZOPACAS. These initiatives have been overlaid by efforts to contribute to soft peacekeeping in UN missions. Based on the norm of "peace not by force but through winning hearts," Brazilian troops and commanders have assumed leadership roles in building peace in Haiti and the Congo (Stuenkel 2016 and Chatin 2016).

Multilaterally Brazil has aggressively set its sights on becoming a major interlocutor in important international negotiations, and hence a diplomatic steering force in global diplomacy. It builds on a very long tradition of mediation in South American border disputes. It has involved itself in every major international and regional organization possible, and within those organizations has continually worked to take a leadership role as a means of bolstering its image and consequently its diplomatic clout. The results have been especially visible in the WTO where Brazil emerged as a forceful player in agricultural (especially on cotton subsidies) and intellectual property issues.³⁰ Furthermore, Brazil has remained diplomatically impetuous by stepping into even the highest stake games. It offered its services to mediate a resolution to the Arab-Palestinian conflict after declaring the U.S. unfit, and through the Tehran Declaration sought to impede new sets of sanctions against Iran before the U.S. had concluded a nuclear deal with that nation. It also condemned the U.S. intervention in the 2nd Iraq War, and condemned NATO for surpassing its mandate in the Libyan conflict. In addition it insisted that Annex I nations (i.e., developed nations) be true to their promises and undertake GHG reductions as stated in the Kyoto commitments. Brazil has even emerged as a leading global figure in the discussion over internet rights (Stuenkel 2016 and Chatin 2016).

³⁰ Brazil's tenacity in negotiating trade agreements on agriculture and medicine patents was rewarded by extensive support among developing nations in the election of Roberto Acevedo as Director General of the WTO in 2013 (Chatin 2016).

Finally, the BRICS bloc, in its political narrative, also offers a layering opportunity to Brazil in the nation's promotion of democratic values.³¹ The region of South America has seen no stronger supporter of democracy since 1990. It has in these past years consistently intervened in political crises among regional powers (Bolivia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Ecuador) to promote democratic practices, re-establish democracy and to push back against coups. It has come out strongly in its own domestic political arena as a beacon of anti-corruption and political accountability in providing social services. For these reasons, Brazil has been named the truly "entrepreneurial and democratic" member of the BRICS (Chatin 2016).

For South Africa, there is a natural layering effect on the shoulders of a golden age of political liberalization in the 1990s under Mandela, which turned South Africa from a reviled apartheid state to a beacon of democratic liberalization under a leader of Gandhiesc stature. Regionally, the BRICS augmented the greater leadership role South Africa was taking on the continent over the past three administrations, from Mandela to Zuma, with the two highpoints being the creations of The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU). Internationally, by joining the BRICS in 2010, layering effects have been manifest in an attempt to reinvigorate the aggressive multilateral expansion of South African diplomacy under Mandela. Indeed joining the BRICS has been an attempt to reverse a regionalism under Mbeki and the early Zuma administration that undercut South Africa's soft power. Under Mandela it intervened regionally in a number of constitutional and political crises on the continent as a champion of democracy, and also outside the continent as an intermediary in high profile conflicts such as Northern Ireland and Palestine-Israel. It also assumed a leadership role in a number of high profile international initiatives, such as the ICC, UNCTAD and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Under Mandela the diplomacy machine boasted new memberships in dozens of international organizations and the signing of many more international treaties. But even under Mbeki and Zuma, despite a regional orientation, South Africa aggressively promoted soft dispersion by being a host of "mega-events": e.g., UN conferences and world summits on important medical, development, and human rights issues; as well as hosts of global sporting championships. The resulting soft power dispersion is reflected in the fact that in 2013 South Africa led all African nations in votes for new members of the Human Rights Commission (HRC)—no small testament to its image as a leader in promoting liberal values across nations (Van der Westhuizen 2016).

Aside from layering as a rising power (perhaps the next super power) whose population is 2nd only to China, a nuclear power, and has the third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity; India has amassed impressive cultural and political soft power assets. It is the world's largest democracy under conditions of extensive ethnic and religious cleavages (it is a land of 14 distinct languages). In this sense it is a modern day miracle: like growing wheat in sand. Culturally its Indic customs and lifestyle have withstood the test of time dating back

³¹ Gallarotti (2010b) underscores a commitment to democratic values at home as an important source of a nation's soft power.

5,000 years, and today the Indic legacy stands among the most venerated cultures in the world. It is, along with China, one of the two great civilizations of world history that are still thriving. Religiously it was the birthplace of Buddhism and Hinduism, and today remains an entrepot of Islam. It is a nation in which virtually every major religion has coexisted for millennia. Finally, its moviemaking prowess is globally renowned. Bollywood is a 3.5 billion dollar industry, and in terms of productions and viewership, it surpasses Hollywood as the cinema capital of the world. Its films have become the rage in both China and Pakistan, two nations with which India has traditionally experienced strained relations. The nature of the films (pushing traditional family themes and religiosity) has connected well with Islamic and Buddhist narratives in Pakistan and China; thus offering a soft gateway to rapprochement among these nations. Moreover, the fact that Indians are the second largest internet users after the Chinese, means that social layering is taking place on top of a global presence by Indian civil society. In terms of layering onto previous multilateral efforts which pushed widely held norms among developing nations, India was a leader both in the Non-Aligned movement in the 1950s and the New International Economic Order in the 1970s. In some cases, the layering took a compound (i.e., multiple layers of multilateralism) form anticipating the creation of the BRICS, especially within developing nation coalitions. For example, South Africa, India and Brazil issued the Brasilia Declaration in 2003: a statement of intent to act as a negotiating bloc (notwithstanding starkly different agricultural interests) within the WTO (Armijo 2007 and Thussu 2016).

China has experienced a development miracle by bringing 400 million people out of poverty in the past twenty years, an historic achievement. The BRICS is another multilateral part of an ongoing layering initiative undertaken by China to enhance its international standing. The BRICS universal principles about mutual security, development, and multilateralism enhance Chinese statements and actions that are squarely consistent with such principles. China has provided more troops to international peacekeeping missions than any other nation since 2005. It has sent troops and advisers to South Sudan and Iraq, and has emerged as a strong ally in fighting piracy. Aside from providing large amounts of development aid in Asia and Africa (data on such activities is limited), China has fully paid its debts to the international organizations it is a member of. The international proliferation of Confucian Institutes, as noted, also function as a layering mechanism for China's domestic initiative to fill in the ideological void created by the decline of Communism with Confucian ideas (Zanardi 2016 and Stuenkel 2016).

Like China, Russia also has used the BRICS statements and membership to layer onto initiatives to fill the ideological void left by the decline of Communism. Yeltsin began this on a domestic front with an initiative called the "national idea," and successive leaders have searched for their own means of imparting a new cohesive ideology onto Russian society, even supporting the spread of religious identities.³² Russian layering sees the BRICS as a reinforcement of recent foreign policy objectives voiced by Medvedev in 2008 and more recently often supported by

³² It is indeed interesting to note that the very thing that China and Russia vilified under Communism (religion) would now be seen as a remedy for a fracturing community.

Putin: supremacy of international law, a more balanced global power structure, and to oppose unilateralism in solving international problems.³³ Russia has also seen the BRICS as reinforcing a foreign policy stance that supports rights and opportunities for developing nations, and in this vein also condemning relations among nations that could be construed as neo-imperialistic. This stance has a long legacy through the period of Communism (Rutland and Zazantzev 2016).

2.d. Compensation

The compensation function of compound soft power is orientated around counteracting events, actions and policies that would compromise the unilateral soft power of the BRICS nations. It is no coincidence that the major statements issued at meetings of the organization contain a wealth of direct and implied references to sensitive domestic and foreign outcomes in the BRICS nations that stir up negative reactions from the international public. In this respect, the BRICS as an organization is a vehicle for exoneration and exculpation for domestic and international misuses of (mostly) hard and (sometimes) soft power.

For Brazil the BRICS offers compensatory advantages in several areas. The first is in the context of its languishing in the role as the next great power. Brazil has been consistently hailed as the “eternal country of the future,” (with the 7th largest economy in the world, large land mass, educated population, and abundant natural resources), but has yet to fulfill the expectations of the Brazilian dream. Second, soft power dispersion within the bloc can help Brazil enhance its “capacity basis” military capability by encouraging greater military technology transfer (to modernize Brazil’s obsolete technology) within BRICS as well as by generating possible de facto security understandings along the bloc nations. Third, its membership in a bloc of super and rising powers stakes a claim among nations with stable and well functioning governments, a strong counter wedge to the reputation Brazil has gotten as a disorderly society, given the internal violence in a nation that has seen more homicides over the past several decades than most international conflicts that occurred in these same years. Finally, with a president and her predecessor under siege with charges of corruption, Brazil is indeed in need of some countervailing strategies that would protect its political image as a functional democracy (Chatin 2016).

South Africa’s entrance into the BRICS in 2010 cut into a decade long policy of regionalism that, although impressive as a strategy for leadership on the continent, rolled back Mandela’s liberal internationalism and left numerous illiberal footprints in its foreign affairs. Both Mbeki and Zuma embraced a regionalism that was indeed mixed, but on the down side featured an emphasis on an old anti-colonial narrative which hailed state sovereignty. During their tenures, a number of illiberal political outcomes on the continent failed to prompt a firm

³³ Although in terms of actions, Putin showed complete disdain for these principals in annexing Crimea.

South African condemnation. In fact, South Africa actually defended repressive regimes in the name of non-interference: Liberia, Zimbabwe, Libya, Guinea, Swaziland, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast. Some of the shockwaves had an international reverberation in South African votes in the UNSC to oppose resolutions condemning human rights violations, and refusing a visit from the Dalai Lama. South Africa also backed away from UN initiatives on human rights it had supported strongly under Mandela. BRICS membership in this respect has offered a counterweight to this regionalism in an elite international venue that was founded on true diversity and universal principles that Mandela strongly espoused. In fact, the BRICS offered a bridge back to its image as an international soft power broker under Mandela. Domestically, the BRICS have offered some means of abating a deteriorating image resulting from a xenophobic re-ignition of old flames of racial hatred that have emerged recently over the issue of immigration. There have been a number of instances in which angry South African mobs have killed and displaced large numbers of Africans who have taken refuge from violence by crossing over into other countries: the events of April and May of 2008 were especially frightening (Van Der Westhuizen 2016).

India shares much of Brazil's duality as a nation: vast wealth in a nation of great poverty. India as a nation has the largest population in abject poverty in the world, and income gaps have grown over time. In terms of many of the components of the development indexes, India falls woefully short: especially in literacy, life expectancy, child labor, malnutrition, and maternal mortality. India presently ranks 130 out of 186 on the 2014 UN Human Development Index. Its government is fraught with bureaucratic dysfunction and corruption. The level of public services and state of infrastructures are deficient. India may be a large economic power and democracy, but its population is deeply ensconced in a third world environment. (Thussu 2016).

China, as noted, has conceptualized its soft power as inherently complementary to its hard power: the idea of *qi* and *zheng* place influence squarely in the realm of the coexistence of hard and soft power. Its blue water naval strategy of PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) precisely mirrors this integrated dynamic. China's build-up of a blue water military capability has been combined with naval initiatives that carry out peaceful and humanitarian initiatives, but also with global security initiatives in fighting piracy. This is done with a variety of vessels, but most important is the Peace Ark (the *Dashandao* launched in 2007). Its humanitarian efforts as a major hospital ship gives China a unique status shared only by Russia and the US, who have their own floating hospitals. It not only provides medical services, but also is a platform for floating public diplomacy. Its functions have exhibited a close connection with China's economic and geo-strategic interests by servicing a chain of ports that make up a network of economic and military locations important to China ("string of pearls" military ports). The idea of "military in velvet gloves" and "harmonious oceans" is quite "smart" in that these naval missions using non-military vessels attend to both soft and hard functions, and the use of non-military vessels to accomplish geo-strategic objectives is a way of gaining access to sensitive regions without stirring any military push back. This is a more indirect (*qi*) strategy that co-exists with the *zheng* (direct) strategy of naval confrontationalism in the East and South China Seas. In

this respect, the Confucian Institutes are also distributed to compensate for the negative feedback of the East and South China Seas ventures. They are targeted toward South and South East Asian nations that have issued competing claims over the seas. Above and beyond compensation for its militarism, the multilateral bonding based on sanctity of international law and human rights serves as a source of moral balance against an image of an autocratic and repressive nation (Zanardi 2016).³⁴

Like China, Russia seeks similar compensation benefits from membership in the bloc. It too has a tarnished image from extensive militarism in territories of the former Soviet Union (Georgia and Crimea), it has moved in a more autocratic direction since the collapse of the Soviet Union (recently instituting a new security agency called the Russian Guard), and it has been heavily involved in propping up the Assad regime in Syria. Moreover it has continued to be criticized for anti-semitism and homophobia, and of course for a rampant corruption bordering on kleptocracy.³⁵ And even more than China, it has had to compensate for a longer history of a dark image: even before the Stalin era, 19th century Czarist Russia was widely impeached by Western nations. But unlike the other nation that has most vigorously constructed a soft offensive (China), scholars have generally seen Russian soft power as a failure with respect to compensation functions. By almost all accounts, China has done a far better job (Rutland and Kazantzev 2016).

3. Evaluating the BRICS: There is Room for Improvement

The findings of this analysis suggest that the BRICS as an organization possesses a number of conduits through which the soft power of its members could be modified and enhanced. Indeed one can say it has succeeded in accomplishing a number of objectives in this respect. It has provided a globally visible platform for shaping the international images of the BRICS members. Indeed, the public relations function of the organization has been prodigious. But even more so, the organization has served as a conduit into a variety of important international diplomatic issues, thus enhancing the status and presence of the member states within those negotiations. Finally it has been productive in creating a counter-balance to actions and policies that have the potential to compromise the unilateral soft power of the member states. But notwithstanding the organization's creation of soft power in these areas, still more could be

³⁴ Another interesting soft spin off can be seen in the role of the Confucian Institutes breaking down the monopoly which Taiwan had on teaching non-simplified Chinese abroad, thus degrading the cultural role of Taiwan in the world (Zanardi 2016).

³⁵ In a twist on the soft power dynamic, both China and Russia have recently ramped up their barriers to the infusion of Western soft power, as both nations have been cracking down more robustly on the operations of NGOs within their borders (Chin 2016).

done both unilaterally and multilaterally by its members to enhance the organization's soft power dispersion. In this respect, the BRICS organization has underperformed. The members could enhance performance in generating soft power through the following strategies.

First the members need to work more closely as a bloc within existing organizations rather than independently meeting on the fringes of meetings of important international organizations. At present, the main output of the bloc is in the form of statements that represent agreements from the BRICS meetings. In this respect, they serve a strong information function. The bloc could be more aggressive in functioning as a bloc within these organizations. Such activism would require greater joint action within the larger meetings. Such action would comprise vigorous team work in everything from voting as a bloc to undertaking diplomatic duties as a bloc. Even small blocs can “perform well beyond their weight class” given the structure of voting and agenda setting in international organizations. The BRICS number only five, but the impact of working together generates an influence far greater than their number.³⁶ Along this vein, the group could also take a greater leadership position on issues that enhance its image and/or issues that directly affect the members in larger international organizations, thus placing them in advantageous positions diplomatically. Through both enhanced image and favorable strategic placement, other nations may more readily follow the lead of the BRICS on crucial issues.³⁷

Second, with respect to bloc strategy, the group should consider strategic decompositions of the BRICS. Most major international organizations have done this, with an especially visible example in the G-20, which has functioned in differing combinations depending upon the type of issues raised and the intensity of stakeholding (i.e., G-2, G-3, G-5, G-7). In conducting business, the BRICS tend to stay en bloc at their general gatherings. Disaggregating functions into sub-groups could help expedite business: more sub-groups would increase the involvement of the BRICS in global diplomacy. Disaggregation could also be of great importance within the functions of larger international organizations. Meetings among developing nations could enjoy enhanced representation if certain select BRICS (India, Brazil) were used to represent the bloc as a whole. Conversely, meeting that include great powers might be better navigated by the more powerful members of the BRICS. Disaggregation creates greater fit for attending to issues, and thus enhances the influence of the bloc as a whole. In this respect, assigning committee tasks also relieves the BRICS from members having to get involved in touchy or delicate issues that might cause domestic or diplomatic difficulties for individual members.

³⁶ Studies of voting in legislatures has shown that blocs can sway outcomes in far greater proportion to the number of their memberships (Mueller 2003).

³⁷ The influence that the Cotton Club enjoyed in global trade diplomacy (mainly in the WTO) on farm subsidies is a testament to how effective even small blocs of developing nations could be in dismantling policies supported by hegemonic powers (Nelson 2016).

Third, the bloc needs to expand its business and address more specific international problems, especially those that affect the BRICS members. As of yet, they have met on very few specific global issues: the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs addressing issues of the Nuclear Security Summit in the Hague on March 24, 2014 and the meeting of Deputy Foreign Ministers on the Situation in the Middle East (West Asia) and North Africa in Moscow on May 22, 2015. There are regular meetings on sectoral issues that involve each of the BRICS nations, and these are attended by domestic ministers of those sectors (education, agriculture, finance, energy, etc), but there has been no regular and systematic strategy for addressing specific negotiations of global importance. The benefits in terms of soft power here would be fairly obvious, as greater involvement would increase the possible diplomatic tools the BRICS can use in larger negotiations. In this vein, there should be a special emphasis in addressing issues in which the BRICS nations have larger stakes. Getting involved in all such higher stake issues would give the BRICS nations a chance to enhance all of the soft power dispersion mechanisms enumerated above: greater augmentation, transitivity, layering and compensation. Moreover, such involvement could also reduce the domestic costs of passing controversial laws at home, laws that could enhance domestic soft power. Leaders would accumulate more domestic political capital to pass difficult legislation if they could use diplomatic support as a wedge. Also, leaders could more effectively slingshot the policies of other BRICS leaders through diplomatic accords and meetings.³⁸

Finally, the BRICS need more action and action statements along with more specific rhetoric from their meetings. The language tends to be general in its prescriptions and resolutions. Nations and events are too infrequently mentioned. The following statement by the BRICS in 2015 is precisely the sort of statements required to enhance the images of BRICS members.

“The Ministers reiterated their deep concern about the situation in Ukraine. They emphasized that there is no military solution to the conflict and that the only way to reconciliation is through inclusive political dialogue. The Ministers called on all parties to comply with all provisions of the Minsk Agreements adopted in February 2015. They urged the parties to observe the achieved ceasefire and make it sustainable” (BRICs Foreign Ministers' Communiqué 2015).

This charges Russia to push harder in fulfilling its obligations under the Minsk II agreement. Similar statements on Syria could push Russia harder to get Assad to the table by linking his fate to diplomacy. The possibilities for statements charging each member of the BRICS to push harder on soft power initiatives could add a far greater layer of legitimacy to the statements already made unilaterally. And of course, concomitant unilateral and group actions and policies in these areas would enhance the legitimacy all the more. Each nation, as in the Russian example, can target especially toxic outcomes that have compromised their soft power. As the discussion on compensation demonstrates, there are a plethora of unilateral actions and outcomes that push back against the soft power dispersion of the BRICS. It is trivial to state that

³⁸ Gallarotti (2004) demonstrates how leaders can piggyback off diplomatic accords to promote the passage of difficult laws at home.

BRICS nations should concentrate on purging inconsistencies in their unilateral actions and their soft power initiatives. Nations still have important domestic and foreign policy goals that dominate concerns about soft power creation. But many of the goals themselves would not be inconsistent with soft principles, and hence there may be less toxic means of attaining national objectives: e.g., gaining access to resources and sea lanes in the South China Sea, maintaining close ties with ethnic Russian regions in the former Soviet Union, and going about securing borders with Pakistan are objectives that need not diminish soft power as much as they have. China, Russia, and India could obtain those objectives through more constructive and less confrontational methods. After all, national interest is served by the ends rather than the means by which these ends are gained. So too Brazil and South Africa have often dealt with domestic problems (e.g., poverty, inequality, political agency, corruption) through means that could be modified in a softer and less heavy-handed direction. Shifts in means need not be Manichean changes, but marginal changes would accrue marginal benefits in soft power dispersion.

4. Conclusion

This article has attempted to offer a systematic way of understanding how the creation of a multilateral bloc can enhance the soft power of each individual member within that bloc. This represents a process which can be referred to as the multilateralization of soft power, or compound soft power. Compound soft power is different from the sum of its parts, as the dynamic itself creates a new kind of power that enhances unilateral soft power, but also creates a very distinct power dynamic in itself. This dynamic occurs through four formative processes: augmentation, transitivity, layering and compensation. Each process creates new wedges of influence for each of the member nations. The BRICS as an organization has been demonstrative of these effects, thus enhancing the soft power resources of each of its members. Interestingly the diversity of the group has worked in favor of generating soft power dispersion. In this respect, this compound power dynamic produces some counterintuitive outcomes. The lesson here is that birds of a different feather could be successful at flying together. While the BRICS has provided a multilateral enhancement to each of the BRICS nations' unilateral soft power, there are still a variety of strategies the members can pursue to enhance their soft power even more through the vehicle of this international organization.

The BRICS is not the panacea that will necessarily deliver the member nations from evil. Clearly the issues brought up in discussions of diversion and compensation show that indeed this fledgling organization has much to compensate for. This analysis should not be taken as a sign of having partaken in drinking the BRICS kool-aid. Many might see the rhetoric and diplomacy of the BRICS as a minor palliative for toxic actions and outcomes in the BRICS nations themselves. And of course those that scoff at the impact of soft power will continue to be incredulous about the compensatory impact of the organization, even if this compensatory effect is deemed significant. But one should not end with the platitude of: people who value the role of soft power

will see the BRICS as an important wedge of soft power, and those that dismiss soft power as inconsequential will conclude the opposite. As Chatin and Gallarotti (2016) have made clear, irrespective of the magnitude of soft power dispersion effects of the organization, there are indeed a variety of vehicles through which the organization generates soft power. And irrespective of the problematique of whether soft power does or does not create greater influence in world politics, the leaders of BRICS nations have for some time strongly believed in such initiatives, notwithstanding some salient unilateral actions that cut against that soft power. The leaders of some influential international nations in world politics have invested much attention and resources into promoting soft power through both unilateral and multilateral means. And these investments have most certainly produced some dividends through the BRICS organization. Whether or not one weighs such dividends as producing true influence on the world stage, it is still the case that a group of significant actors have placed importance in such strategies as means of bringing about outcomes deemed essential to their foreign interests. This analysis has shown how this multilateral soft value-added can be produced. As such one hopes that it would be worthy of some attention even from the greatest skeptics of soft power.

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