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# Does the appointment of secretaries-general to lead global bureaucracies correlate with international power sharing? A longitudinal assessment based on empirical evidence from 1945 to 2016

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on secretaries-general, given their relative centrality in international politics, as they embody the power to explore institutional and personal agendas, and enjoy the chance to seek prestige for a country or region. Through descriptive statistics, this article analyzes the distribution of secretaries-general per country, reaching some noteworthy findings, especially regarding sharp changes in recent years.

**Keywords:** International Organizations; Secretaries-general; Institutional Politics; Multilateralism.

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## Introduction

This paper concentrates on secretaries-general (SGs) of global international/intergovernmental organizations (GIGOs) and aims at answering three questions: *how did the distribution of these key posts occur in the international system from 1945 to 2016? What were the characteristics of this distribution? And does the appointment of SGs to lead global bureaucracies correlate with international power-sharing, notably in recent years?* Although these may not be falsifiable questions, the goal of this paper is to produce descriptive inferences that allow to identify and detail the features of this distribution within this period, assuming the perspective that the less concentrated the distribution of SGs among states, the more polyarchical a international system is. As this research extensively relies on descriptive statistics, one can arguably claim that it adopts a predominantly quantitative approach.

While assessing the distribution of SGs by country of origin, this research found three periods of concentration (1945-1957, 1978-1997 and 2010-2016) and two of deconcentration (1958-1977 and 1998-2009), with an incremental growth in the number of countries participating in the pool of SGs, and a gradual shrinking in the participation of Western Europe and the United States (US) as sources of leaders. These progressive transformations are reflective of the diversity attached to the last period of concentration (2010-2016), a time when distributional changes became more evident, featuring a larger number of states making up the pool of SGs, through a 'concentrated deconcentration' mechanism, along with the emergence of China and South Korea as blunt 'concentrators' of SGs. Moreover, there is a newborn protagonism of Africa and Asia in appointing their nationals to these posts. The occupation of such political spots has become more geographically dispersed, transcending the borders of North America and Western Europe, even if still circumscribed to a relatively small group of countries. These shifts also hint at changes in international politics writ large.

This paper splits into six sections. The first builds the puzzle from a theoretical perspective. The second presents the methodology. The third one demonstrates the distribution of SG posts from 1945 to 2016, in terms of concentration of appointments among countries, focusing on the five aforementioned periods. The fourth assesses each of these periods in greater detail, highlighting the states and regions that accumulated the most leading positions. The fifth section synthesizes the results and analyses some of the questions that crosscut the observed periods. Finally, we proceed with the conclusions.

## SGs and international power sharing: a theoretical puzzle

The role of an SG in an international organization (IO) – which has many other names, such as president, director general, and executive director – enjoys a relative centrality in international politics, though it is often neglected as an object of studies in International Relations (Chesterman 2007). Some authors (such as Walker 2011; Breuning 2007) argue that most canonical views in International Relations, such as structural realism, failed at properly acknowledging the role of individuals in the international arena, but added that the same cannot be said about the Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) approaches. They claim that FPA usually is agent-centered and, thereafter, admit the interaction between decision-makers and institutional procedures of decision-making. In so being, FPA focuses on aspects of domestic culture and psychological traits of leaders in action, featuring as an individualistic approach (Kaarbo 2015).

Conversely, according to institutionalist perspectives, people who take part in political institutions, as they embody a higher degree of responsibility, hold the capability to put political strategies into practice with the potential to affect information diffusion and alter some actors' preferences (Kille 2006; Tallberg 2006). Within these terms, the relevance of SGs for international politics has three main dimensions. The first is the formal exercise of leadership in IOs, which

allows the promotion of values and political goals through the institution (Kille 2006; Tallberg 2006; Schroeder 2014). The second relates to the job prerogatives, and the chances that some connections may occur between national and international interests (Kille 2006; Tallberg 2006). The third is the usage of the position, by any a national state, to promote a country's 'diplomacy of prestige' (Lopes and Oliveira 2017).

The employment of SGs for promoting a country's diplomacy of prestige has been in sight of practitioners and scholars for a long time. Hammarskjöld delivered a famous speech in 1961 exhorting a concept of civil service neutrality, where international bodies should serve the purposes of all members of an organization, not those of specific countries with power leverage. Institutionally speaking, a solution for this problem would be found in a technocratic approach, one in which ensuring legal principles for international civil service would be associated with efficiency, competence, and integrity (with an emphasis on administrative functions) and the whole secretariat apparatus could be recruited from a worldwide geographical basis (Hammarskjöld 1961). Scholars would attribute the projection of higher moral standards to this assumption of civil service neutrality, as SGs usually stick to certain principles and modes of political action agreed upon by (a majority of) GIGO member states (Skjelsbaek 1991; Lentner 1965).

The SG, – due to their formal leadership position inside any given IO, – differs from other actors on the multilateral context, as s/he has official control over the institution and privileged access to information – valuable resources in negotiations. These resources allow the SG to come up with tentative solutions for occasional collective-action problems, and possibly influence their outcomes (Kille 2006; Tallberg 2006). Once the institutional environment works as an intervenient variable for the actions of an SG, three situations may enforce their leadership role: the SG may find it propitious to expand the IO mission when member states are dubious and hesitant about an issue; the SG may offer more appropriate solutions for practical problems when member states show some informational deficit; and in some particular cases the SG may persuade institutional bureaucracy into re-interpreting existing rules, mainly when member states do not control essential institutional resources (Schroeder 2014). By these means, institutional leadership proves to be a critical determinant for the successes and failures of bargains, mostly within the ambit of international regimes and IO's bureaucratic settings, making the SG chiefly responsible for the institution she or he leads (Young 1991).

While acknowledging that the formal exercise of leadership often gives institutional powers to the SG, s/he may use them to assert their personal values and preferences. Tallberg shows that the political influence exercised by the President of the European Union is repeatedly used as an instrument for the promotion of his or her interests. Such influence translates into power to set the agenda, through the changing of priorities, deadlines, and procedures, as well as the power to reinterpret rules as s/he stands in a privileged position in an institutional hierarchy. Moreover, the position grants the chance of calling for bilateral meetings with member states to attain concessions from these actors who might hamper the negotiation process (Tallberg 2006).

Sometimes the SG needs to accommodate the interests of member states to be relatively successful on the job (Chesterman 2007). One may highlight that this hypothesis shows no direct association between a leader's nationality and the chances that s/he may resort to institutional powers as to benefit her/his country of origin. Therefore, due to this very possibility, member states could be interested in promoting their nationals for the role of SGs (Tallberg 2006; Lopes and Oliveira 2017). When states succeed at nominating a national to the post of SG, they also promote 'diplomacy of prestige,' which bears strength in a normative sense and aims not only to achieve material capabilities, but especially to explore an alternative course of action within a normative specter in international politics, embedding certain values and perceptions in foreign policy that can be disseminated in world politics.<sup>1</sup> Within this analytical dimension, institutional leadership would be an important power resource for states in spreading their national preferences internationally, using a soft power and a reputation-based strategy (Tallberg 2006).

The three relevant dimensions of the SG show just how important it is to understand the distribution of these positions among states. When discussing the democratization of international relations, such distribution patterns become a subject of utmost salience. It is important to pinpoint that the perspective of democratization of the international system adopted by this paper differs from the perspectives of Archibugi et al. (2012), Marchetti (2008), and Held (1995). For these authors, the democratization of the international system requires an effective participation of citizens in decision-making beyond national borders. This implies the direct involvement of the population in responsiveness and voting procedures, thus altering the conception of demos in decision-making processes that are not state-centric. For this paper, the issue of democratization in international relations, notably in IOs, focuses on the pluralization of governmental demands within the institutional level, leaning towards a more intergovernmental approach. Therefore, democratization means the continuous process of polyarchization in terms of participation and contestation inside international decision-making structures (Lopes 2016).

For matters of states, the question of SG nationality is central to explaining how individuals might intervene in the foreign policy choices of their own countries through the IO platform, not to mention this privileged political spot that IOs occupy in promoting the overcoming of collective problems, or in spreading democratic practices inside countries (Russett and O'Neal 2001; Keohane et al. 2009). In terms of global democracy, the centrality of the relationship between states and SGs subsist on all three levels (the so-called 'federalist,' 'confederalist,' and 'polycentric' ones), as states always are special actors, even if not the only ones, mainly from a polycentric perspective (Archibugi et al. 2008).

The relationship between democracy at the international level and SGs has a poorly developed literature, since the most common analytical path mainly considers transnational actors (Jönsson and Tallberg 2008) and formulations of normatively oriented rules, capable of connecting citizens to decision-making structures (Archibugi et al. 2008), with little or

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, prestige is (or should mean) strength in a normative way, transforming national states into moral authorities in international politics.

no attention given to eminently international actors like SGs. While not deeply discussed in this paper, SGs are somehow hybrid entities, standing halfway between intergovernmental and polycentric governance approaches. As argued by Archibugi et al. (2008), and Marchetti (2008), SGs are intergovernmental agents for being the byproduct of the collective decisions of the national states, which prevents them from being conceived as full-fledged transnational agents. However, after taking over their posts, they adopt discourses and goals that can make national and personal preferences overlap. Whether they are appointed by representatives of national states or have an electoral mandate, SGs will remain 'intergovernmental' by nature, though becoming 'polycentric' if acting on the world scenario.

The puzzle of this paper stems from the tension between the relative centrality of SGs in international politics, the mechanisms through which countries can exert power accessing these positions, and the issue of democratization in international relations. As mentioned earlier, this research aims at answering *how did the distribution of these key posts occur in the international system from 1945 to 2016? What were the characteristics of this distribution? And does the appointment of SGs to lead global bureaucracies correlate with international power sharing, notably in recent years?*

## Methodology

Regarding the data collection and the production of descriptive inferences, this paper reckons the nationalities of SGs from thirty-seven GIGOs from 1945 to 2016, in which each post per year accounts for an observation, summing up to 1,888 observations. The data about SGs are extracted from the IO BIO Project<sup>2</sup> and information provided on GIGOs' official websites.<sup>3</sup> The nationalities are those recognized on data provided by the GIGOs. In cases of dual nationality, this research opts for the country where the individuals developed most of their professional and academic activities. To count the years of each mandate, this paper includes the first year and rules out the last, thus enabling to account for one country in a position for one year. Thus, the accounting of a mandate in years in office simplifies the compiling of data for mandates that start in the middle of the year, thereby avoiding significant distortions. Interim mandates and those that lasted less than a year were not considered.

There are two chief criteria used to select GIGOs, which are the same as those employed by Lopes (2006): (i) current number of member states that equals or is superior to one hundred (100); and (ii) whose membership is distributed across three (3) or more UN regional groups. Even though these criteria could be seen as anachronistic, since they are applied throughout a long period of time using current numbers, the cohort of IOs accounts for those legitimized and active in the international system all the way through these seventy one years.

<sup>2</sup> Available online at: <http://www.ru.nl/fm/iobio>.

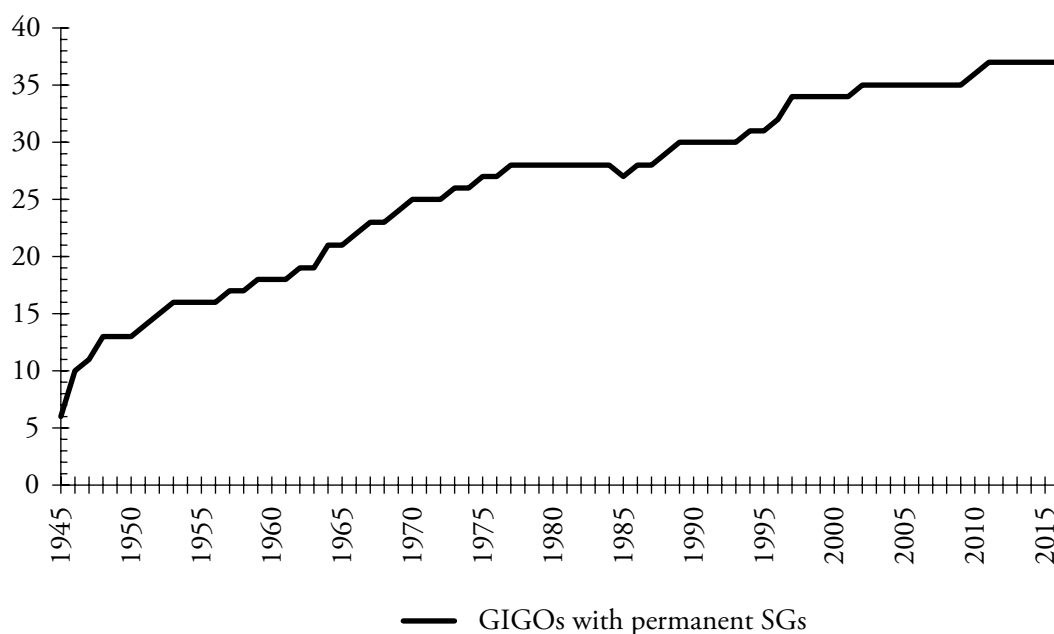
<sup>3</sup> Find the list of the GIGOs and their respective official websites on Appendix A.

Furthermore, this paper analyzes GIGOs subsequently to World War II (WWII). The international order prior to this conflict featured a substantial exclusion of populations and territories from global institutions, notably the African and Asian continents, because of the conditions of colonial dependency (Kennedy 2007), and the excluding character of some international values and norms that differentiated ‘civilized’ and ‘non-civilized’ nations, as shown in articles 22 from the Covenant of the League of Nations (1919) and 38.3 of the Statute from the Permanent Court of International Justice (1920) (Lopes 2012). The international order after 1945, despite the continuance of colonial conditions in the first decades, and some weighted representation, such as in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, has liberal foundations, including the protection of individual liberties and the promotion of multilateralism, which Ruggie (1982) dubbed ‘embedded liberalism.’

## Distributional patterns of SGs from 1945 to 2016

This section evaluates the distribution of SGs from 1945 to 2016, and its concentration and deconcentration patterns. There is a rising number of GIGOs in this period with a continuous growth from six to twenty-eight GIGOs in the world between 1946 and 1977, as well as a substantial expansion between 1993 and 1997, when four new GIGOs were created. Smaller increments occur in the final years of the 1980s and 2000s. Finally, the number of permanent GIGOs stabilizes at thirty-seven in 2011 (see Chart 1).

**Chart 1. Existing GIGOs (1945-2016)**



Source: Elaborated by the authors



**Table 1. SG concentration index year by year**

Year	n <sub>oig</sub>	n <sub>e</sub>	i <sub>con</sub>
1945	6	4	0.333
1946	10	7	0.300
1947	11	7	0.364
1948	13	8	0.385
1949	13	8	0.385
1950	13	8	0.385
1951	14	9	0.357
1952	15	8	0.467
1953	16	8	0.500
1954	16	8	0.500
1955	16	8	0.500
1956	16	8	0.500
1957	17	8	0.529
1958	17	9	0.471
1959	18	11	0.389
1960	18	10	0.444
1961	18	9	0.500
1962	19	11	0.421
1963	19	11	0.421
1964	21	12	0.429
1965	21	13	0.381
1966	22	13	0.409
1967	23	15	0.348
1968	23	15	0.348
1969	24	16	0.333
1970	25	18	0.280
1971	25	18	0.280
1972	25	18	0.280
1973	26	19	0.269
1974	26	19	0.269
1975	27	20	0.259
1976	27	21	0.222
1977	28	22	0.214
1978	28	19	0.321
1979	28	19	0.321
1980	28	19	0.321

Year	n <sub>oig</sub>	n <sub>e</sub>	i <sub>con</sub>
1981	28	19	0.321
1982	28	19	0.321
1983	28	18	0.357
1984	28	17	0.393
1985	27	16	0.407
1986	28	18	0.357
1987	28	18	0.357
1988	29	18	0.379
1989	30	19	0.367
1990	30	21	0.300
1991	30	19	0.367
1992	30	18	0.400
1993	30	19	0.367
1994	31	19	0.387
1995	31	18	0.419
1996	32	19	0.406
1997	34	19	0.441
1998	34	22	0.353
1999	34	22	0.353
2000	34	22	0.353
2001	34	23	0.324
2002	35	24	0.314
2003	35	25	0.286
2004	35	25	0.286
2005	35	26	0.257
2006	35	26	0.257
2007	35	26	0.257
2008	35	26	0.257
2009	35	26	0.257
2010	36	26	0.278
2011	37	26	0.297
2012	37	26	0.297
2013	37	24	0.351
2014	37	23	0.378
2015	37	21	0.432
2016	37	23	0.378

Source: Elaborated by the authors



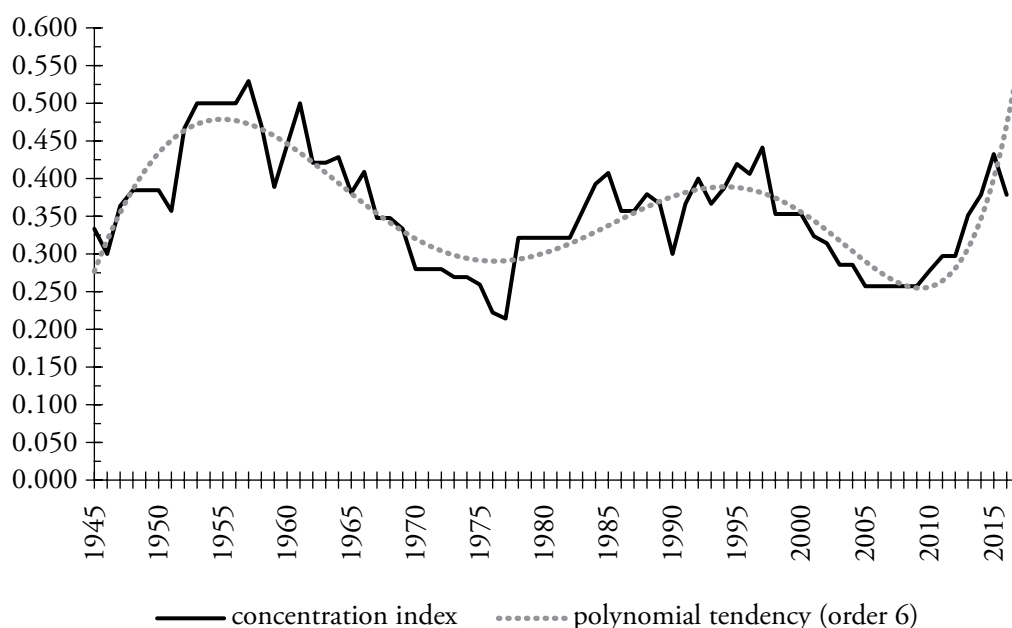
Due to the great variance in the number of GIGOs from 1945 to 2016, a concentration index was conceived to enable comparison over time. The index is brought up by way of identifying the nationalities of SGs in a given year and reckoning the totality of states that had nationals in these posts in the year of reference. The total of states that concentrate SGs (*nea*) is divided by the number of permanent GIGOs with SGs (*noiga*) in the year of reference (a). The result of this operation deducts from 1 to attain the concentration index (*icona*), represented by the following mathematical formula:

$$icona = 1 - \frac{nea}{noiga}$$

The deduction is made to facilitate the visualization of the concentration. The closer the score is to 1, the larger the concentration of SG posts in a given year, ie. more positions distributed among less states. As can be observed in Table 1, the year 1957 displays the highest annual concentration index ( $icon_{1957} = 0.529$ ), while 1977 has the lowest ( $icon_{1977} = 0.241$ ).

By plotting the concentration index in a two-dimensional chart (see Chart 2), it is possible to identify, with help from a polynomial tendency line,<sup>4</sup> five distinct periods, three of concentration and two of deconcentration, in which the former occurs from (i) 1945 to 1957, (ii) 1978 to 1997 and (iii) 2010 to 2016, while the latter takes places from (iv) 1958 to 1977, and (v) 1998 to 2009.

**Chart 2. SG concentration (1945-2016)**



Source: Elaborated by the authors

<sup>4</sup> The polynomial tendency line is used to smooth and facilitate the visualization of data.

## Assessing concentration and deconcentration

### First concentration period (1945-1957)

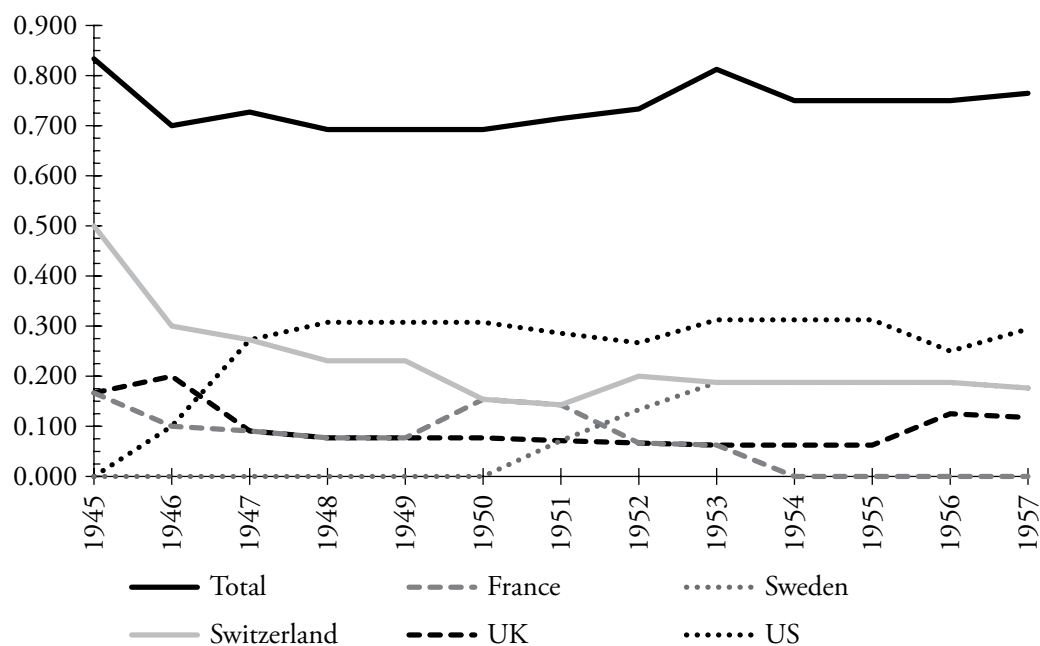
The SG concentration from 1945 to 1957 occurs in a moment of world order reconstruction, as the number of GIGOs almost triples – jumping from six to seventeen (see Chart 1). Such concentration starts at 0.333 in 1945, and reaches an apex (0.529) in 1957 (see Chart 2). During this period fourteen states shared SG posts, though six of them, the US, Switzerland, Sweden, United Kingdom (UK), France, and Belgium, held almost 80% out of the total. One can also detect this concentrating tendency by measuring the distance between median (3.4%) and arithmetic mean (7.1%) (see Table 2).

Throughout this period, the five major SG concentrators show distinct dynamics (see Chart 3). The US expands its concentration of posts in the first two years and stabilizes it around 30%, which accounted for five global organizations in 1957. Another country that increases its concentration of SGs in the period is Sweden, initiating this trend in 1951, stabilizing it at approximately 18%, accounting

**Table 2. States with nationals in SG posts (1945-1957)**

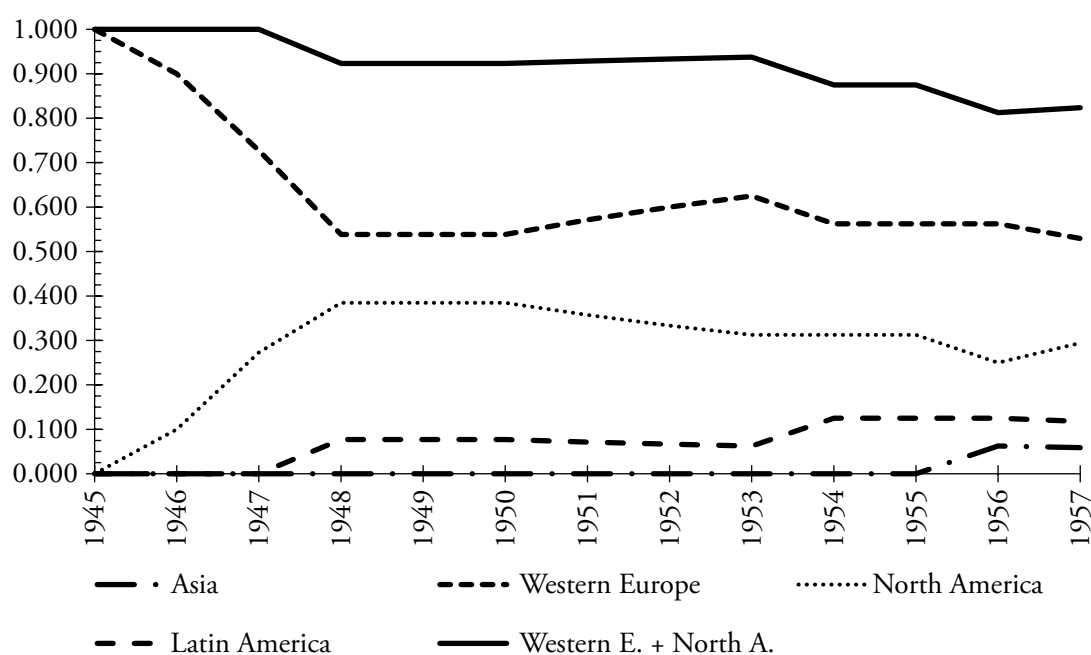
RANKING	STATES	POSTS*YEAR	
		ABSOLUT NUMBER	%
1	US	48	27.3%
2	Switzerland	37	21.0%
3	Sweden	18	10.2%
4	UK	16	9.1%
5	France	11	6.3%
6	Belgium	10	5.7%
7	Norway	7	4.0%
8	Canada	5	2.8%
9	Brazil	5	2.8%
10	Mexico	5	2.8%
11	Netherlands	5	2.8%
12	Argentina	4	2.3%
13	Ireland	3	1.7%
14	India	2	1.1%
TOTAL		176	100.0%
MEDIAN		6	3.4%
MEAN		12.57	7.1%

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 3. Five major concentrators (1945-1957)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

for three organizations in 1957. Conversely, Switzerland and France have diminished their participation. While the former decreased its participation from 50% in 1945 to 18% between 1953 and 1957, the latter left all posts after 1954, after reaching a couple of peaks in 1945 (16%) and 1950 (15%).

**Chart 4. Regional distribution (1945-1957)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The predominance of the five major concentrators reflects on the regional distribution of SGs (see Chart 4), in that North America and Western Europe hold more than 80% of chairs over the period, leaving marginal percentages to Latin America and Asia. The absence of Africa and Asia, to some extent, relates to the ongoing decolonization process at the time.

The main feature of this period is the intense participation of the US and a few Western European countries in a time of building the new world order, implying that GIGOs were established upon a very specific set of Western values, based on liberal ideals and lined with the protection of individual liberties and promotion of multilateralism (Ruggie 1982). This tendency is rather maximized by the presence of traditional middle powers (Sweden, Belgium, Norway, and Canada) among the ten countries that contributed the most to GIGOs' leadership seats. These data are consistent with the notion that, in the first years after WWII, countries with average power capabilities which manifested a sense of conformity with the current political establishment, would receive some symbolic and material rewards from the great Western powers (Glazebrook 1947).

### First deconcentration period (1958-1977)

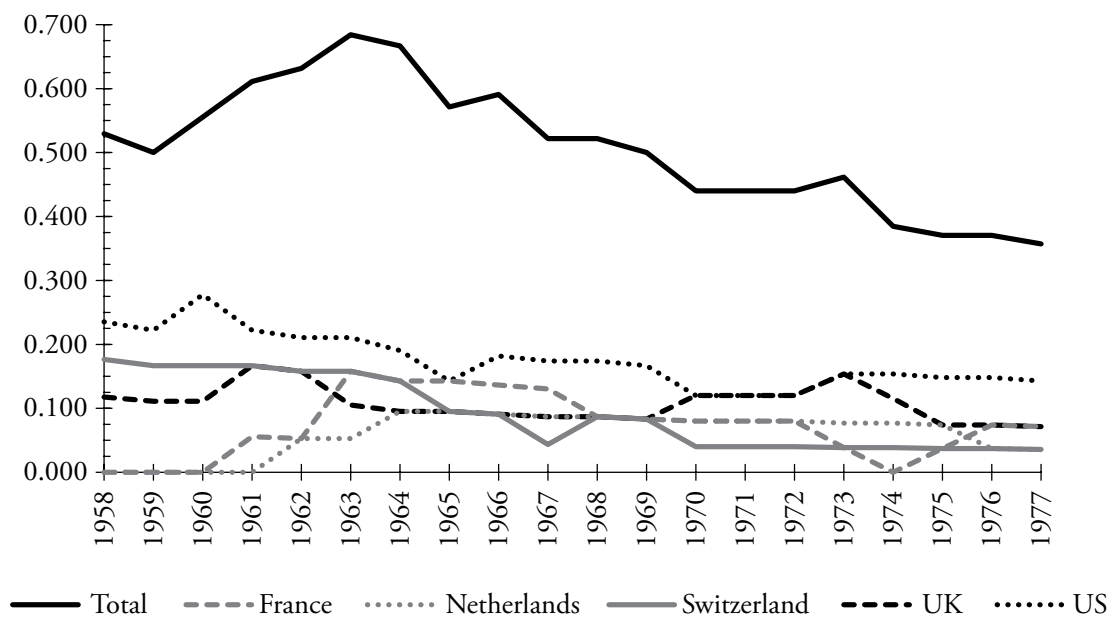
Between 1958 and 1977, especially in the 1970s, there is an enlargement of the international agenda (Saraiva 2007), which is well portrayed by the expansion of GIGOs in numbers, from seventeen in 1958 to twenty-eight in 1977 (see Chart 1). In this period, SGs' concentration is mitigated from 0.471 in 1958 – with a peak of 0.500 in 1961 – to a minimum of 0.214 in 1977 (see Chart 2). Twenty-seven states participate in the distribution of posts (see Table 3). Out of those, thirteen held about 80% of the chairs, and the five major concentrators – the US, UK, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands – 49.6%. The deconcentrated distribution, compared with the previous period, can be statistically translated as the minor distance between median (2.4%) and arithmetic mean (3.7%).

According to the distribution of the five major concentrators, the deconcentrating trend has properly consolidated after 1965 (see Chart 5). Four concentrators – the US, UK, Switzerland, and France – lowered their overall participation, while the Netherlands intensely participated in the years between 1961 and 1975. The joint share of those five countries drops from 68.4% in 1963 to 35.7% in 1977. Individual concentrations fall below 20% after 1964 and 10% after 1975 – except for the US.

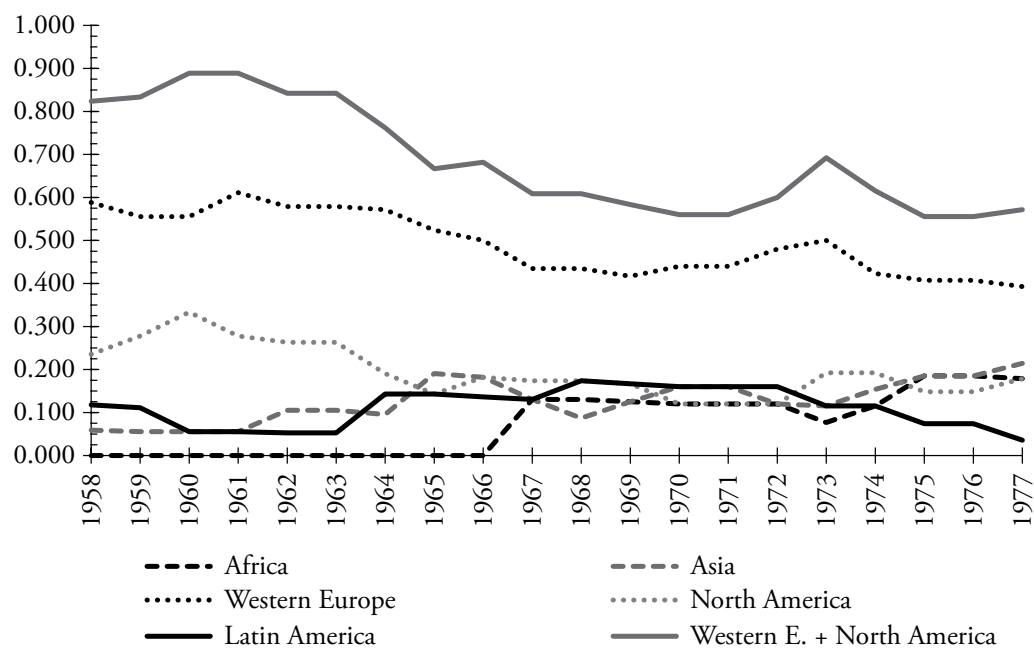
**Table 3. States with nationals in SG posts (1958-1977)**

RANKING	STATE	POSTS* YEAR	
		ABSOLUTE NUMBER	%
1	US	77	17.0%
2	UK	48	10.6%
3	Switzerland	38	8.4%
4	France	33	7.3%
5	Netherlands	28	6.2%
6	Sweden	27	6.0%
7	Egypt	20	4.4%
8	Belgium	20	4.4%
9	India	16	3.5%
10	Brazil	15	3.3%
11	Chile	14	3.1%
12	Iran	13	2.9%
13	Italy	11	2.4%
14	Tunisia	11	2.4%
15	Myanmar	10	2.2%
16	El Salvador	9	2.0%
17	Philippines	9	2.0%
18	Canada	8	1.8%
19	Lebanon	8	1.8%
20	Argentina	7	1.5%
21	Denmark	7	1.5%
22	Austria	6	1.3%
23	Venezuela	6	1.3%
24	Senegal	4	0.9%
25	Algeria	3	0.7%
26	Sri Lanka	3	0.7%
27	Saudi Arabia	1	0.2%
TOTAL		452	100.0%
MEDIAN		11	2.4%
MEAN		16.74	3.7%

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 5. Five major concentrators (1958-1977)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 6. Regional distribution (1958-1977)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The regional distribution of seats shows a decrease of North American and Western European participations (see Chart 6). The European process is gradual, whereas the North American participation stabilizes in 1965 between 10% and 20% (total share). This period is marked by the multiplication of African sovereign states, and an increase in the participation of Asian and Latin American states, despite its downfall after 1972.

Thus, the most patent characteristics of this period are the decrease in participation of the US and Western European countries, as well as the growth in participation of other regions among the major concentrators. Along with the presence of traditional middle powers on the top of the rank (Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium), there is the rise of ‘emerging’ middle powers (Brazil, India, Egypt). This acknowledgment mingles with some relevant historical facts at the time: The Bandung Conference (1955) and the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement (1956), the massive Afro-Asian decolonization (from 1957 to 1974), the consolidation of the third-worldist movement through the foundation of UNCTAD and G-77 (1964), and the defense of a New International Economic Order at the United Nations General Assembly (1974).

## Second concentration period (1978-1997)

From 1978 to 1997 there is an increase in the number of GIGOs, notably after 1989, with the institutionalization of a host of international regimes (Krasner 1983). GIGOs expand from twenty-eight in 1978 to thirty-four in 1997 (see Chart 1). This period shows a somewhat oscillating pattern, reaching peaks of concentration in 1985 (0.407), 1992 (0.400), 1995 (0.419), and 1997 (0.441), notwithstanding the blunt deconcentration seen in 1990 (0.300) (see Chart 2).

The second concentration period features the participation of thirty-seven states in the pool of SGs, in which seventeen of them take up 80% of the posts – these numbers surpass the ones from the two previous periods. The parcel occupied by the five major concentrators is smaller than it was during the last time span of deconcentration, 45.3% against 49.6%. In spite of the relative deconcentration over this period, the intense participation of the US props the high concentration levels, as it alone accounts for 20.6% of posts (see Table 4).

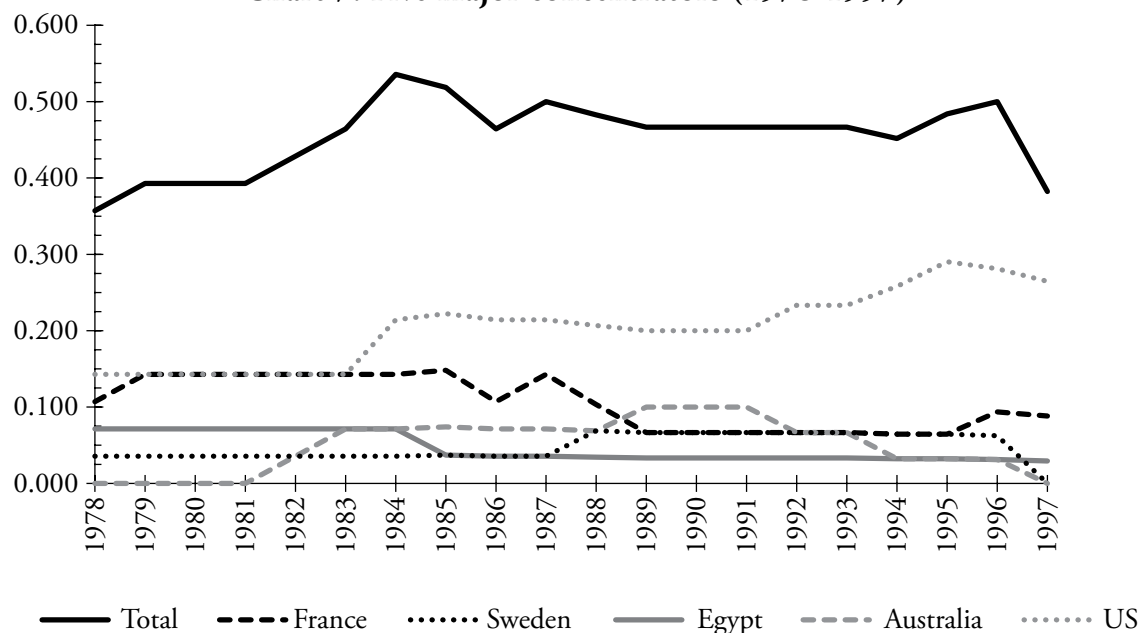
The distribution of the five major concentrators portrays the predominance of the US (see Chart 7). This country deeply intensifies its participation from 1984 to 1995 at GIGOs’ secretariats. The participation of Egypt and France falls, while Sweden and Austria increment theirs – though never exceeding 10% of posts. It becomes interesting to observe the presence, for the first time since 1945, of a country from the Global South among the five major concentrators: Egypt. This country held a similar participation percentage during the previous period (4.4% from 1958 to 1977 and 4.6% from 1978 to 1997), but could not make it into the top five due to the larger shares of European countries.



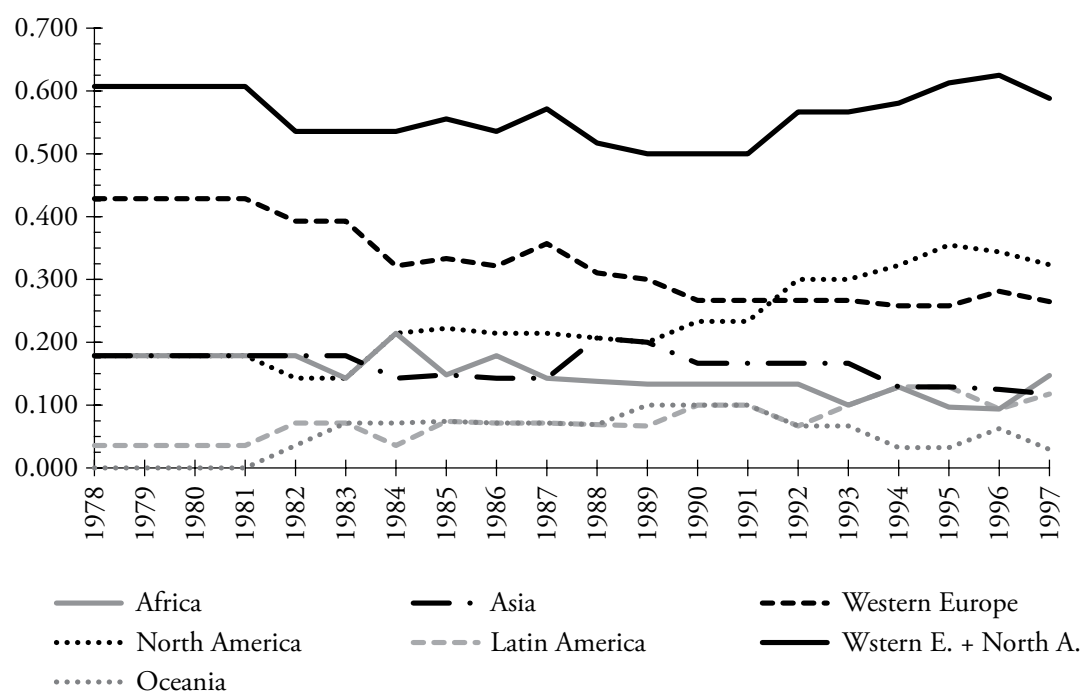
**Table 4. States with nationals in SG posts (1978-1997)**

RANKING	STATE	POSTS*YEAR	
		ABSOLUTE NUMBER	%
1	US	121	20.6%
2	France	61	10.4%
3	Australia	29	4.9%
4	Sweden	28	4.8%
5	Egypt	27	4.6%
6	Switzerland	25	4.3%
7	Denmark	22	3.8%
8	Canada	18	3.1%
9	Japan	17	2.9%
10	Philippines	17	2.9%
11	Algeria	16	2.7%
12	Lebanon	16	2.7%
13	Brazil	15	2.6%
14	India	15	2.6%
15	Nigeria	14	2.4%
16	Italy	13	2.2%
17	Senegal	13	2.2%
18	Pakistan	11	1.9%
19	Spain	11	1.9%
20	Ghana	10	1.7%
21	Mexico	10	1.7%
22	Peru	10	1.7%
23	Belgium	9	1.5%
24	UK	9	1.5%
25	Austria	8	1.4%
26	Sri Lanka	7	1.2%
27	Chile	6	1.0%
28	Saudi Arabia	6	1.0%
29	Kuwait	5	0.9%
30	Tunisia	5	0.9%
31	Ecuador	3	0.5%
32	Ireland	3	0.5%
33	Fiji	2	0.3%
34	Finland	1	0.2%
35	Sudan	1	0.2%
36	Norway	1	0.2%
37	Argentina	1	0.2%
TOTAL		586	100.0%
MEDIAN		11	1.9%
MEAN		15.84	2.7%

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 7. Five major concentrators (1978-1997)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 8. Regional distribution (1978-1997)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The US concentration affects the regional distribution as well (see Chart 8). There is a sharp decrease in the participation of Western Europe, going from around 40% to levels under 30%, along with an increase in the North American share. Conversely, there are gradual reductions in the participations of Asia and Africa in concomitance with a progressive rise of Latin American shares.

The main characteristic of this period is the strong concentration role played by the US, majorly after 1983, which occupied a very significant portion of secretariats at a moment of rapid institutionalization of the international system, similar to the one taking place from 1945 to 1957. Furthermore, this timeframe coincides with the debacle of the Soviet Union and the end of bipolarity, launching, according to some scholars (such as Huntington 1999; Nye 2002), what could be regarded as a unipolar era, given the US' dominance in the economic, diplomatic and military fields.

## Second deconcentration period (1998-2009)

The second period of deconcentration occurs at a moment of relative stability with the number of GIGOs (see Chart 1), as only one was brought to life in 2002 due to the institutionalization of UN-HABITAT, hoisting it from a coordination office to a fully-fledged program with political strength and robust institutional mechanisms inside the UN system.<sup>5</sup> The new level of concentration from 1998 to 2000 continuously decreases for five years until reaching the minimum of 0.257, and continues at this level until 2009 (see Chart 2). Historically, this is the third smallest concentration index for the whole time span, falling behind those relative to 1976 (0.222) and 1977 (0.214).

In this period, forty-three countries engage in the distribution of SGs (see Table 5), in which seventeen account for 80% of these posts – more diversity than in any previous period. The five major concentrators hold 40.1% of the SGs, lower percentages than in the past (73.8% from 1945 to 1957, 49.6% from 1958 to 1977, and 45.3% from 1978 to 1997). Moreover, the deconcentration renders a smaller difference between the median (1.7%) and the arithmetic mean (2.3%), the minor gap measured between 1945 and 2016. Differently from the previous period (1978-1997), the participation of the US is now closer to that of its peers. The joint participation of the five major SG concentrators – US, France, Japan, Sweden, and Brazil – reduces over the period, though these countries showcase distinct dynamics (see Chart 9). The US and Brazil lower their shares, while France enlarges its participation, surpassing the US and becoming the major concentrator after 2004.

The regional distribution patterns show the decrease in the participation of both North and Latin America (see Chart 10). Conversely, the intense participation of France after 2004 guarantees historical levels of participation for Western Europe. Furthermore, the African and Asian shares increase from 15% and 8% to 20% and 22.9%, respectively, while for the first time, participation of Eastern Europe countries becomes evident, namely Turkey<sup>6</sup> and Bulgaria, in the pool of contributors.

<sup>5</sup> Resolution A/56/206 of UN's General Assembly.

<sup>6</sup> The regional classification of Turkey is tricky, once the country did share political and cultural ties with Europe, but also with the Western portion of Asia; the near Orient. Therefore, the choice was to classify it as part of Eastern Europe, due to the similarities between the dynamics of Turkey and the remaining countries of this region, which participate on the SG distribution only after 1999.

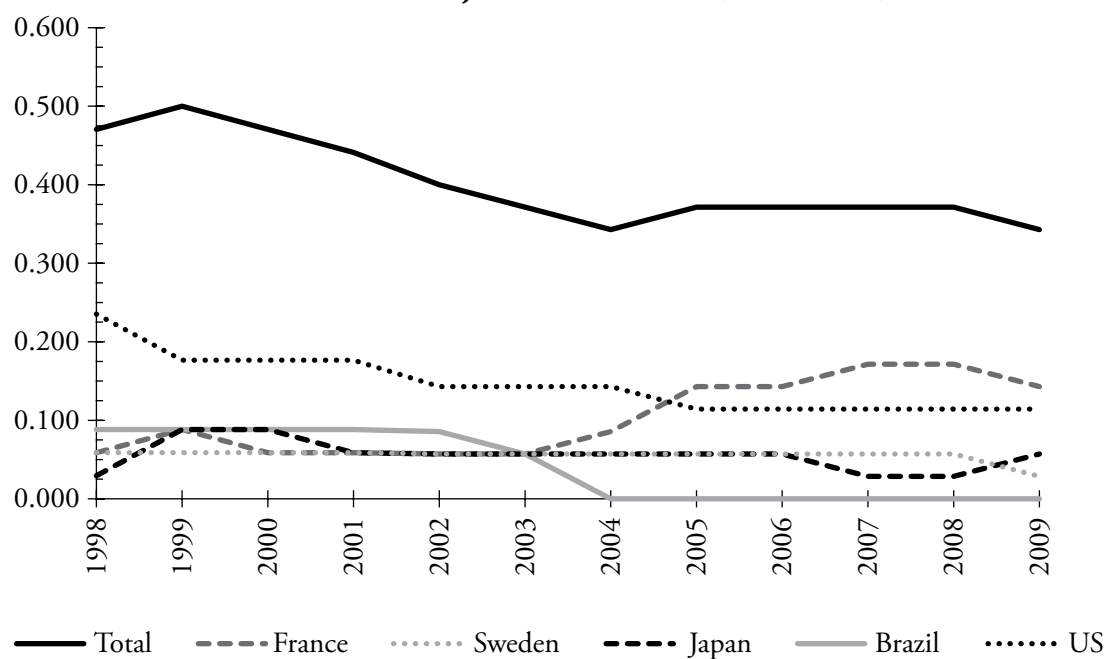
**Table 5. States with nationals in SG posts (1998-2009)**

RANKING	STATE	POSTS*YEAR	
		ABSOLUTE NUMBER	%
1	US	61	14.7%
2	France	43	10.3%
3	Japan	23	5.5%
4	Sweden	23	5.5%
5	Brazil	17	4.1%
6	Germany	16	3.8%
7	Argentina	15	3.6%
8	Italy	13	3.1%
9	Senegal	12	2.9%
10	Chile	11	2.6%
11	Egypt	11	2.6%
12	Fiji	11	2.6%
13	Saudi Arabia	10	2.4%
14	Ghana	10	2.4%
15	Sudan	10	2.4%
16	Canada	9	2.2%
17	Thailand	9	2.2%
18	India	8	1.9%
19	Morocco	8	1.9%
20	Tanzania	8	1.9%
21	South Korea	7	1.7%
22	Greece	7	1.7%
23	Nigeria	7	1.7%
24	Algeria	6	1.4%
25	Portugal	6	1.4%
26	UK	6	1.4%
27	Norway	5	1.2%
28	Sierra Leona	5	1.2%
29	Ireland	4	1.0%
30	Netherlands	4	1.0%
31	New Zealand	4	1.0%
32	Turkey	4	1.0%
33	Spain	4	1.0%
34	China	3	0.7%
35	Mali	3	0.7%
36	Kuwait	3	0.7%
37	Australia	2	0.5%
38	Pakistan	2	0.5%
39	South Africa	2	0.5%
40	Jordan	1	0.2%
41	Bulgaria	1	0.2%
42	Belgium	1	0.2%
43	Finland	1	0.2%
TOTAL		416	100.0%
MEDIAN		7	1.7%
MEAN		9.67	2.3%

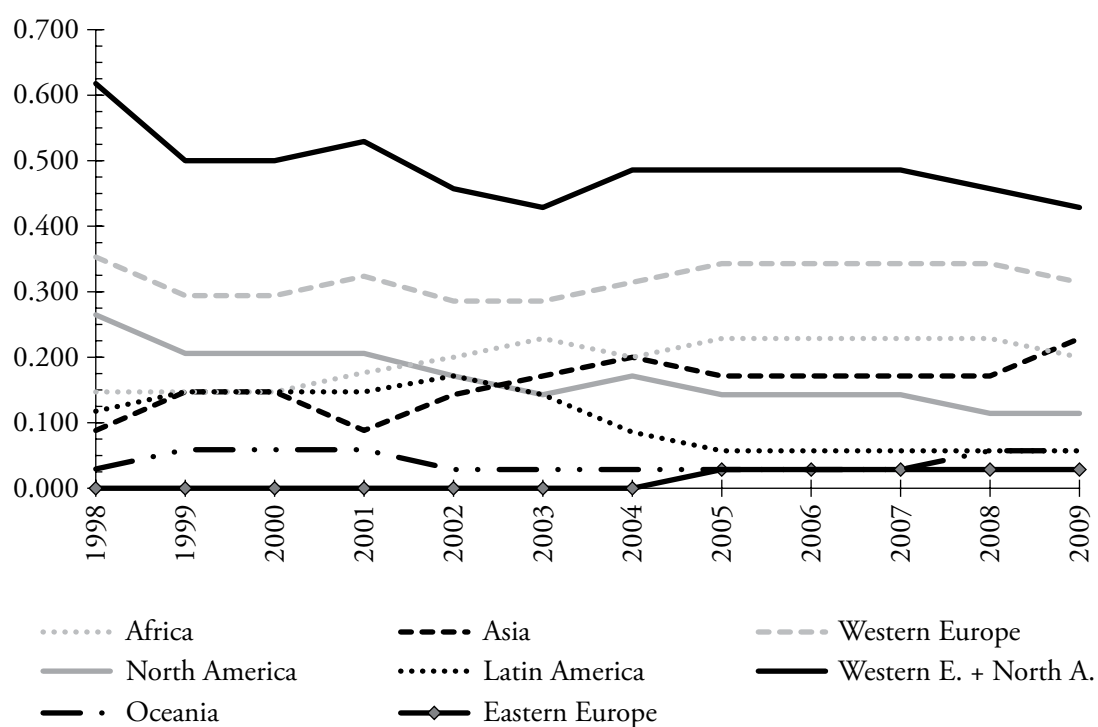
78.8%

21.2%

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 9. Five major concentrators (1998-2009)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 10. Regional distribution (1998-2009)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The main characteristics for this period are the gradual diminishing of the American participation in the distribution of SGs, which occurs concomitantly with an increase of other regions'. There is an arguable 'South American moment,' as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile stand among the ten major SG contributors (even with the sharp interruption of the Brazilian participation after 2004). Despite the decrease of other Western European countries, France has a robust increase, and Asia and Africa augment their shares consistently.

### Third concentration period (2010-2016)

From 2010 to 2016, there is a small increase in the number of GIGOs, with the establishment of UN-WOMEN and IRENA (see Chart 1), and the concentration index grows continuously from 0.278 to 0.432 (see Chart 2). In this period thirty-three countries participate in the SG distribution, and seventeen of them hold 80% of the posts as eight countries display overall participation above the threshold of 5% (see Table 6), exceeding the numbers of all previous periods, including those of deconcentration (six from 1945 to 1957, six from 1958 to 1977, two from 1978 to 1997, four from 1998 to 2009). Therefore, the event can be called a 'concentrated deconcentration' of SG posts, considering that the relative deconcentration takes place within a small group of states, as can be inferred by higher values of median and arithmetic mean than in the previous ones, respectively 2.7% and 3.0% for 2010-2016 against 1.7% and 2.3% for 1998-2009.

Among the five major concentrators, France takes over the first place from the US, while China and South Korea appear for the first time in this grouping (see Chart 11). The five concentrators – France, US, Japan, China and South Korea – present similar numbers, which is revealing of the need to follow up on this dynamic along the upcoming years. It is noteworthy to observe the decrease in the participations of France, US and Japan, while the Chinese and South Korean participations practically quadrupled, going from 2.8% to 10.8% in six years.

The distribution of positions among regions shows that Asia and Africa have become the major beneficiaries, outpacing Western Europe (see Chart 12). This change in the distributional profile is mostly due to the 'East Asian moment,' marked by the vigorous growth of Japanese, Chinese, and South Korean shares. As in the previous period (1997-2009), the participation of Eastern Europe and Oceania represents less than 10% of the total each –, the same threshold reached by North America after 2012.

**Table 6. States with nationals in SG posts (2010-2016)**

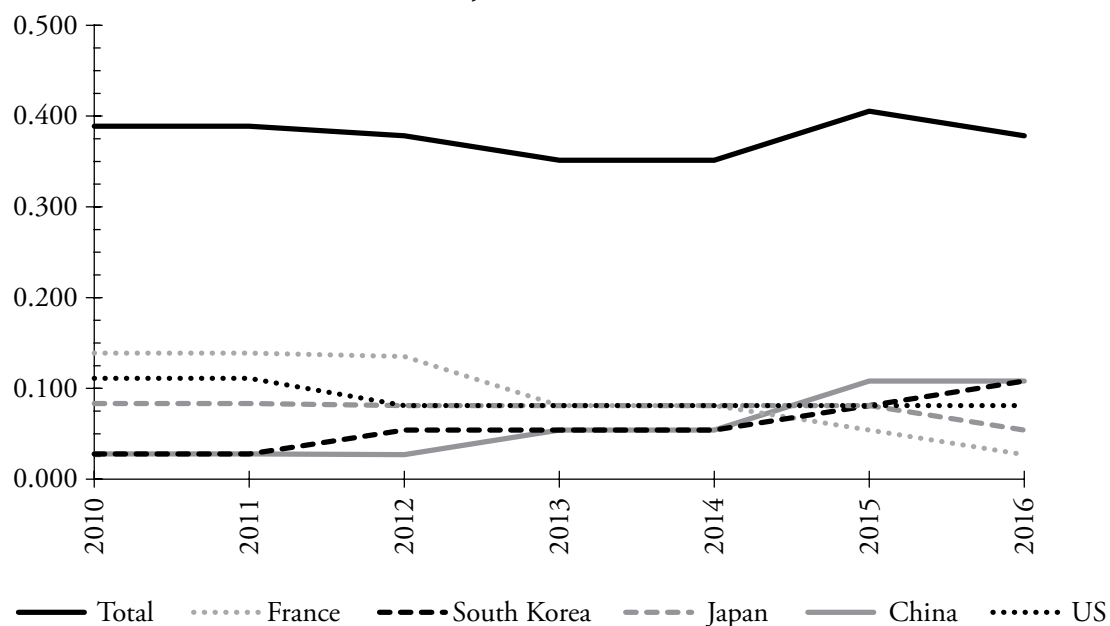
RANKING	STATE	POST*YEAR	
		ABSOLUTE NUMBER	%
1	France	24	9.3%
2	US	23	8.9%
3	Japan	20	7.8%
4	China	15	5.8%
5	South Korea	15	5.8%
6	Kenya	14	5.4%
7	Portugal	13	5.0%
8	Nigeria	13	5.0%
9	Jordan	10	3.9%
10	Brazil	9	3.5%
11	South Africa	8	3.1%
12	Bulgaria	7	2.7%
13	Ghana	7	2.7%
14	Russia	7	2.7%
15	Turkey	7	2.7%
16	Australia	7	2.7%
17	New Zealand	7	2.7%
18	Spain	6	2.3%
19	Germany	6	2.3%
20	India	5	1.9%
21	Mali	5	1.9%
22	UK	5	1.9%
23	Chile	4	1.6%
24	Sweden	4	1.6%
25	Thailand	4	1.6%
26	Cameroon	3	1.2%
27	Sierra Leona	3	1.2%
28	Senegal	2	0.8%
29	Tanzania	1	0.4%
30	Saudi Arabia	1	0.4%
31	Finland	1	0.4%
32	Italy	1	0.4%
33	Norway	1	0.4%
TOTAL		258	100.0%
MEDIAN		7	2.7%
MEAN		7.82	3.0%

79.8%

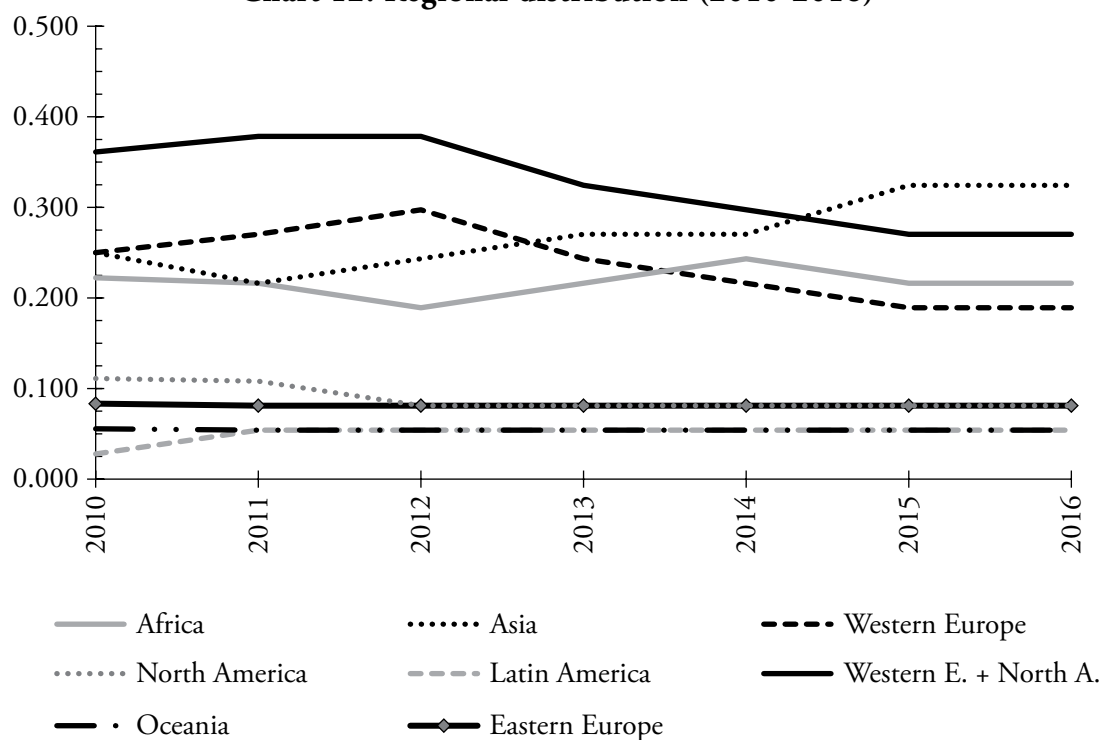
20.2%

Source: Elaborated by the authors



**Chart 11. Five major concentrators (2010-2016)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 12. Regional distribution (2010-2016)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The main feature of this period of ‘concentrated deconcentration,’ – in which the emergence of new actors was not enough to dilute the ‘SG oligopoly,’ – was the emergence of China and South Korea among the main traditional concentrators, and the new profile in the regional distribution, in which Asia and Africa supersede Western Europe and North America. The background is set with the consolidation of the BRICS grouping – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – among the twenty largest contributors of SGs to GIGOs, which seems to fit the new tendency towards an ‘oligarchyization’ of international relations, which has gained more visibility after the 2008 global financial crisis, with the rise of a Financial G-20, the negotiations on quotas at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and the re-emergence of the bid for the enlargement of the UN Security Council (Stuenkel 2015).

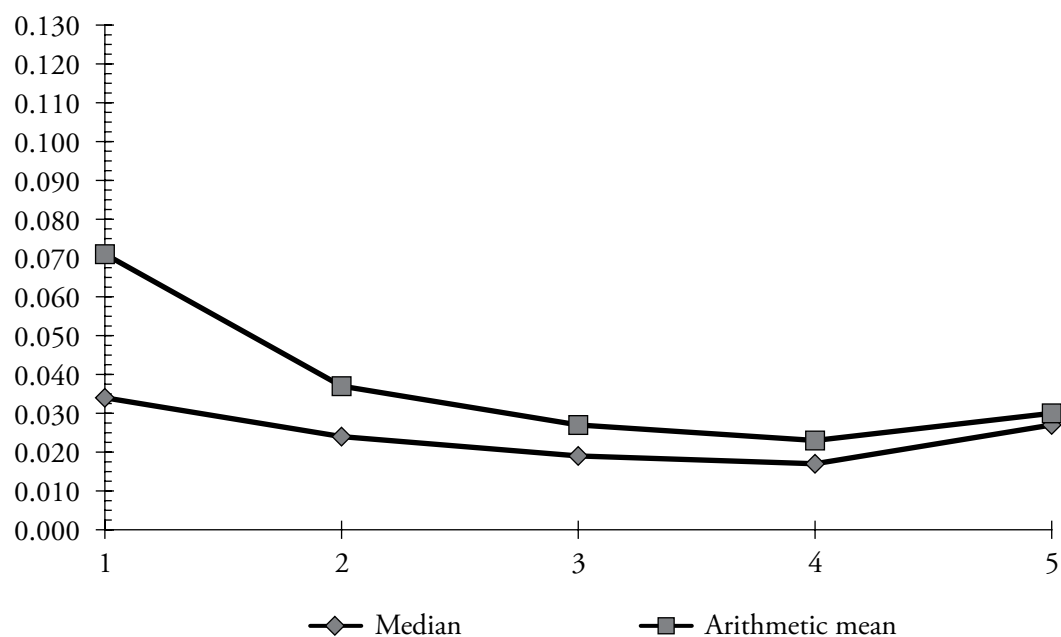
## Findings and discussion

This section synthesizes the article’s findings and points to the future shifts in the distributional features of SGs by exploring the tendencies evident during the third concentration period. On that matter, there are two main findings regarding these recent years: (i) the reduction of the shares of the US and Western Europe in the distribution of SGs; and, by the same token, (ii) the growing participation of China, South Korea, and Japan after 1990.

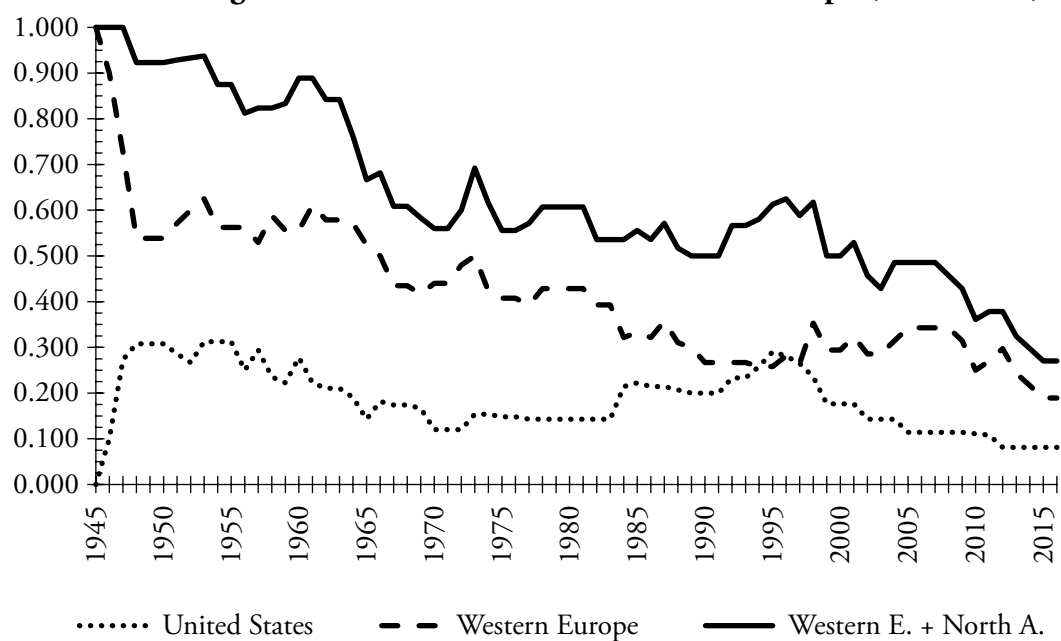
The period from 1945 to 2009 shows a process of continuous polyarchization of international politics through the deconcentration of SG distribution. Apart from the concentration and deconcentration of national quotas during specific intervals, the first four medians and arithmetic means in Chart 13 are successively smaller, while the number of countries with a seat per observation increases starting in the second period (1958-1977). However, in the fifth period (2010-2016) some characteristics change, since this period of concentration shows larger values of medians and arithmetic means than in all other assessed periods (see Chart 13).

This ‘concentrated deconcentration’ paradigm manifests as a consequence of the substantial reduction of positions held by the US and countries from Western Europe (see Chart 14), which is not followed by the inclusion of a larger number of states, as can be inferred by the concentration index, along with the increasing median and arithmetic mean values from 2010 to 2016 in Chart 13.

Despite the reductions in the participation of the US and Western European countries, such countries still hold meaningful stakes in the distribution of SGs from 1945 to 2016, in which Americans concentrated the largest number of years for these posts (17.48%) and other four countries from Western Europe compose the five major concentrators in the period: France (9.11%), Sweden (5.30%), Switzerland (5.30%) and UK (4.45%). Within the ten larger participations, only Brazil (3.23%), Japan (3.18%), Egypt (3.07%), and India (2.44%) do not belong to the North America-Western Europe axis (see Table 7).

**Chart 13. Comparison of medians and arithmetic means in the five periods**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 14. Weight reduction of the US and Western Europe (1945-2016)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

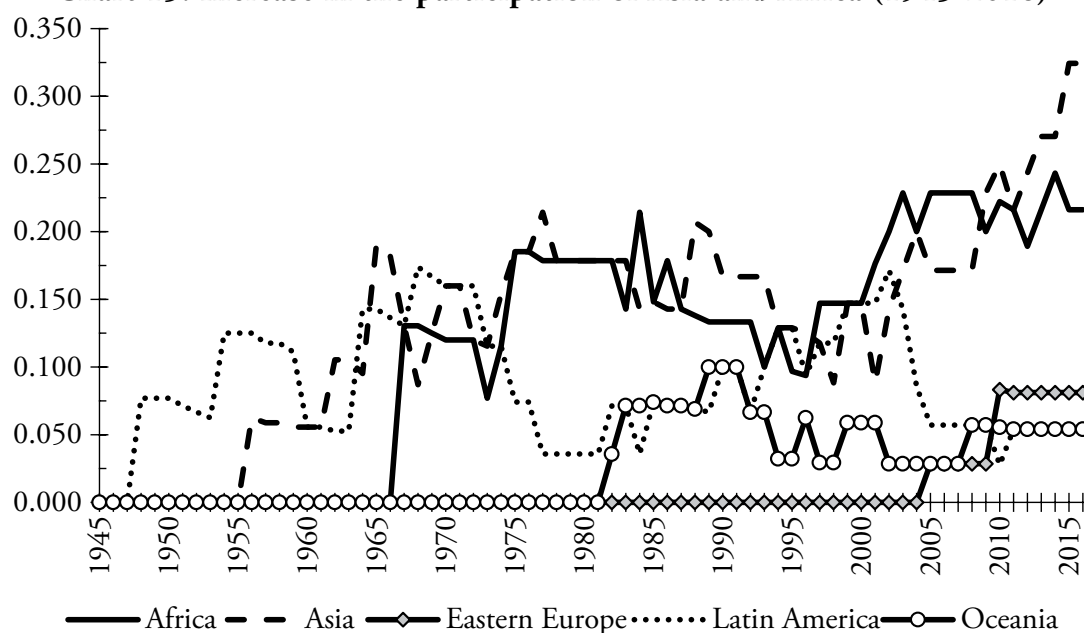
**Table 7. Twenty major concentrators (1945-2016)**

RANKING	STATE	POSTS*YEAR	
		ABSOLUTE NUMBER	%
1	US	330	17.48%
2	France	172	9.11%
3	Sweden	100	5.30%
4	Switzerland	100	5.30%
5	UK	84	4.45%
6	Brazil	61	3.23%
7	Japan	60	3.18%
8	Egypt	58	3.07%
9	India	46	2.44%
10	Belgium	40	2.12%
11	Canada	40	2.12%
12	Italy	38	2.01%
13	Australia	38	2.01%
14	Netherlands	37	1.96%
15	Chile	35	1.85%
16	Nigeria	34	1.80%
17	Senegal	31	1.64%
18	Denmark	29	1.54%
19	Ghana	27	1.43%
20	Argentina	27	1.43%
Other 40 countries		501	26.54%
TOTAL		1888	100.0%
MEDIAN (all 60 countries)		15.5	0.8%
MEAN (all 60 countries)		31.47	1.7%

Source: Elaborated by the authors

From the 2000s onwards, there is a consistent growth in African and Asian participation in the SG pool, to the detriment not only of Western Europe and North America, but also of Latin America. After 2013, the participations of Africa and Asia reach levels higher than 20% and 25%, respectively (see Chart 15). This growth occurs in concomitance with two other phenomena identified by international studies: (i) The ‘African rebirth,’ (Saraiva 2008) and (ii) the coming of age of the ‘Asian century’ (Rachman 2013).

The African rebirth from the 2000s features the gradual consolidation of democratic institutions, the containment of armed conflicts along with economic growth, leading to greater trust in political and economic elites. These factors back up the increased participation of African countries in international politics (Saraiva 2008). However, it is not possible to ascribe this growth in participation to any specific country, as is shown by the proximity between median and arithmetic mean values for African nations (see Table 8).

**Chart 15. Increase in the participation of Asia and Africa (1945-2016)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Table 8. Participation of African states on SG posts (2000-2016)**

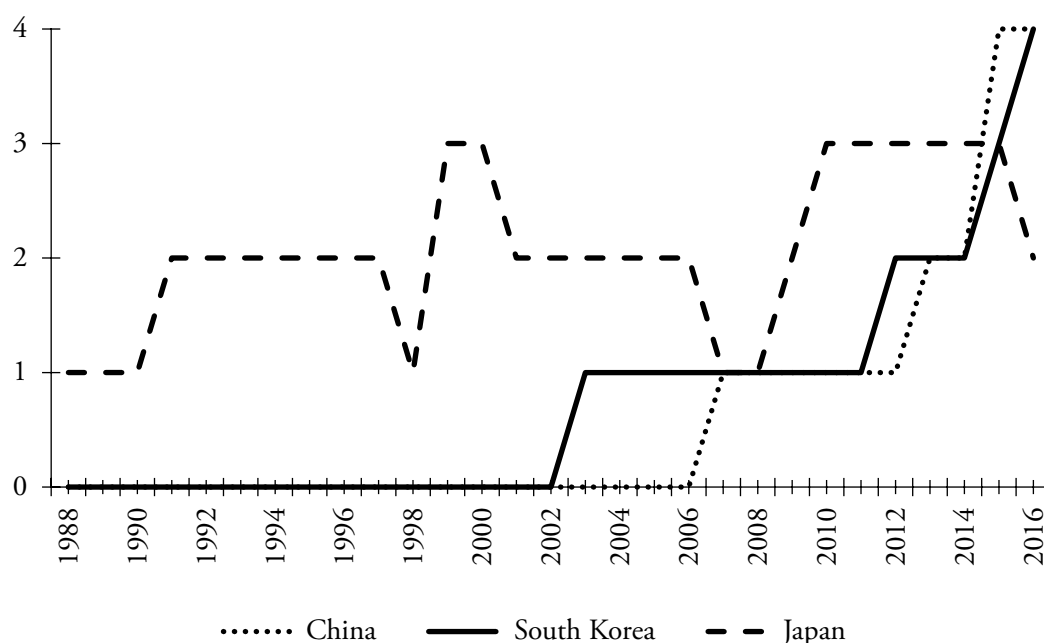
RANKING	STATE	POSTS*YEAR
		ABSOLUTE N.
1	Nigeria	18
2	Ghana	15
3	Kenya	14
4	Senegal	12
5	South Africa	10
6	Egypt	9
7	Tanzania	9
8	Mali	8
9	Morocco	8
10	Sierra Leone	8
11	Sudan	8
12	Algeria	6
13	Cameroon	3
TOTAL		128
MEDIAN		9
MEAN		9.85

Source: Elaborated by the authors

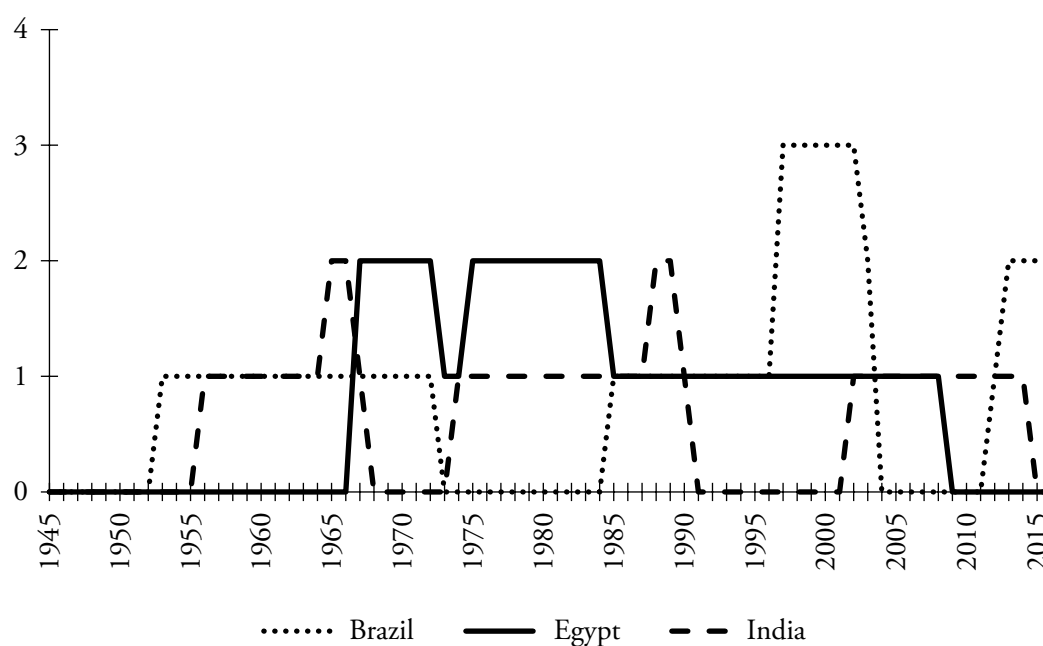
By contrast, the ‘orientalization’ represents the emergence of the Asia-Pacific region as the new center of global influence, with the rise of China, which joins established powers such as Japan and South Korea, along with the role played by regional institutions, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). On that matter, the expression ‘Pivot to Asia’ arises from the reorientation of the US foreign policy during the Obama administration, which explicitly relocated its focus to the region (Rachman 2013; Oliveira 2013).

The performance of China, South Korea and Japan – main countries covered by the Asian pivot – in the distribution of SG posts stand out for the intensity of their participation (see Chart 16). Japan, seventh biggest concentrator from 1945 to 2016, launches its participation in 1988. China and South Korea, though not ranked among the twenty major concentrators, start to occupy SG seats in the 2000s. The intensity of these Asian participants is better grasped when compared with the participation of Brazil, Egypt and India, three countries who do not belong to the US-Western Europe axis, which made it into the ten major concentrators from 1945 to 2016. These three countries from the Global South distribute their participation in a much less concentrated way (see Chart 17).

**Chart 16. Number of SGs from China, South Korea and Japan (1988-2016)**



Source: Elaborated by the authors

**Chart 17. Number of SGs from Brazil, Egypt and India (1945-2016)**

Source: Elaborated by the authors

This vigorous participation of China, South Korea, and Japan, notably the two first, suggests a tendency that can alter the profile of SG distribution for the upcoming years, with the potential to turn these countries into leading concentrators, as changes in the realm of international politics possibly indicate. Overall, the results of this paper show substantial transformations in the characteristics of the SG distribution. It starts deeply concentrated by the US and Western Europe, then it gradually opens up to new countries and regions, as illustrated by the first period of deconcentration (1958-1977), in which Brazil, Egypt and India climb up to the top of the ranking and join the ten major concentrators. This progressive opening can be perceived through the successive reductions of medians and arithmetic means from 1945 to 2010. Nevertheless, these transformations bring about a new configuration for the SG distribution, in which the major concentrators begin to hold similar shares, a feature this paper dubs ‘concentrated deconcentration.’ New regions become major concentrators, namely Asia – with a special emphasis on China, South Korea, and Japan – and Africa, in which the concentrations are divided among a larger number of stakeholders. Conversely, the inclusion of new actors is not proportional to the reductions in the concentrations of the US and countries from Western Europe.

## Conclusion

This paper shows that GIGOs may serve as important microcosms for the observation of general trends and patterns in international politics. The distribution of SGs is a proxy variable to



the ongoing debate on the polyarchization of the international system (Lopes 2016), in view of the salience of these posts as instruments for states to intervene in global decision-making processes. From an interstate perspective (Marchetti 2008) – which posits that democratic potentials should increase as the distribution of SG positions would deconcentrate – this paper identified greater possibilities for global democracy from 1945 to 2016, since the US and Western European countries partially retreated from GIGOs' secretariats, making room for the participation of countries from other regions. However, this distribution after 2009 has become concentrated and restricted to a smaller number of players. This is explained by the non-inclusion of new actors in similar proportion to the reduction in traditional participations. The intense growth in the participation of China and South Korea reinforces the 'concentrated deconcentration' paradigm – that is, East Asian nations now represent the major concentrators in the world from 2010 to 2016. These new characteristics in the distribution of SGs show a more even occupation of key institutional positions in international politics, which clearly transcends the borders of North-Atlantic countries, but still looks circumscribed to a certain number of states.

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## Appendix

**Table A1. List of GIGOs and official websites**

INITIALS	GIGOs	WEBSITES
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organizations of the United Nations	<a href="http://www.fao.org">http://www.fao.org</a>
GATT/WTO	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/ World Trade Organization	<a href="https://www.wto.org">https://www.wto.org</a>
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency	<a href="https://www.iaea.org">https://www.iaea.org</a>
IBRD	World Bank	<a href="http://www.worldbank.org">http://www.worldbank.org</a>
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization	<a href="http://www.icao.int">http://www.icao.int</a>
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	<a href="https://www.ifad.org">https://www.ifad.org</a>
ILO	International Labour Organization	<a href="http://www.ilo.org">http://www.ilo.org</a>
IMCO/IMO	International Maritime Consultative Board/ International Maritime Organization	<a href="http://www.imo.org">http://www.imo.org</a>
IMF	International Monetary Fund	<a href="http://www.imf.org">http://www.imf.org</a>
IOM	International Organization for Migration	<a href="http://www.iom.int">http://www.iom.int</a>
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change	<a href="https://www.ipcc.ch">https://www.ipcc.ch</a>
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union	<a href="http://www.ipu.org">http://www.ipu.org</a>
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency	<a href="http://www.irena.org">http://www.irena.org</a>
ISA	International Seabed Authority	<a href="https://www.isa.org.jm">https://www.isa.org.jm</a>
ITSO	International Telecommunications Satellite Organization	<a href="http://www.itso.int">http://www.itso.int</a>
ITU	International Telecommunications Union	<a href="https://www.itu.int">https://www.itu.int</a>
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	<a href="http://www.ohchr.org">http://www.ohchr.org</a>
OPCW	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons	<a href="https://www.opcw.org">https://www.opcw.org</a>
UN	United Nations	<a href="http://www.un.org">http://www.un.org</a>
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	<a href="http://www.unctad.org">http://www.unctad.org</a>
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	<a href="http://www.undp.org">http://www.undp.org</a>
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme	<a href="http://www.unep.org">http://www.unep.org</a>
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	<a href="http://en.unesco.org">http://en.unesco.org</a>
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund	<a href="http://www.unfpa.org">http://www.unfpa.org</a>
UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme	<a href="http://unhabitat.org">http://unhabitat.org</a>
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	<a href="http://www.unhcr.org">http://www.unhcr.org</a>
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund	<a href="https://www.unicef.org">https://www.unicef.org</a>
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	<a href="https://www.unido.org">https://www.unido.org</a>
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	<a href="https://www.unodc.org">https://www.unodc.org</a>
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women	<a href="http://www.unwomen.org">http://www.unwomen.org</a>
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization	<a href="http://www2.unwto.org">http://www2.unwto.org</a>
UPU	Universal Postal Union	<a href="http://www.upu.int">http://www.upu.int</a>
WCO	World Customs Organization	<a href="http://www.wcoomd.org">http://www.wcoomd.org</a>
WHO	World Health Organization	<a href="http://www.who.int">http://www.who.int</a>
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization	<a href="http://www.wipo.int">http://www.wipo.int</a>
WMO	World Meteorological Organization	<a href="http://www.wmo.int">http://www.wmo.int</a>
WFP	World Food Programme	<a href="http://www.wfp.org">http://www.wfp.org</a>