

Brazil and China Interests in Atlantic Africa: Convergences, Divergences and Opportunities for Cooperation Inside the BRICS Forum Framework

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Abstract

Brazil and China have strategic interests in the West African countries. Of these two countries, China has increased influence in the region, both in the economic and in the military issues. In this context, some questions arise: How could the presence of China in the western portion of the African continent interfere with Brazilian interests in this region? As Brazil and China's trade relations with Africa grow, will the possibility of disputes arise between these two current BRICS partners? Could the participation of Brazil and China in the BRICS group contribute to aligning these interests and, if possible, minimize some future disputes? Thus, the article aims to identify whether a forum such as the BRICS, can contribute to aligning the objectives and interests of its constituent States or minimize the divergences arising from conflicting objectives and interests, particularly in the Atlantic portion of Africa. In order to achieve this objective, the article is divided into three sections. Firstly, it identifies the current strategic interests of Brazil and China in the Atlantic portion of the African continent. Secondly, it presents an analysis of the present and potential conflict of interests of these two States related to Atlantic Africa. The third section focuses on BRICS, seeking to identify how its vocation for dialogue and consensus-building may be useful to minimize these potential conflicting interests and even institutionalize an arbitration center for its members.

Keywords: Atlantic Africa. BRICS. Brazil. China.

Introduction

Starting from an acronym formulated by Chief Economist at Goldman Sachs, Jim O'Neill, in 2001, the BRIC incorporated South Africa in 2011 and became BRICS. Since then, the BRICS forum has made many achievements, mainly in the economical field.

The BRICS group is unique. There is no charter, no fixed objectives, no political or defense alliance. The BRICS group is an expression of the political will of its members. However, since the first Summit in June 2009 at Yekaterinburg, Russia, the BRIC – and after 2011 the BRICS – became a forum that materialized the cooperation in many areas, mainly in the financial and economic, that are generating benefits for all its members. Since its inception, the joint actions taken by the BRICS are perceived from a range of optimistic perspectives to ones of concern and pessimism (Baumann et al, 2017).

One point to be noted is that the national interests of its members are always present in their relations. It is reasonable to infer that all BRICS countries have interests on the African

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continent. These interests can range from economic to defense. In that sense, considering that Brazil and China have strategic interests in the West African countries, some questions arise: How could the presence of China in the western portion of the African continent interfere with Brazilian interests in that region? As Brazil and China's trade relations with Africa grow, will the possibility of disputes arise between these two current BRICS partners? Could the participation of Brazil and China in the BRICS group contribute to aligning these interests and, if possible, minimize some future disputes?

Theories related to the causality between international trade and bilateral conflict/cooperation are central to this article. The research questions addressed in this study are related to the debate on whether international trade causes bilateral conflict or cooperation.

Albert O. Hirschman was one of the first modern economists who exposed the relationship between international trade and national politics. In *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade*, Hirschman analyzed the political aspect of international trade. His study focused on understanding “why and how international trade might become consciously and efficiently used as an instrument of national power policy” (Hirschman, 1945: 12).

Since the end of World War II, several researchers sought to quantify the relationship between international trade and international politics. These studies gave rise to the so-called “trade and conflict debate” (see Reuveny and Kang, 1996: 945).

Polachek (1980) took international trade as a measure of mutual economic dependence. He argued that the mutual dependence established between two trading partners is sufficient to raise the costs of conflict, thereby diminishing levels of dispute and conflict. Polachek concluded that countries with the greatest levels of economic trade engage in the least amounts of hostility.

Sayers (1989) refines the argument of trade lowers the level of conflict pointing that the structure of trading and the volume of trade, as well as the tendencies of some traders to “dominate the global market” are important factors related to the politics on international trade, and in the way these relations could be cooperative or conflictive.

In *The Liberal Illusion: Does Trade Promote Peace?* (2002), Katherine Barbieri (2002) analyzed the four main propositions about trade and conflict relationship: (a) the liberal proposition, by which it is asserted that trade promotes peace; (b) the neo-Marxists proposition by which the symmetrical economic relations may promote peace, while asymmetrical relations may promote conflict; (c) the proposition that trade increases conflict; and (d) the null hypothesis, that there is no relationship between trade and conflicts.

Barbieri (2002) concluded that the liberal assumption lacks empirical accuracy and provides a criticism of the liberal peace idea by which increased trade is a panacea for improving interstate relations. Besides that, her findings pointed out that although symmetry is negatively related to conflict, it only works at a lower level of interdependent trade States.

As pointed out by Reuveny and Kang (1996) the proponents of the causality between trade increase and potential to conflict argue that international trade can increase the level of international conflict since it may increase frictions among nations.

The basic assumption is that traders compete for scarce resources (both production inputs and markets for final products). With limited resources, as the competition for depleting resources intensifies, state power is used to guarantee national access for production inputs and for final goods markets. As the level of state intervention increases, it is more likely to observe an increase in protectionism, trade wars, economic penetration, colonial expansion, intervention in local conflicts, and hence an overall decrease in international cooperation. (Reuveny and Kang, 1996: 946-947).

In light of the different theoretical lenses mentioned, one can see that the trade and conflict debate remain unfinished. In this context, the two central hypotheses of this debate remain open: (a) international trade increases cooperation between States; and (b) international trade increases the possibility of conflict between States. In this context, this article argues that as relations between China and Brazil with African countries mature and develop, it will increase the possibility of conflicting interests, especially in the dispute over markets in those countries. However, the BRICS has the space to minimize these potential conflicting interests and even institutionalize an arbitration center for its members.

Thus, the article aims to identify whether a forum such as the BRICS, can contribute to align the objectives and interests of its constituent States or minimize the future divergences arising from conflicting interests, particularly in the Atlantic portion of Africa. To pursue answers to the proposed question and corroborate the formulated assumption, this paper proceeds in three steps. Firstly, it identifies the current strategic interests of Brazil and China in the Atlantic portion of the African continent. Secondly, it presents an analysis of the present and potential conflict of interests of these two States related to Atlantic Africa. The last section focuses on BRICS, seeking to identify how its vocation for dialogue and consensus-building may be useful to minimize these potential conflicting interests and even institutionalize an arbitration center for its members.

In summary, the paper contributes to the studies on BRICS, focusing on the possibility of BRICS, as a forum, acting to minimize the future divergent interests and disputes between its members, using Brazil and China relations with African countries as a case study.

Quality studies have already been produced having the BRICS countries relationship with Africa as the object of the study. One can find optimistic prospective analyzes and views of these relationships in which a perception of new dynamic of development in Africa is highlighted. This dynamic would be driven by relations with Brazil (see White, 2013) and China (see Carty and Gu, 2014) inserted in the context of “South–South cooperation” (Bhattacharya, 2011). There are also studies that present a very different view and point out that these relationships are just a new guise of old imperialism, a kind of sub-imperialism that reproduces patterns of economic exploitation and unequal and asymmetrical trade (see Moyo and Yeros, 2011). Others point out that the BRICS trade strategies in Africa only seek to fulfill their own commercial interests (see Qobo and Soko, 2016). Within these extremes of this spectrum is the complex reality of Brazil and China’s trade relations with Atlantic Africa, and there is still a lack of studies on the BRICS as a forum to minimize possible divergences among its participants, mainly in the commercial area. It should not be forgotten that BRICS is a relatively recent group and issues such as those proposed in this paper have space to be discussed and assessed. It is in this context that this study is presented.

Following these introductory considerations and before beginning the above-mentioned sections, it is important to address some concepts used in the text, that is, to define some of the lexicon used here, mainly the concept of strategic interest according to the theoretical framework of Strategic Studies.

The term Strategy as used in this study signifies the way that connects the means available to achieve a specific end or set of ends, in the international system, in accordance with a State policy.

An underlying assumption of strategy from a national perspective is that all States have interests they will pursue, or should pursue, to the best of their abilities. “Interests are desired end states categorized in terms such as survival, economic well-being, favorable world order, and enduring national or group values” (Yarger, 2006: 5).

Thus, for the purposes of this paper, the Strategic Interest is a categorized desired end state that should be achieved by one or more ways with the means at hand of the State, in accordance with a State policy.

Once having made these introductory considerations, which are intended to define the lexicon used in this article, the next two sections will address the strategic interests of Brazil and China in Atlantic Africa.

Brazil's Strategic Interests in Atlantic Africa

This section highlights the Brazilian strategic interests in relation to Africa, particularly with the countries of the Atlantic portion of the African continent, in the dimensions related to economy and defense, having as temporal frame the period between 2003 and 2019.

It should be recalled that since the 1960s Brazil's relations with African countries have alternated moments of approximation and withdrawal due to both ideological constraints and economic conjunctures.

However, in the first decade of the 21st century, Africa emerged as one of the priorities of Brazilian foreign policy, aiming both to increase trade relations and to increase Brazilian influence not only as a global trader but also as a global player.

In fact, during the two terms of President Lula – 2003-2006 and 2007-2010 – a renewed political, economic, social, commercial and cultural agenda was sought with African countries. Between 2003 and 2010 the amount of Brazil's trade with Africa rose from about US\$ 6 billion to more than US\$ 20 billion (See Brazil (d)) In the same period, Brazilian companies constructors Andrade Gutierrez, Camargo Correa, Odebrecht, Queiroz Galvão and others – won contracts in the area of civil construction and engineering, mainly in Angola. These projects were financed by the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES, in Portuguese. See Brazil, BNDES).

Another indicator of this renewed Brazil - Africa agenda, in the Lula government, was the number of opened embassies: 19 in total. At the end of Lula's second term, Brazil had embassies in 37 African countries (Fellet, 2011).

It should be noted that cooperation focused on the economic and social areas. In the meantime, there was also a spillover for defense projects such as training and training of military personnel from Namibia, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Angola. In addition, several agreements were signed in the area of export of defense equipment that resulted in the sale of ships, *Super Tucano* aircraft, as well as the development of advanced technology projects such as the *A-Darter* Air-to-Air Missile - which is in its final phase of joint development with South Africa.

In 2011, at the beginning of the Dilma Roussef administration, the discourse and actions pointed to a continuity of the importance of Africa and South-South Cooperation to foreign policy, and to Brazilian foreign trade. Three great areas of cooperation with Africa were identified as a priority for Brazil: economy and trade; peace and security; and democracy and governance (Brazil, 2011).

Although South-South Cooperation is not the objective of this study, some observations on this concept are worthwhile here. First of all, it is worth remembering that the conceptual division of “North” and “South” is used to refer to the social and economic differences that exist between developed countries (North) and developing countries (South). It should be noted that the division is not a purely geographical division. A country is defined as North or South not by location, but by social and economic factors that place it as an undeveloped or developing country. (See UN DESA, 2019).

The second point to be noted is that South-South Cooperation refers to the “mutual sharing and exchange of key development solutions – knowledge, experiences and good practices, policies, technology, know-how, and resources – between and among countries in the global south” (FAO, 2014).

Perhaps the greatest strength of the concept lies in the idea – not always true – that South-South Cooperation “lacks the overtones of cultural, political, and economic hegemony that is sometimes associated with traditional North-South aid” (Rosseel et al. 2009: 19), and that countries from the South have comparative advantages in helping each other due to “their comparable level of development levels” (Li, 2018: 14). Together, these factors could lead to more understanding about the problems faced by each other.

The BRICS – at least in principle – could be seen as a grouping of the leaders of the so-called Global South (Khomyakov, 2019), and as an expression of South-South Cooperation. However, some caveat is needed in relation to the concept of South-South Cooperation applied to the BRICS, especially in the relationship of its members with African countries. As pointed out by Candice Moore (2012):

[...] there is a risk of overlooking some of the key assumptions about South-South cooperation when this label is linked to BRICS. These include: the belief that trade between Southern States would be less exploitative than that between the South and the North [...]; and, the belief that economic interactions between States of the South would be more responsive to the development needs of the South [...]. However, it is by no means assured that these assumptions will be borne out by the BRICS’ interactions. [...] While trade partners like China leave no doubt that they can surpass traditional trade partners from the developed world in Africa¹, it is certainly still an open question whether this latest incarnation of South-South cooperation will be less exploitative and more relevant to development needs. The theoretical, or hoped for, benefits of South-South cooperation, therefore, should not be confused with the process in action, which could really have a wide variety of consequences (Moore, 2012).

Having made these brief considerations about South-South Cooperation, the point to be highlighted here is that, the period of economic crisis and political instability experienced in Brazil, especially after 2013, changed domestic policy and also Brazilian foreign policy. The South-South Cooperation ceased to be a priority of Brazilian foreign policy and domestic policy issues began to consume the attention of the country. Brazil stopped looking outside and

focused on its internal problems, both economic and political. The Brazilian economy has entered a recession, and President Dilma Roussef was removed from office following a process of impeachment in 2016. These changes were also reflected in relations with the African continent.

Aloysio Nunes Ferreira was the Foreign Minister (March 7, 2017 - January 1, 2019) of the government of Michel Temer.² In an article titled *Brazil and Africa: A Permanent Commitment* (2018), then Minister Aloysio Nunes pointed out that the “Africanist impetus” of the recent past had lost strength in the face of the economic crisis and “disinterest in the upper echelons of power.” In this sense, the then minister emphasized that he assumed the foreign affairs ministry with several Brazilian embassies in Africa in a situation of shortage, with “arrears basic services bills, semi-paralyzed cooperation projects, sparse and unfocused initiatives.”

Aloysio Nunes Ferreira (2018) also pointed out, critically, that his predecessors were right “to privilege Africa.” However, they did so in a “stumbling-block” fashion, relying primarily on “the rhetoric of historical and cultural ties,” but did not translate those links into strategies capable of enabling the “interests that cement lasting partnerships.” In its almost two years ahead of Itamaraty, Aloysio Nunes said he sought “less rhetoric and more results” in relations with Africa. In this sense, he pointed out that “the exchange with Africa grew 20% between 2016 and 2017, reaching US\$ 14.9 billion” and that Africa “is a strategic continent for Brazil and for the construction of a multipolar order”.

Even with the 20% growth mentioned by Aloysio Nunes, the amount of US\$ 14.9 billion is much lower than the more than US\$ 20 billion registered in 2010. That is, despite the official speech, Africa no longer occupied a position of priority for foreign policy nor for the increase of Brazilian foreign trade.

The 2018 Brazilian elections led to a new president and a significant renewal in the Brazilian congress, whose policy on Africa has yet to be made clear.

The current Brazilian Foreign Minister, Ambassador Ernesto Araújo, was inaugurated by President Jair Bolsonaro on January 2, 2019. On the occasion of the celebration of Africa Day on May 27, 2019, the minister delivered a speech at the conference “The Cooperation between Brazil and Africa”, when the main views and projects of the Bolsonaro government’s foreign policy towards Africa were expressed. Among the points highlighted by the minister

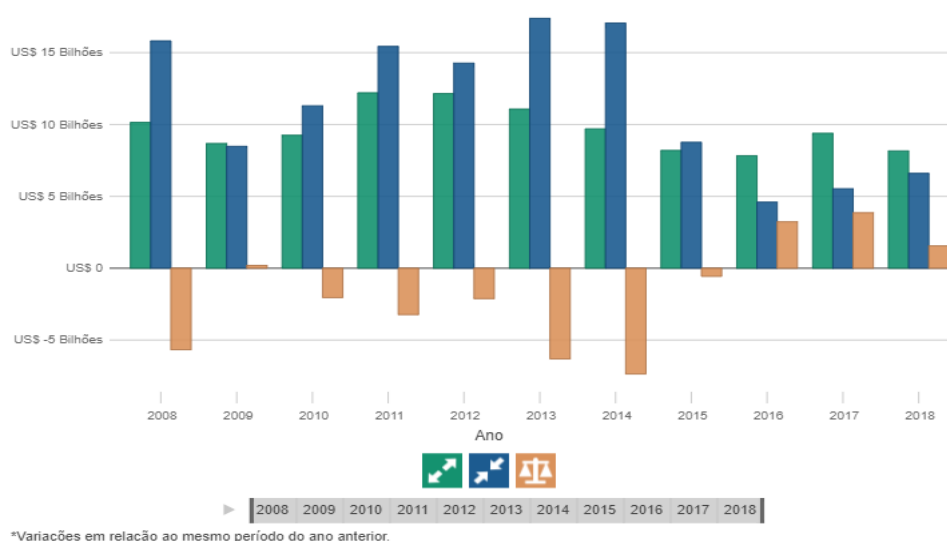
² Michel Temer was the vice president and assumed the presidency of Brazil after the impeachment of Dilma Roussef (Author’s note).

were the following objectives: increase trade; and participate in the development of infrastructure works and food production (Brazil, 2019).

In summary, at least in the speech, the new Brazilian government points out that increasing trade partnership with African countries is a Brazilian economic interest. In this context, it is pertinent to analyze Brazil's trade with Africa, particularly as its Atlantic portion, with a view to highlighting the amount, main trading partners and trends regarding growth, stabilization or reduction of these relations in the last ten years.

According to data from the Brazilian Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services, Africa accounted for 3.4% (US\$ 8.16 billion) of Brazilian exports in 2018. Regarding imports, Africa accounts for 3.64% (US\$ 6.61 billion) of imports made by Brazil (See Brazil (a)). The trade relationship presents a surplus trade balance for Brazil (US\$ 1.55 billion). Graphic 1 shows the value of exports, imports and trade balance between Brazil and Africa, from 2008 to 2018.

Graphic 1 – Foreign Trade Brazil - Africa (2008 - 2018).



Source: Brazil (a). Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services. *Comex Vis: Africa*. Available at <http://www.mdic.gov.br/comercio-externo/estatisticas-de-comercio-externo/comex-vis/frame-bloco?bloco=africa>. [Accessed on February 15, 2020]

Based on Graphic 1, it can be seen that in the period 2010-2014, the trade balance between Brazil and Africa becomes deficit for Brazil. It is during this same period that the largest amount of commercial transactions between Brazil and Africa occurs. From 2015 this amount drops to about half of the peak value (2013); however, the trade balance becomes a surplus for Brazil from 2016.

It is worth highlighting which nations are Brazil's current main trading partners in Africa, as well as the amount of trade transactions between Brazil and these countries. According to data from the Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services, in 2018, the value of Brazilian exports to Africa was US\$ 8.16 billion. Imports from Brazil from African countries totaled US\$ 6.61 billion (See Brazil (a)). Table 1 summarizes Brazil's main trading partners in Africa in 2018.

Table 1: Brazil's main trading partners in Africa (2018)

Rank	Country	Brazilian Imports (US\$ Billion)	Brazilian Exports (US\$ Billion)	Total Trade (US\$ Billion)
1	Algeria	2.42	1.01	3.43
2	Egypt	0.27	2.13	2.40
3	Nigeria	1.63	0.67	2.30
4	South Africa	0.66	1.36	2.02
5	Morocco	0.91	0.49	1.40
6	Angola	0.21	0.46	0.67

Source: Brazil (a). Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services. *Comex Vis: Africa*. Available at <http://www.mdic.gov.br/comercio-exterior/estatisticas-de-comercio-exterior/comex-vis/frame-bloco?bloco=africa>. [Accessed on February 15, 2020]

In light of Table 1 it is identified that Brazil's main trading partners in Atlantic Africa are: Nigeria, South Africa, Morocco and Angola. Table 2 shows the main products exported from Brazil to these four countries in 2018.

Table 2 – Main Products Exported from Brazil to Nigeria, South Africa, Morocco and Angola (2018).

Product	US\$ Million
Sugar	749.19
Chicken meat	325.03
Tractors	169.01
Buses and other vehicles	148.64
Corn	98.14
Manufactured Products	79.53

Source: Brazil (b). Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services. *Comex Vis: Países Parceiros*. Available at <http://www.mdic.gov.br/comercio-exterior/estatisticas-de-comercio-exterior/comex-vis/frame-pais?>. [Accessed on February 15, 2020]

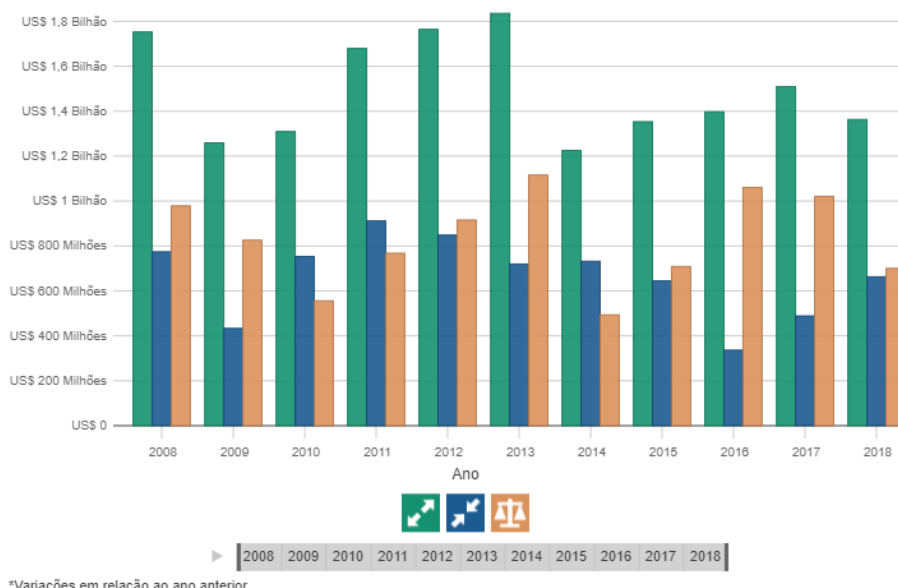
Table 3 – Main Products Imported from Nigeria, South Africa, Morocco and Angola (2018).

Product	US\$
Crude Oil	1.37 billion
Fertilizers	724.6 million
Naphtha	180.22 million
Liquefied petroleum gas	140.28 million
Urea	134.46 million
Coal	86 million

Source: Brazil (b). Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services. *Comex Vis: Países Parceiros*. Available at <http://www.mdic.gov.br/comercio-externo/estatisticas-de-comercio-externo/comex-vis/frame-pais?>. [Accessed February 15, 2020]

Regarding economic relations with South Africa, which is one of Brazil’s main trading partners in Africa and also a member of BRICS, data from the Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services show that Africa South Africa ranked 37th in the ranking of Brazilian exports in 2018. The value of these Brazilian exports to South Africa was US\$ 1.36 billion, which corresponds to 0.57% of total Brazilian exports. With regard to imports, in 2018, South Africa accounted for 0.37% (US\$ 662.94) of imports made by Brazil, ranking 41st in the Brazilian imports ranking (See Brazil (c)). Graphic 2 shows the value of exports, imports and trade balance between Brazil and South Africa, from 2008 to 2018.

Graphic 2 – Trade Brazil - South Africa (2008 – 2018).



Source: Brazil (c). Ministry of Economy, Industry, Foreign Trade and Services. *Comex Vis: South Africa*. Available at <http://www.mdic.gov.br/comercio-externo/estatisticas-de-comercio-externo/comex-vis/frame-pais?pais=zaf>. [Accessed on February 15, 2020]

In light of Graphic 2, it can be seen that trade relations between Brazil and South Africa reached their peak in 2013, with a sharp drop in 2014, growing again year after year between 2015 and 2017. In 2018, there is a new fall, placing trade between the two countries at a level close to that of 2016. One point to note is that throughout the period considered (2008 - 2018) the trade balance is favorable to Brazil and, in 2018, this surplus was US\$ 669.53 million.

From the data presented it can be seen that South Africa is a relevant trading partner for Brazil in the African context, but not so significant when one looks at the perspective of Brazilian global trade.

Regarding Brazilian defense interests, it is worth noting since the first decade of the 21st century, Brazil has had strategic defense interests, established in two documents: The National Defense Policy (PND, in Portuguese) and the National Defense Strategy (END, in Portuguese). These documents, in their various editions,³ pointed to Atlantic Africa as an area of Brazilian strategic interest inserted in the so-called “Brazilian strategic environment”. Cooperation in the area of defense and enhancement of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS, in Portuguese) were objectives set out in these documents.

The current Brazilian government is reviewing these documents, but the aforementioned speech by the current Brazilian foreign minister points to several possibilities to increase cooperation in the area of defense, which will probably be present in the next editions of National Defense Policy and National Defense Strategy. The main points that can be drawn from that discourse point out that Brazil has an interest in increasing defense cooperation, not only by exporting military material to African countries, but also by developing joint technology and training human resources for the armed forces of African countries. The minister also highlighted the importance of Brazil’s participation in the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as efforts to consolidate the Atlantic portion of the African continent as an area of peace and stability (Brazil, 2019). In this sense, there seems to be a return to what was initiated and put into practice in the two terms of President Lula.

It is worth noting the minister's speech is in line with the content of the latest editions of the National Defense Policy (PND) and the National Defense Strategy (END). The PND (Brazil, 2016b: 5), the country's highest level document on defense issues, establishes, as in its previous editions that the area of priority defense interest is the “Brazilian strategic environment” that includes, among other regions, the South Atlantic and West African

³ National Defense Policy – See Brazil, 1996, 2005, 2012b and 2016b.
National Defense Strategy – See Brazil, 2008, 2012a and 2016a.

countries. Based on the PND, the END (Brazil, 2016a: 33-40) defines the strategic defense actions, among which the following are evidenced: increase participation in military exercises with other countries; preserve at-risk nationals and safeguard Brazilian assets, resources and interests abroad, including the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC); increase the relationship with the defense sector of other countries; increase naval presence actions in support of diplomacy actions; intensify measures to foster mutual trust and international security; intensify defense exchanges and agreements with other countries.

In summary, the official discourse of the current Brazilian government favors both increased trade relations and increased cooperation in the area of defense with Africa. This last dimension of cooperation is clearly focused on the countries of the Atlantic portion of the African continent.

Thus, it can be inferred that the focus of Brazil's strategic interests, even with the setbacks highlighted here, is focused on the economic dimension and, secondarily, includes the dimension of the defense area. It can also be inferred that there is no consistent state policy for the African continent. Basically, economic interests are conditioned by government policies that change with each election. The exception is, as explained, for the defense area, which has conditioning documents that guide actions in this sector, including interests and actions related to Africa, particularly in its Atlantic portion.

China's Strategic Interests in Atlantic Africa

In this section the Chinese strategic interests towards Africa are highlighted, particularly with the countries of the Atlantic portion of the African continent and, as in the previous section, the focus will be on the dimensions related to the economy and defense, having as a temporal frame the period between 2003 and 2019.

The 21st century began with China emerging as an economic, military and political power. The continuous and consistent economic and military growth of the People's Republic of China has altered power relations in the international system. Second largest global economy in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and second largest defense budget on the planet, China has been playing an active role in economic forums and international security issues.

With regard to foreign trade, Chinese export growth is staggering reaching US\$ 2.263.33 billion in 2017 (China, 2018a), which places China in the position of largest exporter in the world. The performance of Chinese exports and their high share of GDP are the basis of sustaining the country's rapid economic growth and receive priority government treatment in its trade and investment policies.

Armed with more than US\$ 3.1 trillion in reserves (China, 2018b) and with recurring trade surpluses, China has been lending large infrastructure loans to countries that had previously been borrowers and financiers almost exclusively from the International Monetary Fund. (IMF), the World Bank, the United States, Japan, and the European States.

In this context, Africa has become, year after year, a source of products that feed the Chinese economy and also a destination for Chinese exports. To feed its economy with commodities sourced from African countries, China invests in those countries' infrastructure to optimize the supply chain of natural resources needed to maintain Chinese growth.

A milestone of China-Africa relations was the creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000. FOCAC aims to enable the “equal consultation, enhancing understanding, expanding consensus, strengthening friendship and promoting cooperation” between China and the African countries (see FOCAC). By July 2019, FOCAC was attended by 53 African countries. Through FOCAC were negotiated the exemption of Chinese import taxes for numerous products from African countries, the financial incentive for Chinese industries to invest in Africa, large loans, agricultural technology teaching; and scholarships in China.

In 2013 China issued a White Paper on trade and cooperation relations with Africa. The *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation White Paper* clearly points out China's interest in deepening these relations with African countries.

In tune with the changes in the international environment, China and African countries are, within the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), continuing to deepen the new type of China-Africa strategic partnership, vigorously advancing economic and trade cooperation, and actively exploring a common path that reflects both China's and Africa's realities.

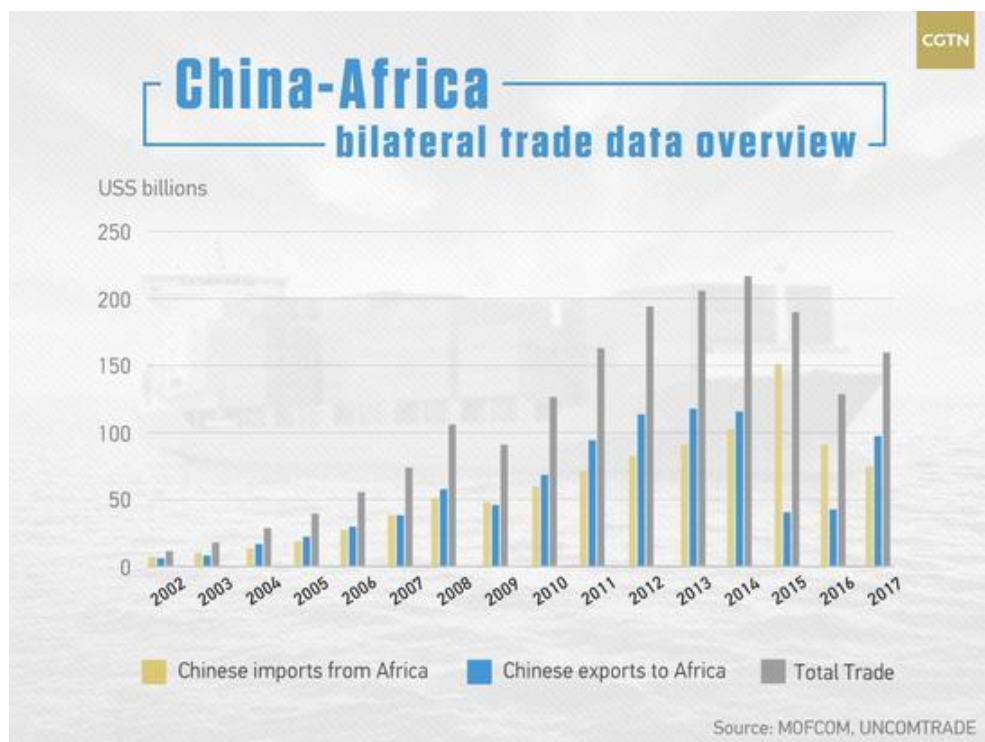
China has become Africa's largest trade partner, and Africa is now China's major import source, second largest overseas construction project contract market and fourth largest investment destination (China, 2013).

Consistent with this objective, the China-Africa trade grew from US\$ 11.5 million in 2002 to more than US\$ 200 billion in 2018. With respect to Chinese loans, from 2000 to 2017, the Chinese government, banks and contractors extended US\$ 143 billion in loans to African countries. In 2016, for example, Beijing lent more than US\$ 30 billion to African countries (See China Africa Research Initiative - CARI).

It is worth noting the trend is for the Chinese investment in Africa to increase within the framework of “One Belt, One Road,” a Chinese initiative which joins the continental economic belt and a maritime road to promote cooperation and interconnectivity from Eurasia to Africa (World Economic Group, 2019).

According to China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the statistics from the General Administration of Customs of China, in 2018, shows that China's total import and export volume with Africa was US\$ 204.19 billion. China's exports to Africa were US\$ 104.91 billion, and China's imports from Africa were US\$ 99.28 billion, and the Chinese surplus was US\$ 5.63 billion (China, MOFCOM, 2018).

Graphic 3 – China's trade with Africa (2002 – 2017).



Source: Chinanews.Com. China-Africa in numbers: trade ties. Available at <http://www.ecns.cn/news/economy/2018-09-04/detail-ifyxpqun1875058.shtml>. [Accessed on July 7, 2019]

In 2017, China's total imports and exports with Africa were US\$ 170.64 billion. Table 4 shows China's main trading partners that year.

Table 4 – China's main African trading partners in 2017.

Rank	Country	Chinese Imports (US\$ Billion)	Chinese Exports (US\$ Billion)	Total Trade (US\$ Billion)
1	South Africa	24.38	14.80	39.18
2	Angola	20.70	2.25	22.95
3	Nigeria	1.62	12.15	13.77
4	Egypt	1.34	9.48	10.82
5	Algeria	0.45	6.78	7.23

Source: China. *China Statistical Yearbook 2018. Value of Imports and Exports by Country (Region) of Origin / Destination*. Available at <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2018/indexeh.htm>. [Accessed on July 10, 2019]

As noted in Table 4, South Africa, Angola and Nigeria were China's top three trading partners in Africa in 2017.

For the purposes of this study it is relevant to identify which are the main products traded between China and Africa. In this sense, trade with sub-Saharan African countries, that is where China's three main trading partners in Africa are, is a good case for identifying exported and imported products in this trade relationship.

Table 5 – Main Products Exported from China to Sub-Saharan Africa (2016).

Product	US\$ Billion
Manufactured articles	27.8
Machinery and transport equipment	22.8
Processed mineral and metals	10.3
Chemicals	4.6
Agricultural commodities & livestock	1.8
Fuels	0.7
Total	68.0

Source: Chinanews.Com. China-Africa in numbers: trade ties. Available at <http://www.ecns.cn/news/economy/2018-09-04/detail-ifyxpqun1875058.shtml>. [Accessed on July 7, 2019]

Table 6 – Main Products Exported from Sub-Saharan Africa to China (2016).

Product	US\$ Billion
Fuels	21.2
Processed mineral and metals	11.3
Crude minerals, metalliferous ores and metal scraps	8.1
Crude Materials	3.7
Agricultural commodities & livestock	1.2
Chemicals	0.4
Total	45.9

Source: Chinanews.Com. China-Africa in numbers: trade ties. Available at <http://www.ecns.cn/news/economy/2018-09-04/detail-ifyxpqun1875058.shtml>. [Accessed on July 7, 2019]

Tables 5 and 6 show that most of Africa's exports to China are comprised of fuels, minerals, metals, and other commodities, including a small amount of agricultural products. China exports a range of manufactured goods, including machinery and transport equipment, processed minerals and chemicals to Sub-Saharan Africa countries.

According to the Comparative Study of BRICS Investment Agreements with African Countries (Garcia, 2016), the search for raw materials has warmed the mining, energy and oil sectors, which are the ones that concentrate the largest Chinese investment.

In summary, it can be seen that the relationship is between exports of manufactured goods from China and commodities from African countries.

Regarding foreign policy and defense issues, China's policy of non-interventionism appears to be being reshaped. According to Chris Alden and Laura Barber (2018) China is

taking a posture of engaging in African security issues through the participation of its armed forces in UN missions on that continent.

Chris Alden and Zheng Yixiao (2018) point to some of the factors that led to this change in China's stance on African issues: the negative risks to China's image arising from the Chinese government's association with dictatorial and corrupt regimes; the risks to China's investments in countries with unstable regimes; and the security risks of Chinese citizens working in African countries plagued by political instability, violence and, ultimately, civil war. In this sense, it should be noted that by the end 2016, there were nearly 230,000 Chinese workers in Africa. More than 60% of them were in Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Kenya (Bhatia, 2018).

It can be inferred that the policy of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of other States is no longer a synonym of noninvolvement or indifference on the part of China. Thus, while nonintervention remains one of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" that has guided Chinese foreign policy since the 1950s, it is clear that China is taking a broader and more flexible approach to its participation in issues of security of its African partners. This participation takes place through peace missions under the aegis of the United Nations.

It can be seen that China has adjusted its stance towards Africa in line with the assessment of the expansion of its economic interests, as well as its increasing military projection capacity. China's current stance on Africa is in line with both China's economic and trade interests and China's growing responsibilities as an emerging global power. China's participation in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden epitomizes this new stance. This mission under the aegis of the United Nations, which started in 2008 and is still active, counts on the significant participation of naval assets of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) (Alden & Yixiao, 2017).

Land operations in Sudan, Mali, Liberia and Congo also highlight China's involvement in African security issues, in line with its economic, trade interests and growing responsibility as a global power. In this context, it is worth noting, since 2013, China has been the permanent member of the UN with the largest number of military personnel engaged in United Nations peacekeeping missions. As of May 31, 2019, more than 2.00 Chinese military personnel were participating in UN peacekeeping missions on the African continent (South Sudan, Darfur, Mali, and Democratic Republic of Congo) (See United Nations Peacekeeping). At the same time, China has been expanding the number of African countries with which it has defense cooperation agreements. Sudan, Tanzania, Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia, for example, are States that have military agreements with China.

In short, China has well-defined strategic interests in Africa, both in the economic and military dimensions. It is clear from the continuity and growing engagement of China in Africa, that there is a state policy, subject to cyclical changes, but not to the voluntarisms of alternating governments, as is the case of Brazil.

Thus, it can be inferred that China's strategic interests in Africa are neither discontinuous nor subject to a setback, and are present by a clear trade policy based on well-defined products that China needs to import from diverse and safe sources, as well as products exported to Africa for competitive prices, as well as infrastructure development projects that enable this trade. All of this is reinforced by the growing capacity for military power projection that is manifested in defense cooperation agreements with several African countries, as well as the military presence inserted in peace missions under the aegis of the United Nations.

Identifying Conflicting Interests

In this section the Chinese and Brazilian interests raised in the previous two sections are confronted with the purpose of verifying if there is an overlap between them.

Comparing the trade relations between Brazil and China with Africa, it is clear that China has a much greater weight than Brazil in these relations. In 2018, for example, China's trade with Africa was US\$ 204.19 billion while Brazil's was US\$ 14.77 billion, which means, China's Trade with Africa is almost fourteen times more than Brazil's.

This same disproportion or asymmetry is reflected in the comparison of Brazil and China's relations with Atlantic Africa. Among Brazil's six main trading partners, four are in the Atlantic portion of the African continent: Nigeria, South Africa, Morocco, and Angola. Brazil's trade with these four countries in 2018 was US\$ 6.39 billion (See Table 1).

Among the top six products exported from Brazil to these countries were tractors (US\$ 169.0 million), transportation vehicles (US\$ 148.6 million) and manufactured products (US\$ 79.5 million) (See Table 2). Regarding the products imported by Brazil from these four countries, oil and liquefied gas stand out (See Table 3).

Looking at China we see that its main trading partners in Africa are South Africa (US\$ 39.2 billion), Angola (US\$ 22.9 billion), and Nigeria (US\$ 13.7). China's trade with these three countries in 2018 was \$ 75.90 billion (See Table 4). The main products exported by China to these countries are manufactured goods (US\$ 27.8 billion) and machinery and transport equipment (US\$ 22.8 billion) (See Table 5). The main products imported by China from these three countries are fuels (US\$ 21.2 billion) (See Table 6). It is important to highlight that for

China, Africa is the second largest source of crude oil imports. More than 22% of all oil imported from China comes from the African countries (Bathia, 2018).

A comparison of these figures shows that the main trading partners of Brazil and China in Africa are basically the same and are in Atlantic Africa. However, the Chinese trade with these Atlantic Africa countries (US\$ 75.90 billion) is almost twelve times more than Brazil's (US\$ 6.39 billion).

With regard to foreign direct investment from Brazil and China in Africa, the asymmetry is even greater. Since the corruption scandals involving Brazilian companies in Africa, funded by the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES in Portuguese), the Brazilian Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa has fallen to practically "zero". On the other hand, the Chinese FDI has been on a consistent growth trajectory. During the period 2007-16, China was the third largest foreign investor in Africa, with US\$ 64.5 billion as the total capital invested, after UAE (US\$ 73 billion) and the UK (US\$ 67.7 billion) (Bathia, 2018).

In summary, China is much more relevant to African countries than Brazil, especially to its main trading partners on that continent, which are in Atlantic Africa and are also Brazil's main trading partners on that continent.

Brazil, however, has certain advantages: the Brazilian FDI generates jobs for the African people; and there are historical and cultural links, which bring together the African countries of Brazil, especially the members of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

But it should be noted that Brazil lacks a consistent foreign, economic and trade policy for Africa, that is, a policy with clear objectives that would guide its interests and relations with Africa. The country has already had a policy that aligned the increased relationship with African countries in order to win the votes of these countries in its project to ascend to the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member. The appreciation of CPLP, ZOPACAS, commercial expansion and investments in Africa were part of this policy. Disenchantment with the UN reform project and the political and economic crisis experienced by Brazil since mid-2010 were reflected in relations with Africa. The exception is in the area of defense, in which the Brazilian State seeks a relationship based on its interests expressed in its National Defense Policy and its National Defense Strategy. The pursuit of greater exchange and interoperability with the countries of Atlantic Africa, as well as actions to avoid militarization of the South Atlantic are interests that have become strategic objectives of the Brazilian state.

Comparing the interests of Brazil and China in the military field, it can be seen that China's actions in Atlantic Africa are not in conflict with Brazil's interests and defense objectives in Africa. Chinese interests in this field are guided by economic guidelines and the

military agreements with African countries basically consist of the sale of military equipment, as well as some kind of training. However, the protection of its working citizens on the African continent is something new in the relations with some African countries. In this sense, it should be noted that by the end of 2016, there were nearly 230,000 Chinese workers in Africa. More than 60% of them were in Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Kenya (Bhatia, 2018).

As stated, Brazilian defense interests in Atlantic Africa are centered on the security of the South Atlantic without militarization of the South Atlantic by powers outside the region. In this context, it is noted that China may extend its naval presence to the South Atlantic waters in the future because of the criminal activity taking place on the African Atlantic coast, especially in the Gulf of Guinea.

In short, the trade interests of Brazil and China are those that have some potential for conflict and dispute, particularly products exported to their main trading partners in Africa. To meet China's numbers, in the African portion where Brazil concentrates its main trade interests, Brazil must have competitive products and also explore forums where the possibility of avoiding or minimizing conflicting trade interests with China could be managed in favorable ways for Brazil.

BRICS as a Forum to Harmonize Interests of Brazil and China in Atlantic Africa

As was pointed out before, the BRICS does not seek to set up any common political or security architecture. Moreover, its members do not have the nearest boundaries, their economies are not similar, two of them have territorial disputes, and there is no common ideology between them. However, the point to be highlighted on BRICS is that its purpose was clear from its inception: “to form a convenient and pragmatic 21st century relationship that pools the influence of its members in order to achieve objectives agreed to by all five countries” (World Economic Forum, 2017).

BRICS' first decade was a successful effort to identify areas of cooperation, mainly in financial and economic issues. However, as a group, BRICS has an informal character. There is no “Charter of BRICS”, though the institutionalization of the group is increasing year by year, ranging from chief of state and ministerial meetings to academic and working groups. The New Development Bank (NDB) and the Contingency Reserve Agreement (CRA) are two remarkable achievements of this institutionalization process.

In the last 11 years, 11 Summit meetings have taken place, with the presence of all the leaders of BRICS members (See Brazil (e)):

- 1st Summit: Yekaterinburg, Russia, June 2009;

- 2nd Summit: Brasília, Brazil, April 2010;
- 3rd Summit: Sanya, China, April 2011;
- 4th Summit: New Delhi, India, March 2012;
- 5th Summit: Durban, South Africa, March 2013;
- 6th Summit: Fortaleza, Brazil, July 2014;
- 7th Summit: Ufa, Russia, July 2015;
- 8th Summit: Benaulim (Goa), India, October 2016;
- 9th Summit: Xiamen, China, September 2017;
- 10th Summit: Johannesburg, South Africa, July 2018; and
- 11th Summit: Brasília, Brazil, November 2019.

Since the first summit in 2009, BRICS has significantly expanded its activities in many fields, but it was the financial field that guaranteed major visibility to it. The BRICS forum addressed many proposals to reform global financial governance structures, in line with the increase in the relative weight of emerging countries in the world economy. In the last few years, BRICS cooperation led to the launching of its first two institutions: the already mentioned New Development Bank (NDB) and the Reserve Contingent Arrangement (RCA).

Regarding relations with Africa, it is worth highlighting the fifth summit held in Durban, South Africa, in 2013. That summit was held on the theme of “BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialization”. At that summit, BRICS heads of State met with African leaders in the session “Unlocking Africa’s Potential: BRICS and Africa Cooperation on Infrastructure”. This was the first BRICS external involvement with South African Union countries and has shown that the BRICS will increase engagement and cooperation with African countries (Damico, 2017).

However, despite these advances, when one looks at the interests of BRICS members in Africa, one realizes that each has its own competitive strategy on the continent. According to Lechini (2012), the BRICS action in Africa presents logic of dispute for natural resources and access to markets.

In the case of China, in particular, these relationships are similar to the model already known by African countries for commodity exports and imports of low and medium technology manufactured goods.

In addition, there is competition for markets in Africa. Of all the BRICS, China is the best positioned country in this competition. China’s trade and investment with African countries exceeds that of all other BRICS members. Regarding Brazil, the numbers presented in the previous sections show this asymmetry. However, should the other BRICS countries compete

with China for African markets, it is reasonable to infer that trade disputes will arise. In the case of Brazil this cannot be ignored, given that Brazil's main trading partners are also China's main trading partners.

These disputes may be referred for resolution within the World Trade Organization (WTO), or in arbitration centers such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the International Center for Dispute Resolution (ICDR).

With regard to The World Trade Organization it is worth remembering that the WTO operates a global system of trade rules, acts as a forum for negotiating trade agreements, and settles trade disputes between its members. The WTO goal “is to ensure that trade flows smoothly, predictably and freely as possible” (WTO, About WTO).

In November 2019, the WTO had 164 members representing 98 percent of world trade (WTO, About WTO). Regarding trade disputes, since 1995, 590 disputes have been issued (WTO, Dispute Settlement).

Regarding the BRICS, it is worth asking: How many of these disputes were played by the BRICS members?

Table 7 presents the number of disputes in which BRICS members were involved as complainants or as respondents or even as a third party interested in a dispute with other countries.

Table 7 – Disputes involving the BRICS at WTO.

	Disputes by BRICS Countries (number of cases)		
	As Complainant	As Respondent	As Third Party
Brazil	33	16	141
Russia	8	9	72
India	24	32	160
China	21	44	173
South Africa	0	5	21

Source: Prepared by the author based on data extracted from the World Trade Organization. See WTO. *Disputes by member*. Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_by_country_e.htm. [Accessed on November 4, 2019]

In light of Table 7 it is noted that Russia and South Africa have little participation in disputes, either as complainants or respondents. On the other hand, Brazil, India and China are involved in numerous controversy cases, whether complainants, respondents or third parties.

In this context, the question is: what is the number and type of disputes between the five BRICS countries in the WTO?

Table 8 – Disputes between the BRICS under the WTO.

		As Complainant				
		Brazil	Russia	India	China	South Africa
As Respondent	Brazil			DS 229		
	Russia					
	India	DS 579				
	China	DS 568				
	South Africa	DS 439		DS 168		

Source: Prepared by the author based on data extracted from the World Trade Organization. See WTO. *Disputes by member*. Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_by_country_e.htm. [Accessed on November 4, 2019]

Based on Table 8 it can be observed that:

- Of the five disputes between BRICS members, three have Brazil as complainant (DS 579, 568 and 439). These three complainants from Brazil have India (DS 579), China (DS 568) and South Africa (DS 439) as respondents.
- The other two disputes between the BRICS have India as complainant (DS 168 and 229) and Brazil (DS 229) and South Africa (DS 168) as respondents.
- Russia is the only one of the BRICS without any kind of dispute with the other BRICS, under the WTO.

Appendix A summarizes the content of these disputes between the BRICS under the WTO.

The point to note is that there are few cases between the BRICS countries under the WTO, and none of these cases have been resolved. The current status of the five DS presented above shows that none of them had a mutually agreed solution (See Appendix A). In this context, it is also worth asking: “why” and “if” are the BRICS seeking another organization as an option to arbitrate eventual commercial disputes that may arise between its five members?

According to the World Trade Center Mumbai Research Initiative (WTC Mumbai), in the *Engineering the BRICS Engagement* study, the BRICS countries “are keen to have a common BRICS Arbitration platform for easier and faster dispute resolution” (WTC Mumbai, 2016: 13).

The same study points out that among the key achievements of the BRICS is the perception that an arbitration center of its own would be welcome:

Realizing the importance of inter-state arbitration, the BRICS nations are striving to develop their own arbitration centers to mediate in cases of disputes using mutually acceptable business and commerce principles. In October 2015, the BRICS Dispute Resolution Center Shanghai was set

up with the support of China Law Society and other members of BRICS legal community to accept arbitration cases from commercial parties of the member countries (WTC Mumbai, 2016: 2)

In this context it is possible to understand why, on October 14, 2015, the BRICS countries established the BRICS Dispute Resolution Center (BDRC) in Shanghai, China, on the sidelines of the second BRICS Legal Forum.

This Center was established under the support of China Law Society and other members of BRICS legal community, and according the official site of the “The BRICS Dispute Resolution Center Shanghai”:

The BRICS Dispute Resolution Center Shanghai accepts all arbitration cases among Commercial Parties from BRICS Countries, providing professional service of alternative dispute resolution. The BRICS Dispute Resolution Center Shanghai works actively to promote and drive forward the amiable cooperation and sound progress of finance, investment and trade among BRICS countries (See Shanghai International Arbitration Center. *BRICS Dispute Resolution Center Shanghai*).

This is a center that can be used to address potential disputes that may arise in the not too distant future between BRICS members. The prospective scenario of disputes arising from the search for markets for Brazilian and Chinese products in the African continent would be inserted in this scenario.

However, it should be recalled that the statements resulting from the 10th and 11th BRICS Summits – respectively the Johannesburg Declaration (July 27, 2018), and the Brasília Declaration (November 14, 2019) – both expressed the BRICS members commitment to the WTO, but also expressed their concerns about the future of that organization. In both declarations the concerns about the impasse of Dispute Settlement Mechanism, as well as the necessity of WTO reform were clearly spelled out:

We recall that the WTO Dispute Settlement System is a cornerstone of the multilateral trading system and is designed to enhance security and predictability in international trade. We note with concern the impasse in the selection process for new Appellate Body Members that can paralyse the dispute settlement system and undermine the rights and obligations of all Members. We, therefore, urge all Members to engage constructively to address this challenge as a matter of priority (Johannesburg Declaration, See Brazil, 2018).

We recognize the importance of necessary WTO reform, including in the lead up to the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the Organization and its capacity to better address current and future challenges. [...]. (Brasília Declaration, See Brazil, 2019).

We emphasize the importance of the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism, with its two-stage binding adjudication system. [...] We underline the urgency to overcome the impasse in the appointment of members to the Appellate Body and call upon all members to agree to initiate the Appellate Body selection process promptly (Brasília Declaration, See Brazil, 2019).

The point to be noted is that a dispute resolution mechanism that was born aimed at resolving disputes between the BRICS has a long way to come to achieving full reality.

Actually, one can even question whether the BRICS Dispute Resolution Center is not just a way to increase pressure for WTO reform. However, it is worth remembering the history of the BRICS summits indicates that the spaces and themes in which cooperation is increased could advance in a fast way.

Final Remarks

Brazil's strategic interests in Africa, particularly in its Atlantic portion, are centered on trade relations, which involve some direct investment in infrastructure in some African countries, as well as the eventual sale of defense material. This research allowed us to infer that Brazil does not have a consistent state policy for Africa. Brazil's relations with Africa oscillate with each new Brazilian government, as well as with the Brazilian economic conjuncture. The common point among the policies for Africa of the last four Brazilian governments was the search for trade relations that preferably generate a surplus trade balance.

Despite this political and strategic myopia of Brazilian governments, Brazil has very favorable intangible capital in its relations with African countries. This is due to two main factors: cultural ties - especially with the CPLP countries - and non-interventionism.

Although these two factors are a differential that favors Brazil, they, by themselves, are not enough to boost trade relations. Clear strategic interests and objectives to achieve, as well as competitive products and attractive credit lines, backed by a steadily state policy, are key factors in enhancing Brazil's relations with Africa.

Analysis of Brazil's trade with Africa, particularly as its Atlantic portion, has highlighted the major trading partners of Brazil in that portion of the African continent. Of the six main Brazilian trading partners, four are in Atlantic Africa, and relations with South Africa, also a member of the BRICS, should be highlighted. This relationship with South Africa is harmonious and has no obstacles to growth, and this can be increased through the BRICS.

The research also identified that China's strategic interests in Africa, including its Atlantic portion, are backed by a state policy aimed at achieving its economic growth through access to energy inputs and resources, including the development of infrastructure in the countries that supply these inputs and resources, as well as the export of Chinese products. The non-intervention in the internal affairs of its trading partners, no longer confused with indifference, is the new face of Chinese foreign policy towards Africa. Taken together, the virtuous circle of Chinese economic development supports the integrated action of foreign policy to realize its strategic interests. In Africa this true state policy seeks to bring it closer to all African countries, supported mainly by FOAC, and points to a tendency to increase, year

after year, its relationship and relevance to African countries, including those in Atlantic Africa such as South Africa, Nigeria and Angola.

The comparison of the interests of Brazil and China showed that there is an overlap between the main trading partners of the two countries, as well as the much smaller Brazilian economic relevance for these countries, when compared to China. South Africa, Nigeria and Angola, countries of Atlantic Africa, are both suppliers of inputs to the economies of Brazil and China, as well as destination of competing products from these two countries. However, the scale of China's trade with these countries overshadows the relevance of Brazil. The same is true of direct investments in infrastructure. Currently Brazilian FDI in these countries is almost nil and China's FDI is growing year after year. In order to expand trade relations with these countries, in sectors where there is competition from Brazilian and Chinese products, Brazil will need to have extremely competitive products in terms of cost, financing and quality.

In the military field, it has been found that, to date, Brazilian and Chinese interests in Africa are not conflicting. Brazil remains a relevant partner for Atlantic African countries such as Namibia, Angola and South Africa. The sale of Chinese war material to African countries does not interfere with Brazil's strategic goals of preventing militarization of the South Atlantic by exogenous countries to the region.

Carrying out this context of Brazilian and Chinese interests, where there is some competition for markets in Africa and, considering that the current conjuncture largely favors China in competitive matters, we should look to forums that are configured as opportunities to harmonize or minimize these issues.

BRICS presents itself as an option for this. The BRICS' eleven Summit meetings points out that the cooperation opportunities in many fields are becoming reality. As stated, since 2015 there is the BRICS Dispute Resolution Center Shanghai. This center was designed to arbitrate disputes between commercial parties from BRICS Countries. However, as of this writing, it has not yet been used.

The BRICS meetings show that broad opportunities for cooperation have been explored and realized. See the case of the New Development Bank and the Contingency Reserve Agreement. Moreover, while not being the object of study of this research, Russia, India and, of course, South Africa also have interests in Africa and there will probably be those that are conflicting. In this regard, from a proactive perspective, Brazil should be alert to windows of opportunity at upcoming summit meetings, including the one to be held in November 2019 in Brasilia, under the motto "BRICS: economic growth for an innovative future". Further

institutionalization of the BRICS Dispute Resolution Center Shanghai could begin to be articulated at this or the forthcoming BRICS summit meetings.

Brazilian Foreign Office of the new Brazilian government must assess the BRICS' opportunities and inherent limitations, and once having defined the Brazilian strategic interests, should handle the present opportunities in BRICS forum in advantage of these interests.

In summary, BRICS forum opens a space and an opportunity for the identification of convergences and consultation regarding various topics. This feature of the BRICS forum should be explored to resolve potential trade conflicts arising from market disputes in the African continent, particularly in Atlantic Africa, which is one of the areas of strategic commercial interest and defense of the Brazilian State, even though most of the Brazilian political leaderships have not yet realized this.

In this sense, the argument put forward in this article appears to be valid: insofar as relations between China and Brazil with African countries mature and develop, it will increase the possibility of conflicting interests, especially in the dispute over markets in those countries. However, the BRICS has the space to minimize these potential conflicting interests and even institutionalize an arbitration center for its members. In this sense, the issue needs more research and some questions easily rise up: How exactly will the BRICS Dispute Resolution Center work? How much will it cost to keep an arbitration center in operation for which demand has not yet been presented? Issues like these are promising in terms of future academic research and point out to the dynamics of future BRICS relations as a group. Finally, it is hoped that this article may also contribute to the fostering of new academic research related to the BRICS.

Appendix A – Summary of the content of disputes between the BRICS under the WTO.

DS 168	
Complainant:	India.
Respondent:	South Africa.
Agreements cited (as cited in request for consultations):	Art. 2, 3, 6, 12, 15 Anti-dumping. Art. I, VI Services (GATS).
Consultations requested:	1 April 1999.
On 1 April 1999, India requested consultations with South Africa in respect of a recommendation for the imposition of definitive anti-dumping duties by the South African Board on Tariffs and Trade (BTT), contained in its Report No. 3799, dated 3 October 1997, on the import of certain pharmaceutical products from India	
Current Status: Complainant requests consultations with respondent, no dispute panel established, and no withdrawal or mutually agreed solution notified.	
Source: World Trade Organization (WTO). Disputes. <i>DS168: South Africa – Anti-Dumping Duties on Certain Pharmaceutical Products from India</i> . Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds168_e.htm . [Accessed on November 4, 2019]	

DS 229	
Complainant:	India.
Respondent:	Brazil.
Agreements cited (as cited in request for consultations):	Art. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 12, 17.6(i), 18.3, 18.4 Anti-dumping. Art. VI, X GATT 1994. Art. XVI Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization.
Consultations requested:	9 April 2001.
On 9 April 2001, India requested consultations with Brazil concerning: the determination by the Brazilian government to continue to impose anti-dumping duties on jute bags and bags made of jute yarn from India, based on an allegedly forged document regarding dumping margin attributed to a non-existing Indian company; [...].	
Current Status: Complainant requests consultations with respondent, no dispute panel established, and no withdrawal or mutually agreed solution notified.	
Source: World Trade Organization (WTO). Disputes. <i>DS229: Brazil – Anti-Dumping Duties on Jute Bags from India</i> . Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds229_e.htm . [Accessed on November 4, 2019]	

DS 439	
Complainant:	Brazil.
Respondent:	South Africa.
Agreements cited (as cited in request for consultations):	Art. 2, 2.4, 3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.8, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.9, 6.10, 7.1, 12.2.1, Appendix II Anti-dumping.
Consultations requested:	21 June 2012.
On 21 June 2012, Brazil requested consultations with South Africa with regard to the preliminary determination and the imposition of provisional anti-dumping duties by South Africa on frozen meat of fowls of the species <i>Gallus Domesticus</i> , whole bird and boneless cuts, originating in or imported from Brazil.	
Current Status: Complainant requests consultations with respondent, no dispute panel established, and no withdrawal or mutually agreed solution notified.	
Source: World Trade Organization (WTO). Disputes. <i>DS439: South Africa – Anti-Dumping Duties on Frozen Meat of Fowls from Brazil</i> . Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds439_e.htm . [Accessed on November 4, 2019]	

DS 568	
Complainant:	Brazil.
Respondent:	China.
Agreements cited (as cited in request for consultations):	Art. 4.2 Agriculture. Art. II:1(a), II:1(b), X:1, X:2, X:3(a), XI:1, XIII:2, XIII:3(b), XIX:1 GATT 1994. Art. 1.2, 1.3, 2.2(a), 3.2, 3.3 Import Licensing. Art. 2.1, 3.1, 4.1(a), 4.1(c), 4.2(a), 4.2(b), 4.2(c), 5.1, 7.1 Safeguards. Part I, para. 1.2 Protocol of Accession.
Consultations requested:	16 October 2018.
On 16 October 2018, Brazil requested consultations with China concerning (i) a safeguard measure imposed by China on imported sugar, (ii) China's administration of its tariff-rate quota for sugar and (iii) China's import licensing system for out-of-quota sugar.	
Current Status: Complainant requests consultations with respondent, no dispute panel established, and no withdrawal or mutually agreed solution notified.	
Source: World Trade Organization (WTO). Disputes. <i>DS568: China – Certain Measures Concerning Imports of Sugar</i> . Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds568_e.htm . [Accessed on November 4, 2019]	

DS 579	
Complainant:	Brazil.
Respondent:	India.
Agreements cited (as cited in request for consultations):	Art. 3.2, 3.3, 6.3, 7.2(b), 8, 9.1, 10.1 Agriculture.
Consultations requested:	27 February 2019.
<p>On 27 February 2019, Brazil requested consultations with India concerning domestic support allegedly provided by India in favor of agricultural producers of sugarcane and sugar (domestic support measures), as well as all export subsidies that India allegedly provides for sugar and sugarcane (export subsidy measures).</p>	
<p>Current Status: Panelists have been selected according to procedures laid down in Dispute Settlement Understanding Article 8. Panel report has not been adopted or appealed, and no withdrawal or mutually agreed solution notified.</p>	
<p>Source: World Trade Organization (WTO). Disputes. <i>DS579: India – Measures Concerning Sugar and Sugarcane</i>. Available at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds579_e.htm. [Accessed on November 4, 2019]</p>	

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