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Table of Contents

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and Possible Repercussions to BRICS and Brazil: Facing Complexity under Uncertainty.....	1–22
<i>Sabrina Evangelista Medeiros and Laura Martucci Benvenuto</i>	
Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Geopolitical Challenges.....	23–44
<i>Pablo Ibañez</i>	
BRICS at the United Nations: An Analytical Model.....	45–66
<i>Marianna Albuquerque & Hugo Bras Martins da Costa</i>	
International Relations Theory and the BRICS Phenomenon.....	67–82
<i>Alexander Sergunin, Valery Konyshov and Gao Fei</i>	
Russia, BRICS and Cyber Power: Evoking Synergies under Conjectures Of Deviation	83–97
<i>Danielle Jacon Ayres Pinto, Larlecianne Piccoli and Riva Sobrado de Freitas</i>	
Brazil and China Interests in Atlantic Africa: Convergences, Divergences and Opportunities for Cooperation Inside the BRICS Forum Framework.....	98–132
<i>Marcos Valle Machado da Silva</i>	
Brazilian New Foreign Policy and Implications Within BRICS: A Discourse Analysis	133–152
<i>Ana Luiza Bravo e Paiva, Cintiene Sandes Monfredo Mendes and Victor Carneiro Corrêa Vieira</i>	

The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and Possible Repercussions to BRICS and Brazil: Facing Complexity under Uncertainty

Sabrina Evangelista Medeiros¹
Laura Martucci Benvenuto²

Abstract

This paper focuses on the study of the Belt and Road Initiative and its eventual impacts on the BRICS project, especially regarding the potential logistical integration it evokes. In this sense, the initiative is very open to the inclusion of several countries that are willing to adapt to the models of cooperation and financing means that China proposes. The objective is to estimate, observing the main routes of the initiative, possible impacts on the BRICS development and corresponding ties. The scope of the initiative and its effect in South America is also the subject of this article, although taking an off-the-land route.

At this point, we wish to observe the nature of this Chinese foreign policy and how much it affects China's expansion and its relations with BRICS partners. However, to understand the Chinese motivations of this initiative, a study of the origins of Chinese foreign policy tendencies and the search for a new international identity is essential. Mapping the initiative in light of the BRICS windows of opportunities is the main focus of the paper, that presents the hypothesis of the expansion of the Chinese influence, including within BRICS, based on the route project, but aligned with the historical path it represents.

Keywords: Belt and Road; Brazilian-Chinese Relations

Introduction

Under formal agreements or less makeable frameworks, international organizations may be understood as entities with a proposal to maximize outcomes or objectives for the institutional structure of society—Involving political, economic, social, and educational entities (North, 1991; 1995). While institutions are considered architectures of laws, regulations, codes of conduct and behaviors, it can be said that organizations are the actors, and for there to be institutional change, some elements are needed. For North (1991; 1995), there is change when there is the interaction between institutions and organizations once in competitive scenarios. So, competition is crucial for institutional transformation and pushes organizations to shape processes. What is very important to observe is that, for a change or an institutional paradigm break to occur, the economic progresses are incremental in this process because it is a reflection of the choices of organizations, executives and individuals.

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In addition, as the rules of behavior change, organizations will consequently also be changed. Institutions are being altered and a new matrix arises with different interests. Brazil and China are embedded in several relevant international organizations, and this fact challenges the geopolitical and geo-economic status quo of traditional global standards. In that sense, they had invariably chosen to create their own ways of engagement with other countries.

Governments, companies and organizations need diplomacy to manage the complexities and adversities of the globalized world, so that reducing political conflicts is necessary. The rise of a new governance structure impacts economic interdependence among countries and, according to Wang (2015), the New Silk Road initiative represents this transformation from rule-follower to rule-setter or "Norm-shaper" in China. In addition, in Zhang et al. (2011) we can find an important argument on the types of Chinese triangulation because of its political and trade options: "third-country effects that follow from the fact that China's relation with any two countries is affected by the relation between these countries themselves" (Zhang, Witteloostuijn, Elhorst, 2011).

Therefore, the Chinese movement for the reformulation of its diplomacy and in its institutional structures is impacting the new dimensions of global power in the international system. Once the rules have been met, competition is a factor that arises throughout the negotiation of transactions, especially when it concerns an element of great interest among the parties. Competition and cooperation are fundamental to economic development, being essential elements to innovation and change.

States rely on the commercial interdependence of their allies and if a trade policy is based on a climate of insecurity, it will impact trade reduction and even diplomatic tensions. According to Zhang et al. (2011) during the period 1950-2002, Chinese diplomatic relations and state visits were associated with significant bilateral trade, and this empirical evidence shows how trade diplomacy facilitates trade between nations.

Commercial diplomacy depends on certain factors that contribute to its success, such as: trade and investment promotion; stability in trade relations, influence on the formulation of foreign policy in multinational companies and maintenance of the international peace environment, including in the China case. But according to Moons (2017:8) there are three determinants that can hinder the success of this policy: diplomatic representation; the institutional and cultural distance between the trading partners, and characteristics of the traded product. The growing uncertainty associated with institutional and cultural differences between countries in bilateral transactions relates also to trust, because cooperation and commercial

transactions are linked to the way compromises are established.

Accordingly, economies usually work well when macro-level institutions are compatible with practices at the micro level, and firms can generate pressure on States to adjust national institutions to support institutional changes at the micro level.

The Brazilian-Chinese relations are shrouded by recent commercial bilateralisms and particular regime multilateralisms such as BRICS. Based on the premise, we propose here to gather elements from the Chinese Belt and Road policies to the Chinese-Brazilian relations, including those under BRICS in its possible frameworks. The main argument here proposed is that the look for opportunities for growth and the way the Chinese foreign policy is being designed to attend international pressures, such as those associated with blue growth and development, may reinforce the Chinese influence within a broader and crossed spectrum like BRICS and the various continents and oceans.

The Chinese Foreign Policy

China has been leading institutional arrangements in an innovative way in international relations matters, *becoming* proactive in its foreign policy, and this indicates how the country has sought multilateral arrangements to consolidate its position as a new player in the game of "standards and rules" (Xing, 2017: 40) or, according to Nie (2016) market by its performance guidance. According to Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1988), interdependence refers to situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or actors in different countries (Keohane, 1988; Keohane, Nye, 2002). China has sought institutional balance in the international and national sphere in order to guarantee its favorable transactional costs (He, 2008).

China has conquered its economic growth in accordance with its national interests and the formulation of its foreign policy. These elements emphasize the position of Chinese status quo in the international system as a system of interdependencies through trade and international institutions. This non-zero-sum game, in international relations, is seen as an upholder of the Chinese influence in the international system, as an approach to inter-state interactions where cooperation may be fostered in these relations within the framework.

Thus, cooperation requires a process of policy coordination in which an actor promotes the compatibility of objectives with another actor and this process is facilitated by the principles, rules and procedures of decision-making into convergence in a given area. If States cooperate in pursuing their individual interests, and institutions are developed monitoring

individual conduct in the face of norms and rules, the Chinese approach to those complex interdependencies seems to be an active objective for their foreign policy paradigms.

In this same conceptual line, it is interesting to highlight the role of interdependent hegemony that is based on the expansion of the emerging powers, in order to counterbalance the power of the United States, while creating interdependence within the global order. In the case of China, as pointed out by Xing (2016), the emergence of new actors should not be seen as a result of the US decline, but rather as a result of the natural behavior of the international system. What the author means by this statement is how, within the scope of the BRICS, for example, its success is linked to the effect of economic interdependence and how the bloc set out to create its own norms and rules of engagement independently of the international order. Also, the author evokes the permanent component of conflict, because it is based on security problems and the constant duty to defend the territorial integrity of States. While China is vulnerable in the matter, as history shows, establishing a pattern of development based on cooperation reduces chances of direct conflict, which benefits the alignment of positions.

The conception of power by Keohane (1988) is interpreted as a potential control over the outcomes of the international system. In Complex Interdependence theory, transactional actors become mutually dependent and responsive to one another which makes co-operation a precondition for such outcomes to be transacted safely and effectively. International conflicts are of an economic, commercial and financial nature; negotiation and international mediation are the most commonly used arbitration practices for the settlement of disputes within this theory. Interdependence, therefore, refers to situations in which there are reciprocal effects between countries, even if not symmetrical, and where there are reciprocal costs. Within the system of interdependence, actors must be willing to cooperate and internal and external objectives are interlinked. By this logic, asymmetric interdependence is a reality that arises within authors' theory, in which actors who suffer with limitations have a greater degree of vulnerability and the States that are most effective in projecting power are considered more powerful.

According to Keohane and Nye (2002), global governance concerns the process and institutions that guide and restrict the collective activities of a group. One of the collective activities in which the characteristics of global governance, as defined by the authors, are presented in international trade. The New Silk Road achieves a relevant influence in terms of international trade governance due to its geopolitical and economic extension. In this sense, in addition to the initiative to create a new paradigm on global governance, it is also a reflection

of Chinese domestic and diplomatic policy of maintaining status in the international system.

According to the authors, in *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (1971) and *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (1977), they argue that the international economy has evolved to a stage where power comes to be measured through the use of financial mechanisms and commercial purposes. This argument begins to be used, due to the emergence of non-state actors who played relevant roles in the States, such as decision-making about investments, technology, development, etc.

Therefore, the international actors, even with particular interests, do not annul the existence of having interests in common, in turn permitting cooperation to develop. China, while accumulating capital and international influence, does not leave aside multilateral or bilateral cooperative mechanisms in order to further strengthen ties with other countries—and one of its tools is the New Silk Road.

According to Zhang (2017), the "going out" policy established in the 2000s by China was one of the main steps for the country's international engagement. The author argues that this policy is seen as the result of the concerns of the Chinese State in securing access to natural resources other than in its regional environment, but Chinese and mainly energy companies were the forerunners of this state policy.

The largest Chinese energy company, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), began its oil exploration activities in Africa and Latin America seven years before the policy was formulated and officially announced by the Chinese State. In any case, this policy has helped expand and accumulate capital beyond the regions close to China and the country has become an exporter of liquid capital. Given this scenario of expansion, the New Silk Road brings with it the policy of "going out" to a new strategic level, becoming rapidly crucial to foreign policy and the strategy of the domestic economy (Zhang, 2017: 320). The policy of "open doors", deepened during Hu Jintao's rule, marked the country with regard to political and economic openness to the world, as well as developing the concept of "Pacific Development" as a fundamental pillar of Chinese society based on friendship and tolerance.

This peaceful positioning of internal development for/with its partners creates a narrative of acceptance of China's rampant growth without appearing to pose a threat to the international system. According to Wang (2008), Chinese diplomacy goes beyond the traditional molds, which is focused only on "government to government" relations, and the country has several factors in its favor, to make its diplomacy public, stronger and to its benefit. Wang (2008) states that China's rapid growth and political development draws the attention of the world and this

drives the country to attract more people to live there; also, it encourages more people to invest in the country as more are learning the language through the Confucius Institute. Second, due to the fact that China has a very large population, several Mandarin teachers have been sent to the rest of the world, and so the country has already participated in United Nations peace operation (thus sending people to be part of the troops). Third, the country has strong ties with developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. For the author, China has positive points in its public diplomacy towards the world and because it has a strong government, as well as political, economical and cultural abundance, the country can influence others (Wang, 2008: 264).

As cited by Devermont (2018), 63 percent of respondents in 36 African countries thought China's economic and political influence in their country was positive in a report published in 2016. China's foreign policy, therefore, is based on the pragmatism and grand strategy (the long-term goal, *yuanqi mubiao*) that is applied in the diplomatic, military, and economic fields by a State, in order to develop and protect its interests (Carriço, 2013:23), mainly being a point of rupture with the classic powers. Medeiros (2008) points out that China's goal is "to elevate international status as an economic and political power capable of influencing the international system" and for this the industrial, commercial, science & technology and defense spheres were articulated, thus gaining their autonomy and international influence.

Analyzing Chinese diplomacy, David Shambaugh advocates in his book "China goes Global," that the Chinese are more interested in protecting their own narrative of national interest than in fact establishing a position in common with other nations. What the author means, or criticizes, is that Chinese diplomacy meticulously negotiates international documents; for example, skipping the clauses it displeases in order to protect its own national interests (Shambaugh, 2013:47).

Chinese diplomacy is extremely confident and insecure at the same time, because its actions reflect a historically strong identity, however, some external circumstances generate insecurity to the country, such as anti-regime movements or terrorism in certain regions. It is important to note that, during the "open door policy" period, China reviewed its legal institutions, including regulations and arbitrariness, in order to strengthen its laws and make the country trustworthy in administrative and legal terms (Wilson, 2009:55). This differentiated international insertion, initiated by Deng Xiaoping and continued by his successors, was crucial to make China a well-consolidated power and different from the classical development of other powers. Since 2012, with the entry of Xi Jinping in power, China has reformulated its foreign

policy initiatives in order to change the world order, in order to be a political, economic and financial alternative to the traditional American model of world order. For the president, China takes on new responsibilities for global governance, while it sees opportunities for engagement with its regional and extra-regional neighbors.

In November 2014, the Chinese Communist Party held its first foreign policy conference since 2006, when more engaged lines of Chinese diplomacy are evident. Xi Jinping stressed that China should be aware of the long-term nature of the international order; the direction of the reform of the system remains unchanged and stressed the importance of the Chinese dream in building a new type of international relations marked by gains mutual funds. At that time, China's foreign policy focused more on the Asian region as a whole and the concept of "Asia for Asians" reflected in the new architecture of regional security programs, such as "community of common destiny" based on shared identities and norms (Chang-Liao, 2016: 84).

It is possible to see that, after the 18th Communist Party Congress, China has improved confidence in its foreign policy by being proactive and demonstrating new attitudes in its role in regional relations. Thus, according to David Shambaugh (2017), Chinese diplomacy has become more multilateral and, with regard to issues such as terrorism, environmental protection, energy security, food security, etc., its good diplomatic relations will vary according to the position on these sensitive issues. According to the author, Chinese diplomacy in the last thirty years has been defensive and passive in many respects: it has avoided confrontations, seeks consensus and respects differences among nations.

It is clear that China has sought to rely on discourses aimed at affirming its rise, first in the 2000s, with the arguments of peaceful ascent, and later, with the idea of Pacific Development and Harmonious World, then about of the Beijing Consensus based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and currently the Chinese Dream. According to Pautasso (2016: 126), this idea of revitalizing and renewing Chinese society, in order to transform and generate development, is linked to the "two centenary agenda", which is the creation of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 and Proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. As such, China is seeking a new format for the insertion of its international identity, which runs away from the standards already analyzed and reaffirms its particular foreign policy.

Chang-Liao (2016) points out that this new Chinese posture of "bringing benefits" to peripheral regions reinforces China's economic superiority and its commitment to economically assist its neighbors. Importantly, China's trade diplomacy gains space and leadership, embracing the idea of using foreign policy resources and prior to Xi Jinping, leaders used the

diplomatic strategy as a means of ensuring the country's prosperity. Nowadays prosperity must help diplomacy in terms of economic growth and the attainment of political goals (Chang-Liao, 2016: 85). As the Chinese economy influences and grows in the international system, it also ends up influencing other nations within multilateral organizations that delimit the rules of the international game.

The Belt-and-Road Project

The history of the true Silk Road began more than two millennia ago when the civilization that inhabited ancient Eurasia began to explore new trade routes through its exits to Asia, Europe and Africa. According to the Chinese, the "spirit of the silk route" was one of peace, cooperation, openness, inclusion, learning and mutual benefit. The route meant the communication between the East and the West, bringing development to the civilizations along the same. President Xi Jinping has promoted his initiative as a new milestone for development and mutual cooperation in order to recover the global economy and overcome regional complexities. In 2013, when the President visited Central Asia and Southeast Asia, the Belt and Road initiative was jointly announced to its maritime links. The Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative was finally published under the "Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, to synchronize development plans and promote joint actions among countries along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (China, 2017).

The first is the land route that aims to connect China and Europe through Central Asia and Russia; China to the Middle East through Central Asia; and China to South East and South Asia and the Indian Ocean (Blanchard, 2017; 2018; Brewster, 2016; 2017). The second project is the sea route, permitting the Chinese ports to work with Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean and connecting China to the Pacific Ocean through the South China Sea. These main routes are being taken advantage of by the existing infrastructure and also being expanded through massive investments in order to form corridors that will facilitate international trade and logistics, according to the Chinese perspective.

These five routes will form six major international economic corridors: (a) China-Mongolia-Russia (CMREC); (b) New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB); (c) China-Central-West Asia (CCWAEC); (d) Bangladesh- China- Myanmar (CICPEC); (e) China-Indochina Peninsula (CIPEC); (f) China-Pakistan (CPEC). The NELB corridor is a railway crossing of approximately 12,000km of connection between Yiwu (East China) to the countries of Western Europe, that is, it crosses by 30 countries in total. This corridor connects the Pacific and Atlantic

Oceans and represents the possibility of maritime extension of the New Silk Road to South Africa (WWF, 2016; Pautasso, 2016). The CMREC corridor connects countries via railroad and highway and runs through the international traffic arteries of Russia and Mongolia, where there are considerable coal and natural gas mines.

The CICPEC corridor connects China to Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Malaysia, and the corridor could represent a major shift to the region's economic development. The CPEC corridor, the most iconic project yet, connects the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The CCWAEC connects China to the Arabian Peninsula, through 5 countries in Central Asia and 17 in Western Asia. It is a corridor of great importance, as it includes regions rich in oil, such as Afghanistan, which represents sources of energy supply for the Chinese. The Economic Corridor of the Indochinese Chinese Peninsula (CIPEC) is South Asia's "gateway to international trade", and it connects large trading centers of India and intends to provide output from the Bay of Bengal to the Chinese (Rahul, 2018: 180). The magnitude of the New Silk Road totals over 60% of the world's population, 30% of world GDP, and 35% of international trade.

What the Chinese intend to expand in the future through the initiative, in fact involves many international actors. According to the MERICS database, China invested more than \$25 billion in infrastructure projects and the map does not include projects still under construction or planning, otherwise the volume of investment would be much higher. The map, therefore, shows the projects of railways, pipelines and ports and visibly the New Silk Road is much more than gaining access to markets, ensuring trade routes and energy supply. The initiative is founded on the foreign policy of Xi Jinping in order to increase China's influence beyond its immediate vicinity and so it is a long-term project with no limited economic objectives.

Another element is the geographical scope of the New Silk Road being in constant expansion. The inclusion of the route through the Arctic to Europe represents this ambition even for Latin America (Abdenur & Muggah, 2017). The ambition of globalization of the initiative ends up becoming a vehicle for the structuring and commercialization of its foreign policy (MERICS, 2018). The initiative has become one of the largest Chinese political projects, occupying the hegemonic position in international trade, production and finance, while establishing the guidelines and norms to be followed. The initiative has the potential to be an alternative model in the implementation of rules to the international political and economic system (Wang, 2018:16).

The 78 countries (see table 1) of the five routes established by the Chinese initiative should, according to the action plan, work together to improve regional infrastructure and thereby facilitate trade and international investment. The official document issued by the National Development and Reform Commission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of China aims to promote connectivity in between Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, as well as to establish and strengthen partnerships between countries along the route. It has, as one of its main objectives, to promote the best interpersonal and cultural interchange with the countries along the route, to deepen mutual political trust and to promote peace and friendship. The vision of the initiative commits itself to linking member countries through policies, infrastructure, trade, finance and people.

The financial aspects as if affects also BRICS was noted by de Seixas (2017), that observes the links between efforts such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the funds dedicated (Silk Road Funds), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the former BRICS Bank (New Development Bank).

Table 1. Countries included in the Initiative of the New Silk Road

Continents	Countries
America	Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago.
Africa	South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Madagascar, Morocco, Tunisia.
Europe	Austria, Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Russia, Turkey, Serbia, Ukraine .
Asia	Armenia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Qatar, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Palestine, United Arab Emirates, Philippines, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Syria, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.
Oceania	New Zealand, Papua New Guinea.

Source: authors

One should note how the New Silk Road initiative is based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in China and is aligned with the principles of the UN Charter: mutual

respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each country; non-aggression; non-interference in the internal affairs of each country; equality and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. These Chinese foreign policy principles are also allied with the five cooperative objectives of the initiative: (a) policy coordination; b) plant connectivity; c) unimpeded trade; d) financial integration; e) peoples to peoples link.

The initiative advocates the formulation of joint development measures in order to achieve transnational or regional cooperation. In specific terms about the facilities, it aims at the joint coordination of policies of the countries involved so that the construction of the infrastructure facilities is promoted. Infrastructure connectivity of railways, highways, air routes, pipelines, and ports are in the initiative as part of the strategy and efforts of member countries to comply. In order to facilitate unimpeded trade, the initiative focuses on investment and trade facilitation by reducing trade barriers, as well as lowering trade and investment costs.

The New Silk Road action plan advocates that efforts will be made to expand trade, develop cooperation in the industry chain with all countries involved. With regard to financial integration, it proposes to take measures to improve local monetary and exchange coordination in trade and investment between countries along the route, deepen multilateral and bilateral financial cooperation, strengthen financial risk monitoring and manage risks through regional agreements. In terms of links between people, the initiative will bring together efforts to promote dialogues among different cultures, strengthen friendly interactions among peoples and thereby advance regional cooperation.

Xi Jinping, in his speech at the 19th CPC National Congress, said that the initiative is a priority for the country, which is expected to make the development of both the Chinese "going global" and the countries that intend to enter the country market. As so, China can carry out its partnerships by land or sea. This speech marks how China has positioned itself strongly for the dissemination of the initiative as a new platform for trade, cooperation and investment. The New Silk Road is one of the most ambitious economic development programs in history and the maritime component of the route involves numerous infrastructure initiatives, such as airports, bridges, pipelines, highways, etc. involving the entire development of local industrial parks and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

In order to analyze the maritime route of the initiative, it is necessary to take into account that it is not only infrastructure development, but a way of integrating institutions, people, policies and culture. What is perceived is that this ambition of global integration is the result of a Chinese discourse based on its foreign policy and reflected in the official documents of the

initiative.

The Sea Route and the Repercussions for Brazil and BRICS

In 2017, the government published a document on its vision of maritime cooperation: "Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative" proposing a blue-partner idea on the issues of exploration of marine resources, maritime industries, maritime safety. In this document there is a subchapter dedicated only to security issues as one of Beijing's priorities for cooperation. In this guideline, the Chinese government highlights the importance of the oceans in the process of regional economic integration, within the process of globalization, maritime cooperation and development.

This blue partnership, according to the document, will be based on efforts made for new cooperative platforms in terms of green development, maritime security and government collaboration. China proposes in this document that the countries that are part of the route have an engagement in the conservation of marine ecology by safeguarding services and global ecological safety of the seas. Another important factor taken into account in this document is the Chinese concern about climate change.

The country is responsible for providing support to "small island States" that suffer from the element of climate change, coastal erosion and sea level rise, etc. This environmental commitment will be established at the level of cooperation in scientific research with the coastal countries that make part of the project route, as well as the creation of regional protection and monitoring institutions. This Chinese environmental pledge within the Maritime Route is in line with the position taken as part of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To a certain extent, these measures for the time being in the political sphere, regarding the preservation of the marine environment, is a way that the country has to guard against the criticisms pointed to the project that has enormous proportions and also the previous questions about the damages caused to the reefs of coral reefs in the South China Sea. The proposed program, "Blue Carbon Program of the Maritime Route of the 21st Century", arises from a demand also for Chinese internal policies to prioritize the development of their marine situational awareness and the same prepares detailed programs for the development of these networks.

The Chinese defend the idea that, for maritime security, the development of a blue economy is necessary. In this sense, the maritime implications for the New Silk Road have been developed in order to improve their capabilities, reduce risks and safeguard the marine environment. Five areas were highlighted for Chinese performance:

- "Ocean-based prosperity": cooperation on maritime safety issues to tackle issues such as crime at sea; cooperation between the Chinese marine industry and the countries along the route (such as economic and trade cooperation zone, industrial parks for the maritime sectors), etc.
- Green Development: through closer cooperation between countries' marine public services (such as a remote sensing satellite system in order to share results and information); promotion of the protection of the regional marine environment (ASEAN and its action plans with China), etc.
- Maritime Security: maritime search and rescue missions to enhance capabilities to deal with emergencies at sea and prevention of maritime disasters; participation in bilateral and multilateral forums in order to expand technical cooperation and joint exercises etc.
- Innovative Growth: tighten the implementation of laws on cooperation and dialogue with the countries that are part of the initiative; cooperation in marine scientific marine research and technological development; cooperation in scientific education etc.
- Collaborative governance: promoting ocean cooperation through mutual policies, providing a cooperative institutional framework, promoting high-level dialogues on marine issues (such as the Global Blue Economy Partnership Forum), exchanges between think tanks of countries along the route etc.

These five areas highlighted in the official Chinese document indicate the willingness to use their maritime power to protect their expanding maritime trade interests and routes, under the sign of regional initiative and cooperation, in order to combat maritime threats. Nowadays, China has a well-engineered, well-designed marine strategy not only to defend its coastline, but also for long-range operations. This need arose in the face of territorial maritime disputes in the East China Sea and the South China Sea—areas that are the scene of historical conflicts. The South China Sea is home to some of the world's major shipping communication lines and port infrastructure. In addition, the area is rich in natural resources (oil and natural gas deposits).

Therefore, to ensure today that this region has security and an environment without hostilities, it is fundamental for the initiative to be well implemented and generate economic gains for the countries involved. One must not forget the need for the country to protect its vital energy supply routes as the second largest importer of oil in the world (Duarte, 2012:507). The importance of the Strait of Malacca to the region should not be overlooked, as it is an area vulnerable to international terrorism and of extreme importance for China's energy security, as 20.3% of global oil routes.

In November 2012, China developed its maritime power strategy and was included in the report of the 18th CPC National Congress, with an emphasis on its maritime rights and interests. In 2013, the publication of the White Paper on its armed forces referred to PLAN as crucial for the country's maritime security operations; since 2008, it has been developing capabilities for "blue waters." Both cases demonstrate China's intentions to expand its long-range naval potential in order to respond to threats to maritime security as well as strengthen its naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

In order for China to become a nation of well-developed naval power, according to the Xiaoyan (2014), the country must continue to implement its three political principles of strategic power: a) insist on peaceful development, both internal and external, so that the concept of ocean harmonious manner is strong enough and exceeds any option of confrontation and conflict between countries as far as the sea is concerned; (b) scientific development is necessary if the marine economy is to be balanced between exploitation capacities and the resources available; and (c) sustainable development is necessary in order to avoid damage to the marine environment (Xiaoyan, 2014, p. .22-23). The author argues that the country should continue to formulate these guidelines, so that: it controls disputes in the marine environment (through cooperative mechanisms); to continue to monitor and prevent escalation of conflict (through dialogue and consensus between the parties); the exploitation of natural resources can benefit more than one country; and finally, that maritime cooperation between China and its neighbors continue in order to generate security and generate win-win results. These factors, listed by the author, contribute to political stability in the region and facilitate international trade.

China is a continental country, with its maritime borders lacking sources of hydrocarbons and natural resources such as those found in West Asia and Africa, which makes the access route costly, as well as there being "bottlenecks" in the Indian Ocean which may be harmful to maritime trade routes. Therefore, Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean routes are based on geopolitical and economic imperatives; gaining influence and status quo in the region goes against the domestic motivations of territorial consolidation and global governance. According to Khurana (2016; 2018), China has engaged its representativeness in two multilateral security fora in the Indian Ocean, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) its position as "dialogue partner" and in the second as "observer". No other major power has such an advantage in regional security relations within these forums as China, which benefits in regards to strengthening its maritime security

(Khurana, 2016; 2018).

At the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, the guidelines on China's geopolitical-spatial development were based on growth for a maritime power and how the country should safeguard itself from its maritime rights. This marked, in 2012, a change of vision about its geopolitical axis; China no longer identified itself as a terrestrial and continental power, but as a maritime power. From this change of gravitational axis, China launched its Defense White Paper, stressing the importance of protecting its rights and interests in energy and natural resources (Len, 2017:54). In this sense, the New Silk Road expresses the diplomatic and military context of China in building a global community of common development, whether through peripheral diplomacy or the expansion of its "blue water" navy agenda that would bring a logistical facility in terms of missions for maritime safety and security.

The mentioned document about the five priority areas within the Maritime Route of the initiative points out the Chinese way of thinking and, through the New Silk Road, seeks to secure the Chinese interests and increase naval power. In addition to the modernization and action priorities of the Chinese in their strategy for the New Maritime Silk Road, the increase in trade volume by sea routes around the world and dependence on imported oil by the Chinese are relevant factors for understanding China's political strategy. Beijing identifies the straits of Malacca, Hormuz and Babelmândebe (which separates the Asian and African continents) as vulnerable and much of the international trade passes through these straits. China, therefore, is concerned about maritime security issues (such as terrorism and piracy) and how this could potentially destabilize trade.

But one needs critical attention to look at the Chinese discourse of international cooperation: are these official documents a safeguard against criticism of the growing expansion of the initiative? Questions are raised and the counter-narratives of other powers that somehow feel threatened by Chinese naval power resurface and echo in the international system. This is the case of QUAD and the Pearl Necklace.

Importantly, Chinese naval expansion has always been viewed with suspicion by other major powers, especially the United States and India; so much so, that the "Pearl Necklace" literature and the most current response to "QUAD", revived after an interval of ten years, may represent the strategic concerns of these countries in the face of the development of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). The term "Pearl Necklace" was used in 2005 in a report provided to the United States Secretary of Defense, entitled "Energy Futures in Asia", claiming that China was adopting this strategy from bases ranging from the Middle East to South China

Sea. These "pearls" were naval bases or Chinese spy posts in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, in order to protect trade routes and oil shipments. This theory assumes that China is building maritime channels to access the Indian Ocean in order to become a dominant naval power, countering the US and UK. But what is concrete about this is only about the Chinese concern with economic gains and protection of the Maritime Communication Lines (SLOC), because at that time, no bases were found in any place in the Indian Ocean. But, in 2017, the Chinese installed their first military base abroad in Djibouti (Downs, Becker, Degategno, 2017).

However, the United States and India also want to guarantee their freedom of navigation across the Indian Ocean, considering that the US has the ability to control bottlenecks on commercial routes and interfere with SLOCs. According to Zhou Bo, an honorary member of the Chinese Academy of Military Science, "access rather than bases is what the Chinese navy is really interested in" (China Daily, 2016).

However, this type of Chinese speech is exactly what observers of the Pearls worry about; the fact that China actually wants to mitigate security concerns in the MSC through megaprojects in the Indian Ocean.

The New Silk Road raised suspicions about the Chinese global agenda and provoked counter-initiatives from other countries. The United States and regional powers in Asia and Europe, concerned about the increase of Chinese influence, launched multilateral arrangements as mechanisms to reach and harmonize interests in the region. In this sense, the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) literature resurfaced with the geo-strategic term "Indo-Pacific" that stretches from the west coast of the United States to the west coast of India, connecting two of the seven oceans of the world: Pacific and Indian. This security association between the United States, Japan, Australia and India has emerged since 2008 but has resumed its dialogues more recently after maritime disputes at the MSC (South China Sea).

This group of States have not yet established a formalization of the arrangement, so far they are only in the sphere of diplomatic synergy and drawing media attention, but the QUAD seems to be a geopolitical tool to counterbalance the advances of the New Silk Road (Fulton, 2018:175). According to de Castro (2018), the aim of the alliance is not only to focus on defense issues, but to ensure that the Asia-Pacific region and the Indian Ocean remain free in access and open to multilateral trade. Japan, for example, launched the Expanded Partnership for Quality Infrastructure in 2015 and India in 2017, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, these political maneuvers are part of the Indian Ocean geopolitical game that has always been a region of great complexity and strategic interests, in addition to being historically dominated by

various maritime powers.

The Chinese foreign policy relationship with the United States on the Indo-Pacific axis has been to propose the idea of a "new model of relations between major powers" in order to create a sphere of trust, cooperation, political and economic security for the region. The smaller countries in the region still have some alignment in terms of security and leadership to the United States, and regional institutions are associated with their influences. This Chinese intention to create a model of collective cooperation in the region was the subterfuge necessary to equalize Chinese and US actions, giving them room to maneuver their interests. Despite these attempts and ideas to create a balance of power in the region, scholars and decision makers have innumerable theories to explain this American and Chinese clash.

Final Remarks

The questions about the proposed effects of the Belt and Road routes and investments are still undermined. While some specialists believe that Beijing will not actually create any concrete alliance with any nation, since partnerships are forged by pure interest, others believe that the United States still remain, in fact, a threat to the Cold War mindset, but it is a fact that China has been able to build alliances with countless countries around the world but will struggle to change the cooperation models pre-established by global traditionalism. All strategic movements in the region create tension and concern, so the narratives mentioned above make sense in the face of Chinese expansion. In order to protect China's energy vulnerability, naval support points along major trade routes are part of its economic diplomacy, based on large international reserves.

The Silk Belt and Road project is the largest Chinese project in recent years in terms of expansion, influence and access to resources that touch its eventual economic vulnerability such as energy and supplies. Although the Belt and Road presents a political challenge to the other actors in the region affected by China's robustness in the seas with its globalized economy, the degree of investment and forecasting of the route through a long-term project is inevitable. Otherwise, in addition to signifying Chinese expansionism as opposed to Western influence in the Cold War, the Belt and Road Initiative also represents these non-competitive alternative local development investments, especially in a global investment-shrinking economy.

If a shift from protocol milestones to the investment destination of institutions such as the World Bank is noteworthy in the Chinese project, the participation of Chinese capital with the New Development Bank (former BRICS Bank) in this share modifies previous interdependent

relationships (Cau, 2018). Accordingly, the first regional center of the NDB is founded in Johannesburg, South Africa, holding a strategy for the 2017-2021 years which includes terms and conditions for the inclusion of new members. Particularly for the medium and small actors on the path of these various routes, the representativeness of the project is marked by disputes that, although endowed with political-military tensions, are economic in nature (Abdenur & Muggah, 2017). To this end, what we seem to be able to observe is that, with cheaper access to products and financing through the direct fomentation of the silk routes, China places the BRICS and other architectures in which it is in a strategic position for the purpose of alternatives to development.

At the same time, QUAD represents one of the most pressing challenges facing the Belt and Road, but also the deepening of the BRICS, as India is torn between QUAD and disputes with Pakistan (partner of the Initiative), and a fragile relationship within the BRICS. For this reason, the issue of political-military tensions seems, to us, to be sensitive; at the same time China has been successful in increasing its share in the International System.

In respect to the Brazilian case, China has occupied a prestigious position as its main commercial partner. With the possibility of having new funds and mechanisms through BRICS developments, Brazil, even during President Bolsonaro's mandate, is reinforcing its condition. Even with limited investment from and to the Oil and Gas sector and energy sector, the Brazilian-Chinese relations are of utmost importance to the BRICS way of consolidation, including the policies discussed during the last meeting in Brazil (November, 2019). Indeed, it is probable that the Belt and Road structured project will override the missing strategy Brazil should have.

Both through the foreign policy project under way and the option to avoid the escalation of international political crises, China is occupying unedited spaces and ways to integrate foreign partners, boosting less mature schemes such as BRICS in order to strategically evoke its own bilateralisms.

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Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Geopolitical Challenges.

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Abstract

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an extremely new and fast-moving project which, as part of a strong effort toward consolidating Chinese power on the international stage, has faced a series of challenges, suspicions and criticisms (especially from Western analysts). What China is proposing is more than a revolutionary infrastructure project. It represents, without doubt, an ambitious geopolitical plan which challenges geopolitical analysis itself. This paper, therefore, presents a theoretical review of geopolitics in order to analyze one of the main projects of the BRI: the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), identifying the challenges relative to comprehending not only the initiative but also Sino-Pakistani relations based on recent experience. While the use of classical theories, such as retrieving the concept of heartland, has proven inadequate, new propositions, such as the concept of *geoeconomics*, provide analytical support that is better suited to this new geopolitical moment. Also of note is the volume of ongoing projects in distant economic areas and the lack of military objectives under the auspices of the corridor. There is a latent concern regarding security, but to date, no elements of militarization have been observed in the corridor. The Sino-Pakistani relations that were firmly grounded on border protection, territorial delimitation and the development of the arms industry, including nuclear weapons, on the conveyor belt of the corridor, are now focused more on the economy with a view to increase trade flow, thereby consolidating the energy sector while creating industrial zones and operations of the Gwadar port.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiative, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Geopolitics, Geoeconomics

Introduction

In 2013, the Chinese government announced the launch of a power strategy that was initially called the New Silk Route. In just under two years, this would become a meticulously planned global project with actions dispersed in several countries. Today, the Chinese government claims that it has hundreds of agreements signed in various economic and cultural sectors and with countries from practically every continent on the planet. For example, there are partnerships on environmental issues such as the Green Silk Road, made with Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands and Vanuatu. Furthermore, six economic corridors connect to relevant neighboring countries and through routes that may come to

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substantially improve the flow of trade, culture and people, from continental China all the way to Europe and Africa.

From a strategic point of view, geopolitical tools and new forms of governance may help not only to understand, but also to prevent and help China face conflicts and fix different kinds of problems that will appear. In this regard, addressing the BRI represents a huge challenge. The new features presented by the initiative do not clearly outline areas of military intervention and are based on presuppositions, according to the official line, such as respect for differences, non-intervention in national matters and an emphasis on the policy of win-win cooperation.

Of all the projects involving the BRI, the CPEC is one of the most important and urgent, based on several reasons. Pakistan is one of the closest countries to China which means that they have an institutionalism framed by a great history of partnerships and experience exchanges. From a geographical point of view, Pakistan offers a strategic exit for China, above all by paving the way for less dependence on the Malacca Strait and representing a logistical option for Western China. Pakistan also handles relevant problems that China will likely face in other places, such as terrorism and cultural resistance. Finally, success in Pakistan could hand China a real trump card to present to other partners and to the world. That is why any effort to analyze the BRI and in particular the CPEC is welcome.

Focusing on these matters, the present article seeks to analyze the classical foundations of geopolitics as a field of study related to space and power and how, under the BRI proposals, the demand for Sino-Pakistani relations will be viewed from new geopolitical approaches unlike those presented by Western analysts who insist on retrieving classical theories to apply to such an innovative and complex proposal. One of the examples is the attempt to compare it to the post-Second World War Marshall Plan, illustrated and refuted by Shen and Chan (2018). No less complicated are the analyses of Sempa (see *The Diplomat*, 2015) and Fallon (2015) who seek to use the concept of *heartland*, originally proposed by Mackinder in the early 20th century, to analyze the BRI. Both cases are subject to criticism and indicate the need for new approaches based on facts, discourse and achievements under the auspices of the BRI.

From a methodological point of view, the article is based on the analysis of official documents, as well as a theoretical and empirical review based on the most recent literature about geopolitics, the BRI and CPEC. The paper is structured initially on a review of the main geopolitical thoughts to find a path that allows us to investigate the BRI and the CPEC at this moment in time. Subsequently, the China-Pakistan relationship shall be briefly discussed from an historical perspective, with a view to showing how the CPEC is another step in this history

and could constitute a major turning point in the countries' politics. Finally, the BRI and the CPEC will be analyzed, involving the identification of some relevant elements that are changing the way in which geopolitics is developed nowadays.

Geopolitical Perspectives and the Expansion of Chinese Influence

Western geopolitics is a field of study that was born in the early 20th century. As part of what most intellectual authors called the institutionalization of geography, geopolitics took a place in the hall of politics when some authors started to have influence on relevant leaders (and politics) in countries such as Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The first theoretical proposals that inspired geopoliticians around the world were based on Friedrich Ratzel's (1844-1904) ideas. His pioneering work on Political Geography postulated about the relationship between State and Space—to be more precise, land, state and population. According to Ratzel (1987), the material foundation of the state is the land. Looking into the recent history of the West, especially Europe, Ratzel argues that there is an enormous difference between a territorial policy and a more 'political policy'. Only the former may be considered as genuinely based on strong foundations. The State is an organism linked to a fraction of the surface of the land/earth. Therefore, its properties spawn from the people and the land. Among them, the author emphasises the following factors: extension; situation; borders; the type of and the shape of the land; the vegetation and irrigation; and, lastly, the relations that it maintains with the rest of the terrestrial surface, as well the seas of political interest.

Space starts to be regarded as "a political force, and not, as otherwise understood, merely a vehicle of political forces" (Ratzel 1898:450). This statement heralded a new historical moment in which space gained a central role in State decisions, increasingly oriented by and toward the consolidation of power based on a territorial base³.

The strategic role that geographic knowledge had been adopting in Western nations starts to lead interlocutors to increasingly think of space as a structural element of the expansion, demarcation and consolidation of nation States. It is no wonder that the discussions about the concepts of territory, as a spatial representation of the concept of power, gain new formats.

³ Agnews and Corbrigde (1995:5) remember that "the primacy of 'the' territorial state is not a trans-historical given, but is specific to different historical epochs and different world regions. States differ historically and geographically in their external powers and in their ability to regulate their own territories. More generally, there have been historical periods, and there are world regions, in which the 'sovereignty' of any one state in relation to other states and non-state organizational actors is far from complete."

Obviously, all these elements go far beyond Ratzel's proposal. However, this author is one the main exponents of theories about geography and politics which soon afterward would be denominated ‘geopolitics’⁴.

Another author that gains enormous expression in geopolitical studies is Mackinder (1861-1947). Although his seminal text does not contain the thought of Ratzel⁵ as a basis, as is the case of Haushofer, this English author was able to clearly and directly express the need for England to look attentively to Eurasia if it were willing to maintain its hegemony in the global context (at that time, England was clearly threatened by the territorial and political expansion of the USA). No less important were his concerns regarding the maintenance of imperial power (including border issues); the connection of spaces provided by transport and communications; the formation of the global scale; the economic strengthening of national markets; the adaptation of civilizations to many different environments and the influence of those on the historical process in general (Ribeiro 2014).

In relation to the historical process, Mackinder produced a text which would become his main reference in geopolitical terms, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, in which he launched the idea of the *heartland*. According to him, this concept would be considered the “greatest natural fortress on earth” (Mackinder 1904). Its area would correspond, in great part, to what would be Russia today. He mentioned its fringes, the inner crescent, and the pivot states—those states that would be able to dominate the *heartland*. In his words, the “oversetting of the balance of power in favor of the pivot state, resulting in this expansion over the marginal lands of Euro-Asia, would permit of the use of vast continental recourses for fleet-building, and the empire of the world would then be in sight” (Mackinder 1904:436).

Mackinder inaugurated a clearly global vision of world political system (Costa 2010). In his argument, the Englishman assumes the central role of land power. The special attention on Eurasia would be based on the fact that the biggest threats suffered by Europe had come from that region and the need to control it. Thus, Mackinder pointed to an area that would be the heart of the expansion of world power: the ‘pivot area’, equivalent to the territory of the USSR.

⁴ The word ‘geopolitics’ became effectively used through the work of the Rudolf Kjéllen (1864-1922).

⁵ Despite the fact that Mackinder did not quote Ratzel, we can find in his writings complaints about German geography, especially in terms of how knowledge about geography and cartography was important to the bureaucracy to conquer relevant goals against the French. Furthermore, he stresses that this discipline in German schools helped to create a sense of patriotism that formed a relevant background to German foreign policy (Mackinder, 1919:26-31).

Years later, with the end of First World War, Mackinder stressed with even more force the strategic importance of this region, bearing in mind a possible alliance between the Russians and Germans. In this regard, the author used the idea of democracy to sustain Western geopolitics against the advancement and the expansion of the German and Russian powers. Mackinder (1919) also started calling the ‘pivot area’ the heartland, including more areas of direct Soviet influence.

With the end of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War, geopolitics went through a period of great analytical clarity. The biggest power centers of the world were well defined and sought at any given moment to expand their spaces of influence. The regional moments of insertion in the spheres of power were followed by actions and reactions of the two main global powers: the USSR and the USA, along with their allies. On the other hand, the decolonization process also revealed a moment of territorialization of power in the form of newborn States, even if each one had its own particular conflicts. Thus, Western theoreticians had a very clear horizon of analysis, as we can observe in the studies of Spykman (1942)⁶ or Brzezinski (1972), two authors deeply concerned with the necessary movements to maintain the spheres of Western influence, and who have been widely quoted in both academic and military areas.

Perhaps Zbigniew Brzezinski was the best example to illustrate how this classical basis of geopolitics remained important during the period of the Cold War, even if he had often not mentioned it directly. By means of maps, the author demonstrated how the conflict was based on the dispute for the control of Eurasia. The conflict reproduced the struggle between the land power (Mackinder theory) and sea power (Alfred Mahan theory⁷), and dialectics between the expansion of Russian power and American contention. Brzezinski used a geographic framework, based on strategic fronts, to sustain the basis of the conflict and its trend towards the Soviet defeat, also associated to its high military expenditures⁸.

In the same period, it is important to point out that the crises of the 1970s and the remedies employed, above all by the USA, drew the economy into the geopolitical discussion even more

⁶ This author died before the Cold War, but his thoughts exerted influence on many scholars and policy makers.

⁷ On the author and his contribution, Ó Tuathail (1998:4) argues “The American naval historian Alfred Mahan (1840–1914), for example, wrote about the importance of the physical geography—territorial mass and physical features in relation to the sea—in the development of seapower by expanding states in his classic study *The Influence of Seapower Upon History*, which was first published in 1890 (Mahan, 1957). The road to national greatness, not surprisingly for the professional naval officer Mahan, was through naval expansionism”.

⁸ Mello (1999) recalls that this thesis predates the seminal work of Paul Kennedy (1989) who argued about the weight of military expenses in the fall of powers over the course of history.

clearly, a fact which would continue to hold true for several decades. Farias (2015)⁹ argues that the financial expansion, by means of deregulation of national markets, gave the USA an unprecedented concentration of monetary, financial, political and military power.

The end of the Cold War and the dawn of globalization brought a number of uncertainties in which the American hegemony and capitalism seemed to represent one of just a few sources of security for the understanding of inter-state relations. Theories such as the end of history of the States and of geography itself circulated with notoriety¹⁰, but lost momentum in a matter of years¹¹.

However, in the 1990s, this thought was replaced by the economic agenda and above all the neoliberal one. Insertion into globalization while complying with the rules of good economic and institutional functioning seemed to be enough to guarantee economic growth and social welfare¹². This was the expression of the Western theoretical mainstream. It is no wonder that a number of authors began a critical crusade against these recipes, both in developed and emerging countries¹³.

Under the point of the influence zones and conflicts, international institutions (above all, NATO and the UN), strengthened by the fall of the Soviet regime, had their hands full with the eruption of regional conflicts such as the Balkan wars and serious conflicts in Africa. These new developments suffered more radical alterations in the 2000s¹⁴.

The international geopolitical chessboard, at this time with the economic strand included in its analysis, faces different strategies, players and new forms of conflict. In this aspect, the phenomenon of terrorism seems to be one of the most evident. For the USA, classical military

⁹ Based on the theoretical ideas derived from authors such as Fernand Braudel, Giovani Arrighi, Sammuel Wallerstein and Jose Luis Fiori, Farias (2015) resumes the classic geopolitical discussion in terms of the formation of the American hegemony of the 1970s on based on a strategy that allied economic and geopolitical elements.

¹⁰ See Fukuyama (1992) for the end of history; Ohmae (1995) for the end of the states; and O'Brien (1992) for the end of geography.

¹¹ Robert Kaplan (2012:16) argues that “it was just a matter of shaping the world more in our own image, sometimes through the deployment of American troops; deployments that in the 1990s would exact relatively little penalty. This, the first intellectual cycle of the Post Cold War, was an era of illusions. It was a time when the words ‘realist’ and ‘pragmatist’ were considered pejoratives, signifying an aversion to humanitarian intervention in places where the national interest, as conventionally and narrowly defined, seemed elusive.”

¹² Ha Joon Chang (2002) argues that the neoliberal recipe that took hold of the Western world during the 1990s was based on policies that even the developed countries had not followed during their paths of development. As an example, the author used the issue of intellectual property, labor laws, democracy (universal suffrage only came to the so-called democratic countries around the 1970s), an independent central bank and financial deregulation.

¹³ See Santos (2017), Rodrick (2006) and Stiglitz (2002)

¹⁴ As Stuenkel (2015:xii) argues: “The dominant position established powers have held in global affairs during the 1990s is slowly eroding. The group of countries with the power to make a difference internationally, for better or worse, is changing. As new powers—principally China and India—rise to the fore, the world’s decision-making elite is becoming less Western, has fewer common interests, and is more ideologically diverse. This creates a necessity to understand emerging powers’ views.”

geopolitical tools have been used specially in the Middle East as in the case of Afghanistan or even in the Iraq invasion¹⁵.

Russia, in turn, commenced several reactions to offensives in its traditional areas of influence, as observed in Kosovo (1999), South Ossetia (2008) and more recently, the Ukraine and Syria (2014). Regarding these cases, Sergunin (2016:13) stresses that “it became commonplace for Western scholars and politicians to ascertain that Russia's post-Cold war foreign policy behavior is often unpredictable, irrational, anti-Western, aggressive / expansionist and even irredentist.” But the fact is that, after the 2000s, the Kremlin resumed some aggressive geopolitics and changed the reconciliatory mood with the West. It comes as no surprise that Russia today is subject to several economic sanctions and has been trying to focus on different strategies, such as the formation and development of the BRICS.

And, finally, China. During this recent period, China has come to represent the greatest question mark from a geopolitical point of view. The enlargement of its sphere of economic influence based on a swift industrialization process and economic growth¹⁶ now includes an unprecedented international strategy, the BRI, which, although well delimited, is still very recent and unpredictable. This might be the most complex point for analysis and, thus, it is paramount to follow up on the execution of this policy and its geopolitical developments (range, logistics, flows, commercial trades, cultural exchanges, cooperation mechanisms and technological development). That is why the theory developed by Blackwill and Harris (2016) seems to be more appropriate to deal with contemporary China's geopolitics. They argued that, in recent years, China has used its economic power to achieve geopolitical goals.

What has been exposed up to this point illustrates that the topic of contemporary geopolitics has been undergoing several transformations which introduce new elements that have tended to escape the attention of international scholars. Russia and its re-established neighboring areas of influence near China, achieved through a global power initiative, are good examples of these transformations. However, there is one certainty: the new leadership role of China with the BRI and the clear need that geopolitics must focus on this initiative, trying not only to bring old methodologies and forms of analysis to the forefront but also to promote a

¹⁵ The resumption of the use of geopolitics to analyze the invasion of Iraq is very common, after all, it bears from the knowledge of the terrain, of difficult access to the centrality of that country and its oil reserves. For a deeper analysis, see Robert Kaplan (2012).

¹⁶ Obviously, China has been concerned with more classical military issues and geopolitical strategies, the South China Sea and the investments in innovation in defense are clear examples. An important work about these themes can be found in Cheung (2014). Another author that emphasizes the importance of the marine power to China is Kaplan (2012). We can also mention the importance of the relationship between China and the US to the balance of power in Eurasia, especially as regards the imminent conflicts in the region as mentioned by Brzezinski (2001).

renewed view of this fresh and challenging initiative. Given the spatial dimension taken by the BRI nowadays, a drill down understanding of the CPEC would seem appropriate to shed light on the structural elements of this power strategy.

A brief history of China-Pakistan relations will be now be presented to support the analysis of the BRI and CPEC. The focus is on demonstrating how these new actions by the Asian giant can be distinguished from the traditional relations developed by these countries over the past fifty years. Although Pakistan features as China's third largest military diplomatic partner¹⁷, the CPEC has yet to officially include any strictly military relationship between the countries.

China and Pakistan Relations: Historical Geopolitical Elements and the CPEC

It is almost impossible talk about Chinese geopolitics without mentioning Pakistan. In China's recent history, Pakistan has assumed a significant position in different strategic issues. In 1975, Barnds (1975:474) wrote that South Asia "is more important to China than it is to either the United States or the Soviet Union"¹⁸. He was right. The Chinese made substantial efforts across this time period in order to build this relationship, while undergoing numerous historical moments both on a domestic and international level¹⁹. As mentioned by Small (2015), "across the last few decades they have survived China's transition from Maoism to market economy, the rise of Islamic militancy in the region, and the shifting cross-currents of the two countries' relationships with India and the United States."

The geopolitical chessboard that was the background for this relationship begins with the Cold War and goes back to the Independence of Pakistan. Barnds (1975) recalls some of the main moments that helped construct Sino-Pakistani relations. Already by 1950, Pakistan supported Peking's right to the mainland Chinese seat in the United Nations. In 1956, there were several visits conducted between the two countries. It was becoming clearer and clearer that, in spite of the political and cultural differences, the two countries did not share conflicts that would prevent a successful partnership. In fact, China regarded Pakistan as a very important ally in order to strengthen its positions, above all regarding the problems faced by the border disputes with India and influence in the region. In 1959, there was a round of negotiations about

¹⁷ According to the article published by the website *The China Power Project*, 'How is China bolstering its military diplomatic relations?', based on data from the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, National Defense University. The top two positions are the USA and Russia, respectively.

¹⁸ In fact, the author argued that the threat against China is not related to its urban area, but to the borders, especially with India, the problems in the Sinkiang area and Tibet. On the other hand, the regions "are clearly of greater importance than its stake in the Middle East, Africa or Latin America."

¹⁹ Barnds (1975:478) recalls that, "China's maintenance of co-operative relations with Pakistan during the Great Cultural Revolution was virtually unique."

border demarcation which directly irritated India. According to Barnds, “Pakistan was large enough to be important, but not large enough - or strong enough - to be viewed as a potential rival such as India or Japan.”

The signing of the Sino-Pakistani airline agreement in 1963 demonstrated the Chinese geopolitical strategy to maintain a relevant space of influence between Asia and the Middle East. From then on, there was an increasing exchange of lower-level officials, trade missions, cultural groups and other organizations²⁰. The following year, the two countries signed their first trade agreement. Besides the agreement, there was also support for the Pakistani position in the region of Kashmir, which was given by Chou Enlai during an official visit.

The increasingly evident strengthening of this relationship would become even tighter in the 1970s, especially due to the role that Pakistan played in the rapprochement between China and the US. At this point, a key player in this process, Henry Kissinger (2011), reported the choice of that country to mediate the rapprochement: “the White House chose a nonaligned friend of China (Pakistan), a member of the Warsaw Pact known for its quest for independence from Moscow (Romania), and member of NATO distinguished by its commitment to strategic independence.”

From the 1970s onwards, the military issue gained a new facet: nuclear armament. An intense partnership was established between the two countries to make Pakistan a nuclear power. The regional context wound up further boosting this development, including the fact that India had performed its first nuclear test in the 1970s. A power balance problem would ensue in the region if Pakistan did not move in the same direction.

The accelerated process of building nuclear weapons, as well as other arms, ended up providing the greatest boost in a period when Chinese geopolitics was extremely attentive to Pakistan and Pakistan itself depended on the strategic cooperation it had established with the neighboring country.

A deeper investigation into the numerous political details of China-Pakistan relations up the present time is not appropriate here. However, it is fundamental to mention the issue of the rise of terrorism and radicalism of sectors linked to Islamism. Forces connected to Islamic radicalism began to bear relevance and carried out actions such as the case of Red Mosque. Hussain (2017:147) recalls that “religious extremism and terrorism pose a serious threat to the

²⁰ According to Barnds (1975), Sino-Pakistani cultural organizations were active in Pakistan. Trade expanded from \$13.5 million in 1961 to \$68.3 million in 1967, but still accounted for only four percent of Pakistan's total trade. China agreed in June 1966 to supply machinery to a heavy industrial complex, and a maritime agreement was signed in October 1966.

very existence of Pakistan as society and the state.” For China, this concern surpasses Pakistani domestic matters; after all, a central part of its security strategy is the containment of radical movements in the Western part of the country, especially in areas close to its borders.

Up to this point, we have mentioned only the essential aspects of China-Pakistan relations. A complex web of events, which range from the conflicts between China and the USSR to more specific details regarding arms production and commercialization, have been responsible for a solid relationship that has stretched over more than 50 years. Classical geopolitical interest in the Chinese influence zone, border conflicts, nuclear weapons, regional power balance and even technology exchange is also evident and is subject to different possible interpretations. The Cold War itself, during which time period this aforementioned relationship evolved, is a historical moment where geopolitics were clearly laid out, either in the dispute for influence zones, the decolonization processes or the non-aligned movement. However, the present context is a little more delicate. This is the point that will now be analyzed based on the assumption that this relationship today finds itself at an inflection point for Chinese geopolitics and required a renewed theoretical framework to prevent the field from being trapped in traditional Western thought. In order to do so, I will begin by looking into the Belt and Road Initiative and then focusing on the specific points regarding the role of Pakistan in this new phase of Chinese power expansion.

Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC: The Role of Pakistan

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the result of the union of two proposals launched in the latter half of 2013: the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The initiative has now reached practically immeasurable dimensions, extending to many areas around the world, such as the Arctic Sea. Within six years of its announcement, the proposal has become a reality and today, according to the initiative’s official website²¹, there are more than 80 associated companies and several ongoing projects, including a recently-launched ST&I cooperation project with Pakistan²², as well as the construction of cultural centers in participant countries that include strategic hotspots such as Turkey (at the doorstep of Europe), and Egypt (located in North Africa and with access to the Mediterranean Sea²³). According to the official document launched by Xinhua at the end of 2019, entitled ‘The Belt and Road

²¹A full list can be found in: https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/info/iList.jsp?cat_id=10080&cur_page=1

²² See: China, Pakistan vow to strengthen cooperation on science, technology <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/19048.htm>

²³ See: More Chinese cultural centers along Silk Road by 2020. http://english.gov.cn/news/international_exchanges/2015/02/17/content_281475057139023.htm

Initiative. Progress, contributions and prospects', the "Chinese government had signed 173 cooperation agreements with 125 countries and 29 international organisations by the end of March 2019. The Belt and Road has expanded from Asia and Europe to include more new participants in Africa, Latin America and the South Pacific".

From a general overview, the initiative seeks to promote greater integration, via cooperation and infrastructure projects between the West and the East, albeit with foundations that extend beyond strictly economic relations²⁴. For example, the geopolitical foundation of the initiative already extends beyond initial estimates. It no longer relates only to classic geopolitical tools such as position, resources, population and so on, but is also linked to a new moment in globalization as well as the use of economic tools to achieve geopolitical objectives. At least two official documents help illustrate the position of the Chinese government²⁵; some of the points that they raise are highlighted here. Firstly, despite the unquestionable Chinese leadership of the initiative, the stance assumed in these documents demonstrates the horizontal relations underlying the project²⁶. These postulates indicate that the project would not rely on the classic means adopted by the main powers to this day, especially the US²⁷. There is an evident effort to approach issues that go beyond cooperation and, in this same document, we see the construction of a strategy based on five elements: policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds.

Another significant point to mention is the institutional framework that the BRI is creating. According to the official website, the project is linked chiefly to the State Council and then to the National Development and Reform Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Communication. Furthermore, the number of institutions that are studying and participating is growing as fast as the initiative is. These include banks, universities, companies,

²⁴ The importance of conceiving the contemporary world beyond purely economic relations has been widely discussed. The study conducted by Blackwill and Harris (2016: 20) has been cited, not least in relation to its reflections on China as central to this tasks. These authors built the concept of *geoeconomics*, defined as: "The use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests, and to produce beneficial geopolitical results; and the effects of other nations' economic actions on a country's geopolitical goals." For the authors, one of the central issues is the use of this concept to analyze Chinese geopolitics which has been ample that the classic basis for this discipline, using economic strategies as a form geopolitical positioning.

²⁵ See: "Vision and Actions On Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt And 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road." Issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, with State Council authorization, March 2015 at: <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/qwfb/1084.htm>. And, "Building the Belt and Road: Concept, Practice and China's Contribution", Office of the Leading Group for the Belt and Road Initiative, May 2017, at: <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/wcm.files/upload/CMSydylw/201705/201705110537027.pdf>

²⁶ According to the document of 2015: "The Belt and Road Initiative is a way for win-win cooperation that promotes common development and prosperity and a road towards peace and friendship by enhancing mutual understanding and trust, and strengthening all-round exchanges."

²⁷ Such as military intervention, construction of military bases or defense agreements.

forums, associations and think tanks²⁸, to name but a few. Particular attention must be paid to the Belt and Road Forum which occurred in May 2017, and was attended by thirty chiefs of States and the head of the United Nations, World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund. That list of attendees alone reveals the importance of the event. Secondly, the BRI Forum published another document²⁹ that clarified some important aspects which will contribute to our analysis as follows:

- A concern with emphasizing the respect for international institutions, such as the United Nations, is mentioned in the document, as well to issues such as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries;
- Cooperation is a keyword. It is frequently referred to, but often in terms of North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation. It is interesting to note how the role of the developing countries is highlighted not only in relation to the initiative itself, but also in terms of a new world order.
- Finally, questions are presented regarding economic growth “based on level-playing field, on market rules and on universally recognized international norms.” To do so, the document lays out the “promotion of industrial cooperation, scientific and technological innovation, and regional economic cooperation and integration so as to increase, *inter alia*, the integration and participation of micro, small and medium enterprises in global value chains.”

Up to this point, we can observe some extremely significant elements which place geopolitics at the center of attention. A strategy of this magnitude comes from the second largest economy in the world which has not assertively addressed any issues regarding conflicts, military affairs, Army, Navy, Air Force, occupation, borders or influence areas³⁰. On the contrary, the proposal has been gaining supporters who share a history of conflicts, but also have an interest in the initiative. On the other hand, it seems obvious that there is a growing

²⁸ For example, Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, New Development Bank, ASEAN, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China Academy of Social Science, SASAC, Fudan Institute of Belt and Road & Global Governance, Belt and Road Think Thank Cooperation Alliance, Silk and Road Think and Thank Association Conference, cultural centers (now under the BRI), among others.

²⁹ See: “Joint Communique of the Leaders Roundtable of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation”: http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zt_ydyl_english/

³⁰ These are often associated to geopolitics, as if this field were strictly linked to war of conflicts of different orders. Even the most attentive observers usually make this direct connection. Overholt (2008:56), when asserting that “Asia’s half-century-long trend toward focusing on extraordinary economic development rather than geopolitical and ideological conflict as the path to wealth and power”, falls into this trap.

concern with the BRI, above all among countries geographically close to the initiative, but more allied to the western powers, such as New Zealand and Australia³¹.

From a geographical point of view, the BRI has been proposing some different strategies. The document from 2015 outlines “six corridors”: the New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor, the China-Mongolia Russia Economic Corridor, the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor; the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor; the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor. Also included are the “six means of communication”, which include rail, highways, seagoing transport, aviation, pipelines, and aerospace integrated information networks, which comprise the main targets of infrastructure connectivity. Otherwise, the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road seeks two major routes: one from coastal ports of China which crosses the South China Sea, which passes through the Malacca Strait and then reaches the Indian Ocean, extending to Europe; and the other which starts from the coastal ports of China, crossing the South China Sea, and extending to the South Pacific. Of all these initiatives, the CPEC is one of the most important and urgent.

As we noted, up until this point the relationship between China and Pakistan has been highly nuanced. The CPEC is a new element which has been constructed under an approach focused on infrastructure, STI and cooperation. It constitutes a completely new moment. It is important to mention some relevant topics related to the CPEC that could provide arguments to use when tackling contemporary geopolitics.

The dimensions of the CPEC are immense. As Ejaz Hussain (2017:156) stresses, the “idea of a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was floated during the President Musharraf regime (1999-2007).” But it was on July 5th 2013 that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the CPEC was signed. The MoU is a multi-dimensional plan that initially proposed to spend 46 billion dollars in projects. The transport route of the CPEC has been planned to connect Kashgar (China) to Gwadar Port (Pakistan) via 3 alignments: Western, Central and Eastern³². The Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Weidong, expects the CPEC to create more than 10,000 jobs for local people directly and generate opportunities for more than 15,000 Pakistani students in China. Finally, in terms of investments, there is the noteworthy

³¹Some authors, as in the case of Reilly (2013), even before the consolidation of the initiative, were already concerned with rising Chinese influence by non-conventional means in the region. Now, new complaints by New Zealanders are being observed.

³²All information and data present in this item came from: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC]. For strategic partnership to economic ties. The Diplomatic Insight. vol. 9, Issue 12, 2016.

participation of development banks such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and New Development Bank.

It is crucial to highlight some issues present in the CPEC Long Term Plan (LTP). Firstly, the LTP was prepared by the China Development Bank under the National Development Reform Council, two of the most important institutions in modern-day China. This is a significant issue. Secondly, it is paramount to stress some of the foundations of the plan. The key areas and major projects are: spatial structure and functional zones, construction of an integrated transport system, IT connectivity, energy cooperation, industries and parks, agricultural development and poverty alleviation³³, cooperation in livelihood areas, people to people communications and financial cooperation.

According to the initiative's official website³⁴, there are seventy-three projects in ten areas under the institutional framework of the economic corridor: twenty-two in the energy sector; eight in infrastructure; nine in the Port of Gwadar; two cited as Other Projects, namely the Cross Border Optical Fiber Cable and Pilot Project of Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast; four in Rail-Based Mass Transit Projects; six in New Provincial Projects; nine in Special Economic Zones (SEZs); four in Social Sector Development Projects; six in Western Route Projects; and three in Related Projects Under Public Sector Development Program (PSDP). Only the last two are part of the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP), Pakistan's most important fiscal policy tool and the main national financial source for development projects (Wolf, 2020). All the rest are financed by the Chinese government.

The underlying circumstances to this development are, therefore, intriguing. The lack of military issues is a standout feature, whether it be due to the fact that some problems are seemingly ignored that effectively exist on the path or by reinforcing elements that promote superior economic effects rather than focusing on military cooperation and integration. For Hussain (2019), the main security-related issues³⁵ should be tackled by Pakistan itself in order to neutralize problems that threaten its sovereignty and to ensure greater political stability to stimulate socio-economic development. In other words, security, although a focus of the CPEC as it could pose serious problems to the implementation of the corridor, would appear to be an issue that must be considered in light of internal Pakistani matters. The Long Term Plan itself

³³ In a recent study launched by the World Bank (2019), there are positive forecasts in relation to poverty alleviation in areas related to the BRI. Pakistan is one of the countries in which this statistic appears particularly positive.

³⁴ See www.cpec.gov.pk

³⁵ Wolf (2020) argues that the “overall lack of security in Pakistan determines one of the greatest challenges for the country’s development and economic cooperation with other countries, especially regarding the attraction of foreign investment.”

states that “Pakistan deploys security personnel from Army and other security forces to ensure the safety of projects' construction, operation and maintenance, employees and camps under the CPEC.”

Final Remarks

This article seeks to present a discussion based on the new moment of expansion of Chinese world power and its relationship with Pakistan. The BRI and CPEC have been executed in a short period of time but the consequences are already well underway. I have been arguing that, with this initiative, new geopolitical tools have been developed and used and it is time to rethink geopolitics without certain prejudices. The historical perspective showed how Chinese geopolitics changed its course, especially with the BRI that has proposed new forms of relationships and exchanges, especially in relation to Pakistan.

The BRI shows some classical geopolitical elements, as can be seen in the strategy of the “six corridors” and the maritime route which now includes the Arctic Sea. Moreover, the CPEC has an important geographical background that could be analyzed from the geopolitical point of view³⁶. It is no wonder that important Western analysts have relied on the classical propositions of Halford Mackinder or Alfred Mahan to refer to the BRI. One of the main active geopoliticians today, Francis Sempa (see *The Diplomat*, 2015), already in the title of his article mentions one the pillars of the Mackinder's theory: *Is China Bidding for the Heartland?* The author goes further and maintains that, according to his analysis, Chinese strategy is based on a dual path—both land and sea power. In his words, “China, however, does not necessarily have to choose between a maritime and continental strategy. Indeed, all signs point to China pursuing a foreign policy that looks to achieve both maritime and continental interests.” All the rationale is built on the dominance of what Mackinder called the *inner crescent*, which represents the fringe access to the *heartland* and the expansion and access to maritime power.

Another author that relies on the propositions of Mackinder is Theresa Fallon. Her analysis is based on the way in which policymakers design the initiative. According to Fallon

³⁶ Given the broader dimension of the analysis of the geopolitical spectrum of the relations between China and Pakistan, we did not work on the geographic dimension of the CPEC which covers important regions and intends to consolidate areas of economic dynamism. The CPEC has a spatial layout of “One Belt, Three Passages, Two Axes and Five Functional Zones”. The “Two Axes” (official document, see footnote number 30) refer to two East-West development axes in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor that are vertical to the main traffic arteries, i.e. Lahore-Islamabad-Peshawar and Karachi-Gwadar development axes. The economic development levels and geographical location conditions of the areas where the ‘Two Axes’ are located differ greatly. They are key areas for the strengthening of regional linkage and promotion of coordinated development of regions in the Corridor construction. ‘Five Functional Zones.’ The Corridor is divided into five functional zones according to the regional development level, industrial structure, resource and environmental bearing capacity, and growth potential. These zones cover major node cities, traffic passages and industrial cluster areas.

(2015), quoting professor Dr. Wang Yiwei, “a professor at Renmin University, quoted Halford Mackinder, the father of modern geopolitics, and called for a revival of Eurasia as a “world island” (Mackinder’s term), thanks to China’s “One Belt One Road,” which would sideline the United States.” Again, this is a further reference that quotes Mackinder’s theory.

In both cases, there is a clear mention of the territorial dimensions of the BRI, which is a fundamental part of any geopolitical analysis. However, the complexity of the initiative demands the construction of clearly defined strategies capable of making operational any proposal linked to it. But it is important to highlight some questions to help us look deeper into this new geopolitical moment. What is the correlation of a theoretical approach that outlines strategies based on military background with others that propose a cooperation based on economic tools? How is China bidding for the heartland without any military action? Is it possible to build a geopolitical strategy based only on economic tools? Moreover, what kind of real structure and tools would the Chinese government have to have in order to be able to influence so many different parts of the world?

All these questions about the initiative are new, as is China’s role in the international arena, and we are using conventional Western thought to try to decipher and forecast the BRI. As suggested in the first section, Blackwill and Harris (2016) seem to be the authors who have come closest to crafting a new approach. They have been investigating how some countries have been using economic tools to produce geopolitical results, what they call *geoeconomics*. Their theory considers geopolitics as a ‘hard power’, which is related to “a method of foreign policy analysis that seeks to understand, explain and predict international political behavior primarily in terms of geographical variables”. In my view, geopolitics involves more than international issues, as I mentioned above, and besides such a narrow definition, these authors are calling attention to China’s strategies, precisely in terms of economic tools. The problem is that there are but a few comments about the BRI in the book. To be more specific, they still call the initiative the New Silk Road, so they have not considered the Belt and Road Forum, one of the most important events for the consolidation of the BRI.

The point is that geopolitics must be considered as a national strategy of wealth and power accumulation; it should be a project of a State that intends to extend its power of international influence in conjunction with its national capital, and hence not limiting itself to the acquisition of physical territories, but also to ‘economic territories’ (Fiori, 2007; 2008; 2015)³⁷. That proposal seems to fit in with the BRI. Furthermore, a geopolitical analysis must

³⁷See Farias (2016). The author carried out a deeper analysis in the Fiori’s theory.

also consider the role of Science, Technology and Innovation as key. Becker (2015) argues that STI involves geopolitics as it is based on information and knowledge about the geographical space and, thus, it creates the capacity to develop techniques and technologies to be applied in strategies and policies in order to assure the appropriation, use and control of the geographical space. To consolidate the BRI, different technological skills are necessary. There are many types of geographical areas, including different cultures, kinds of resources, and materials; in other words, there are a field of obstacles which require innovation to be overcome. China seems to be following that path with the implementation of the BRI. The above-mentioned agreement between China and Pakistan is an important example and should be analyzed as soon as both governments allow the access to the files³⁸. Also to be considered in this respect is the creation of the industrial zones, already under construction, as presented by the LTP which are aligned to this technological perspective.

China has been demonstrating a clear search for balance between their domestic concerns and a more active and central role on the international stage. That is not to say that there are no military motivations or traditional issues of geopolitics and so forth. However, this paper has attempted to approach this development with a different focus, instead looking at the construction of an institutionalized framework, the major projects and how the China-Pakistan relationship in particular highlights both of these priorities. The initiative is massively driven by tools derived from Chinese economic power, and focuses heavily on cooperation and win-win relations.

The geopolitical components can be defined by several elements of the BRI, in general, and of the CPEC. In particular, these include:

- Firstly, the BRI has been showing that some Western analysis is completely removed from the Chinese reality. Brzezinski (2001) highlighted that “China is not going to become a global power, though it is a regional power capable of asserting its national interests. And the BRI is showing exactly the contrary.”
- Trying to analyze a way of retaking the *heartland* would be to consider that China is trying to reduce Russian influence in Central Asia, for example. That might seem doubtful. China’s increased presence in the region may be achieved without affecting relations with Russia. Consideration must also be given to the alliance between China and some Central Asian countries.

³⁸To date, the Ministries of Science and Technology of the two countries have not allowed the disclosure of the agreement terms, or the themes of 26 projects involved in the construction of the South Asia Technology Transfer Center (CSTTC), at PCSIR Head Office Islamabad.

- There seems to be no clear evidence of classical territorial domination, as the early 20th century period as well the Cold War strategies showed. This is the point I believe to be challenging for Western geopolitical thinking which is obviously scared and will try to smear the image of the initiative (as we witnessed in May 2017, when the magazine *The Economist* published an article indicating that the acronym for the Belt and Road Forum[?] would be BARF, when it was officially dubbed BRF). I believe there is already a campaign in this direction, which makes it difficult to analyze the mechanisms, errors, correctness and consequences of the BRI more effectively. It is evident that the information published in the media and the analyses bear a substantial degree of ideological influence.
- Financial resources are a very important weapon and must be used. China has been showing a great capacity to use them, as could be noted in the study conducted by Blackwill and Harris (2016).
- Greater internal and external integration of Western China looking for new logistics routes (flows of raw material, products and people—cultural exchanges);
- Overcoming the difficulties that the Strait of Malacca presents, from the great flow of vessels to the intense and increasing piracy activity in recent years. The CPEC may mitigate the problems that China has been facing with this issue;
- Caution in relation to diversification of the energy matrix and alternative supply solutions for its growing demand for energy. In this regard, China has been more concerned about global warming, signing the Paris Treaty and introducing innovations that allow the use of other energy sources. Pakistan is a very important ally in this quest and the agreement in question mentioned earlier is an example of this;
- China is putting STI at the center of the debate. This is a really important tool in modern geopolitics, with the likely generation of more adequate results and less conflict.

Now, what exactly would be the issue that would lead us to rethinking geopolitics based on the BRI in the case of Pakistan in particular? There is no mention of the military aspect apart from some important security projects; in other words, they are cooperating in some military sectors, especially in productive areas, but there is no underlying military plan of the initiative. There is no reference in contemporary history of such a clear, well placed and well advertised initiative as the BRI. The expansion of American multinationals was done with the help of the American State in the 1960s and 1970s during the Cold War but not with such an explicit and delimited plan. From an economic planning point of view, there are no precedents, not least because we no longer are living in a Cold War with restricted communication systems. Today, we have access to information and information can be used as propaganda.

Finally, the present study concludes that they are more questions to be asked rather than an effective analysis that we could perform at this moment in time. The efficiency of geopolitics based on cooperation, with elements of STI, is not enough to assert anything beyond the fact that it is a challenging strategy.

It is very important to emphasize that the theoretical framework of geopolitics tends to be accompanied by a very strong ideological content that can disrupt any analysis. The case of Pakistan tends to present a successful example of the initiative. The numbers of the partnership are already reliable, as demonstrated, and the expansion into other areas, as is the case of the Technology Transfer Center, supports this assertion. But caution is necessary since it is a friendly country that, in recent years, has increased tensions with the USA. And, therefore, the strategy of approaching China is far more important than in any other period. In addition to the BRI, it offers an alternative path to develop the neediest areas of the country, especially Balochistan. It is fundamental to separate criticisms that originate in central countries with a long imperialist and colonialist tradition from serious and constructive criticism such as those pointed out in the considerations outlined herein.

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BRICS at the United Nations: An Analytical Model

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Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, many scholars have been studying the new power stratification in the international system. In the multipolar order that arose, concepts as emerging and middle powers have been used to analyze the States that are not great powers but still hold a relative influence on global issues. This paper adds to this debate and aims to deepen the classification applied to the United Nations member States. We reinforce the need to update the traditional approach concerning the intermediate countries since it does not suit the specific case of the BRICS. Accordingly, we will propose an analytical model to comprehend the opportunities available to each group of States. The focus will be on peace and security issues, relying on the effects that these asymmetries can cause on the decision-making process. Thus, we will analyze the BRICS countries using the model to indicate the heterogeneity among them and understand why they do not act as a group in peace and security affairs at the UN.

Keywords: United Nations. Emerging Powers. Peace and Security. BRICS

Introduction

Since the foundation of the International Relations' theoretical field, States have been compared based on their relative power. Although classical theories describe the international system as anarchic, the lack of formal hierarchy does not imply the absence of material and subjective inequalities between countries. With the development of academic studies, the asymmetry between States is no longer a hypothesis and has become a premise, generating concepts such as great power, developing countries, and emerging countries.

This paper departs from the literature of international stratification, understanding this concept instead as hierarchies and differences between States, measured in terms of varied powers. Among the several possibilities of levels and classifications, including the great powers and the small countries, some States are described as middle powers, emerging powers, intermediate countries, and developing countries, among other terms.

In analyzing the impact of this group of intermediate countries, Goldman Sachs' researcher Jim O'Neill aggregated Brazil, Russia, India, and China as States that would have both economic and political potential to influence international relations, creating the acronym BRIC. Subsequently, the adhesion of South Africa in 2011 and the transformation of BRIC into BRICS made the group more representative. Although there is no consensus in the

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literature on the actual status of the BRICS—some call it an alliance, group, forum, or actor, among others—its member States have been commonly categorized as emerging powers, including through the joint declarations (Stuenkel, 2015).

These countries, therefore, would have common demands and challenges and could gather to share transactional costs and seek multilateral solutions to their demands (Visentini, 2013). However, despite being a group that conducts joint negotiations in other instances, the BRICS countries do not act as a coalition within the United Nations, the main multilateral organization. Hence, the research question that this article seeks to answer is: why do the BRICS not act as a negotiating coalition in the UN? Due to the opportunities for dialogue opened by the UN, it draws attention to the fact that the BRICS do not use it as a forum for convergence.

Our main argument is that there are particular asymmetries that hamper the BRICS' joint action at the UN. In this logic, the objective of this paper is to propose an analytical model aimed at understanding the opportunities available to the different strata of countries in the organization, which gives them unequal capacities to influence the decision-making process. The model is grounded on indicators that analyze the State's performance in the UN, based on elements of the organization itself, built on two levels: the asymmetry institutionalized in the UN Charter and the control of organizational resources. We consider that the BRICS countries are a fruitful case study to apply the stratification framework since there is no consensus about their status and—as we will argue—no common ground to group them into the same strata at the UN.

We also believed that, among the different UN thematic agendas, the field of international peace and security is a productive topic of analysis, as this is where asymmetries tend to manifest tangibly. Great powers usually have a strong case to take part in negotiations, and States with less relative power are found to have more difficulty advancing their agendas. The latter often need to appeal to alliances as a strategy for sharing transactional costs, but the BRICS have not been following this pattern.

The UN structure itself formalizes this differentiation by establishing permanent members for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and giving them a central role in decision-making. The BRICS countries are divided into permanent (Russia and China) and non-permanent (Brazil, India and South Africa) members, which thus opens different possibilities for international action and hinders joint action. In the meantime, we propose that, at the UN, the BRICS countries have also asymmetrical organizational resources that requalify their ability to influence the decision-making process of international peace and security. This

condition makes it even more difficult for them to act as a coalition within the organization.

This work was also motivated by concerns and theoretical limitations faced during the writing process of the Ph.D. thesis of both authors, who have the United Nations (UN) as a general object of study. We both participated in the Academic Capacitation Program at the Permanent Mission of Brazil at the United Nations and could experience how the asymmetries between countries manifest openly and vividly. The fieldwork was fundamental to conclude that theory does not capture the practical imbalances of UN power politics.

Thus, this paper is divided into three sections: in the first section, we present the genesis and evolution of the concept of middle power, as well as how it has been applied to study the relational power at the UN. In the following two sections, the structure of the UN stratification model is presented to classify the BRICS countries, based on their capacities to influence the negotiations on peace and security. We hope, therefore, to point out elements to understand why they do not use the UN as a forum for joint engagement. Therefore, this article will start with a literature review section on the theoretical evolution of the debates on the stratification of States in the international system and the UN.

International Politics and State's Stratification

Since the consolidation of the International Relations academic field in the post- World War years, asymmetries between States have been related to the ability of a political unit to lead other political units to do something that they would not otherwise do (Lake, 2010; Mattern, 2010). The first attempts to classify and rank the States in the international system highlighted the prevalence of an orthodox view of power measurement. According to the traditional concept, power was based on material and tangible criteria: population, geographical area, and economic and military data. The control of these elements would embed the great power status.

With the enlargement of the concept, material power has been losing its role as an exclusive indicator of power. Complementarily, the literature has come to value the possession of immaterial resources as a means of ensuring that a State can make another political unit follow its preferred course of action. This alternative form is known as soft power (Nye, 2014). Indeed, the concept consists of demonstrating the symbolic resources in ways that do not involve the use of force, such as a country's international leadership, the relative influence in the management of an international regime, and the ability to be an interlocutor of States with different profiles.

The international system, nonetheless, was still an asymmetric environment, but

opportunities were opened for greater participation by other States that did not fit into the group of great powers. A variety of terms were used to analyze the heterogeneous group of intermediate countries, of which Brazil, Russia, China, South Africa, and India would be part of (Lima, 2005). Among them, it came forth in the literature the classification of emerging powers as a valid concept to interpret this rise of States that, despite domestic and regional differences, share aspects of their international strategies.

Intermediate Strata at the International System

According to Lima (2005), although there is no consensus for a precise definition of the term, emerging powers were initially related to the economic categories of large markets. In this context, their ability to affect international issues would be linked to the projection of their economy and growth. Therefore, Fonseca, Paes & Cunha (2016) argue that the “emerging” predicate derives from the economic jargon of the financial market and has been applied as a classification in multilateral organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Thus, the term emerged related to the emerging market scope and was used interchangeably with the term “developing country” to describe States that were rising in the world’s political and economic hierarchy.

However, analyzing the state only by the economic lenses suggests limitations and raises questions. There are rich countries that are not considered powerful, and influential countries that are not economic powers. In this sense, when studying the study of intermediate States, Milani, Pinheiro & Lima (2017) criticize that the debate on the classification of States is generally summarized in the concept of graduation. The graduation of a State consists of an exogenous classification of financial agencies, which verifies the highest economic reliability and the least subject to crises. It is on this horizon that the Goldman Sachs’ report that coined the term BRIC belongs. According to the authors, this view is only partial, since it conceals processes of social, political and normative developments of States. Hence,

In all these domains, the implication seems to be that the very concepts of North/core and South/periphery can be dismissed—that it is possible through statistical permutations to dispel the world’s disparities, asymmetries, and hierarchies. A concept like ‘graduation’ has been used to blur not only the fundamental divide between wealth and poverty but also the cleavage between rule-makers and rule-takers. (Milani, Pinheiro & Lima, 2017: 6)

As the literature on the subject has been developing in recent times, but without a delimited semantic definition of the concept, several terms have been used to express related ideas. As with the concept of developing countries, as mentioned above, the idea of emerging

power also appeared linked to concepts such as medium, intermediate and regional power. In such cases, dimensions such as peer recognition, alliance building, and projection among neighbors were added to the concept, which was no longer based on market size alone. Therefore, Fonseca, Paes, and Cunha (2017) argue that the concept of emergent power absorbed the need to expand its content to escape the limitations imposed by the circumscription to the economic aspect. In both the literature and the financial market, the idea of emerging power also must come with a political aspect:

The investigation of the semantic patterns of academic usage of the predicate emerging to qualify international agents provided a conceptual prototype of this class of phenomena. Emerging is usually placed as an attribute of power as a reference to an increasing degree of might of a country in politics and international economy. (...) an emerging power would be the one whose diplomatic behavior aims to reform or to review the international order, having material support to its claims. This pattern of behavior is prototypically associated with a non-identity belonging to the status quo of the international order. (Fonseca, Paes & Cunha, 2017: 51-52)

The concept, therefore, has undergone a qualitative reinterpretation and has incorporated a revisionist element: these States seek to reform the international order to broaden their diplomatic possibilities and expectations. As they need to have a material basis for their demands, the reform also focuses on—but is not limited to—financial institutions and the economic environment. Therefore, although the material capability is considered fundamental to enable the reform, there is an element of legitimacy and recognition that is also a necessary condition for systemic projection to be effective.

These subjective characteristics are also seized and expressed by the intermediate States in different ways because, as with economic and military elements, they do not use their immaterial resources of power in the same manner. Therefore, even within this middle power stratum, some authors identify this heterogeneity and suggest subclassifications. Jordaan (2003), for example, argues that the concept should be subdivided into emerging middle powers and traditional middle powers. These categories would be distinct in terms of mutually affecting constitutive and behavioral characteristics.

The traditional middle powers would be developed, stable, democratic and uninfluential in their region, while the emerging middle powers would be semi-peripheral, materially unequal, recent democracies and regionally meaningful. Besides, the traditional ones would have a low impetus for regional action and would be conceding to pressures for order reform; the emerging ones would be reformists and, although inclined towards the integration of their region, would seek to build an identity that distinguishes them from the less developed neighboring countries. Examples of traditional middle powers would be

countries such as Australia, Canada, and Sweden, while emerging medium powers can be illustrated by Brazil, India, and South Africa.

However, some countries raise questions about which category they belong to. A striking example is the situation of Russia and China, which are still classified by financial and trade regimes (such as the World Trade Organization) as developing countries and therefore considered emerging powers. However, in the UN, they both act as major powers since they serve as permanent members of the Security Council (MacFarlane, 2009). As we will argue below, this institutional asymmetry is a central factor that weakens the BRICS' articulation as a negotiating coalition in the organization.

Intermediate Strata at the United Nations

With the redefinitions of the global order derived from the consolidation of multilateral forums, especially after World War II, new international organizations were created by the great powers of the period, and the UN was the most successful example. Consequently, several authors of International Relations have studied the relative positioning of States at the United Nations. The starting point is that, within the UN, the relative status of States is not identical to the system's configuration.

As a result, Albaret (2013) argues that the strategy of the middle powers in the United Nations has reshaped the debate on the central role of the great powers in multilateral institutions. According to the author, if we adopt the classification derived from realism and consider that the attribute of power is the ability to impose its will, there would be an incompatibility of power and multilateral forums, which carry the principles of inclusion and reciprocity. Drawing from this conclusion materializes the liberal perspective that multilateralism changes the power game between States and does not generate a simple reproduction of great powers' politics.

The theoretical debate initially outlined here opens up many clues about the relationship between multilateralism and great powers. However, the contribution finds its limits in the fact that each theory offers a partial view since none proposes to think of them simultaneously. Then, the example of the UN invites us to identify, on the one hand, the practice of the powers (understood here as actors) within and related to the UN game, and, on the other hand, the effects of multilateralism on the great power's game. This double questioning thus allows us to understand how the UN, which emanates from the great powers, renewed the game and became a privileged space for the multilateral strategies of the middle powers. (Albaret, 2013: 2 – author's translation)

According to the author, as the UN has been designed as an institution in which persuasion and argumentation are employed more commonly than the use of force, opportunities of autonomy are opened for emerging powers. These States would be located in

an ambivalent position between seeking a seat in the great powers' table and maintaining, at least in the narrative, the defense of the principles of inclusion and equality. Thus, as the middle powers consider themselves qualified to participate in the international game but not to act on their own, the possible strategies would be coalition building, emphasis on niche diplomacy, and consolidating the image of a trusted member of the international community (Albarete, 2013).

Thus, if the strata in a multilateral organization do not automatically reproduce the asymmetries of the system, it is worth pursuing classifications that consider the impact of the UN structure on the relative position of States. Eduardo Uziel (2015), for example, seeks to outline the following typification of United Nations Member States in the field of international peace and security:

In order to update this classification and make it simpler and more adapted to the reality of the United Nations and the Security Council, this paper considers the following categories: 1) major powers, which occupy the permanent seats in the UNSC (US, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France, known as the P-5) and enjoy special powers in the Organization; 2) middle powers, which through their political and economic weight or contributions to peacekeeping missions can influence decisions or coordinate groups that influence them (this would include Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, India, Pakistan, Japan, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Spain, among others); 3) small powers, which have little chance of making a difference in the decision-making process which even when they are members of the Council. (Uziel, 2015: 38; author's translation)

By Uziel's definition, therefore, Russia and China are not part of the same group as Brazil, India and South Africa, because the permanent seat in the UNSC rescales the international role of these States. The author, therefore, recognizes that the sovereign equality established in the UN Charter does not translate into effective horizontality, a situation that restricts those who can influence international decisions. Therefore, for the author, the UN acts on the principle of nuanced sovereign equality.

If in the international system the BRICS gathering was motivated by the mutuality of emerging power characteristics, the same cannot be said about them in the UN. At the organization, they have divergent agendas and strategies. Albaret and Devin (2016) broaden the debate by considering that the proliferation of expressions to analyze these countries demonstrates the numerous uncertainties caused by the increase in their international projection. However, the authors point out that, in practice, the diversity of strategies in these countries makes cohesion difficult. We consider that the asymmetries between the BRICS countries are an obstacle to the group's consolidation as a negotiating coalition and lead them to choose other forms of interaction.

In light of this debate, the first section aimed to introduce the evolution of the concept of emerging power. As presented, the genesis of the term was related to the idea of emerging markets and developing countries. The evolution of the international system caused an expansion of the concept and added subjective elements, such as recognition and revisionism. Later the concept was applied to the intermediate countries at the United Nations. It was possible to verify that, while the classification of Brazil, India, and South Africa as emerging powers is frequent, there are disagreements about the stratum to which Russia and China belong as they are great powers in the UN, but not formally in economic and financial regimes. Thus, the next section will introduce the proposal of an analytical model, which can be applied to further study the strategies of the BRICS at the UN and to understand their obstacles to conduct joint negotiations in peace and security issues.

UN's First Stratification Level: Nuanced Sovereign Equality as the Institutionalization of Asymmetry Between the Member States

The proposal of a framework to analyze the BRICS in the UN necessarily involves understanding the asymmetries between them. These gaps generate different opportunities and interests and make it difficult to align strategies on peace and security issues. Thus, we propose a two-level model to analyze the heterogeneity of the BRICS in the UN. In this section, we will present the first level of the model, referring to the institutionalized difference between permanent and non-permanent members of the UNSC.

To proceed with the design of the analytical model, we emphasize that asymmetries in member States' capacities to influence the outcome of the organization's decision-making processes in the areas of peace and security are initially based on the legal-institutional framework created by the UN Charter³ itself: the founding document of the organization. By institutionalizing both formal equality and formal hierarchy between its member States, the document enshrines the principle of nuanced sovereign equality.

While the institutionalization of formal equality occurs through the principle of sovereign equality among the member States (Article 2.1), the rationalization of formal hierarchy occurs because the UN Charter: i) endows the Security Council with a restricted composition to 15 members (11 members before the 1963 amendment) and guarantees the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France a differentiated prerogative from the rest by virtue of their permanent membership (article 23.1); ii) requires concurrent vote of the permanent members of the Security Council for the adoption of a qualified majority

³ Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/> (accessed on 25th November 2019)

resolution of the body—that is to say, it guarantees the veto power (article 27.3); (iii) give the Security Council primary responsibility and special duties for the maintenance of international peace and security (Articles 24.1 and 24.2); iv) confers binding legal value on Security Council resolutions (article 25); v) the General Assembly has a subsidiary role in maintaining international peace and security (Articles 11 and 12); vi) does not confer binding legal value on the resolutions of the General Assembly (article 10).

As a result, the peace and security mechanisms created by the UN Charter formally crystallize asymmetries in effective participation. Indeed, we conclude that the US, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France (P5) should be treated as a particular stratum concerning the other member States of the organization due to their ability to influence the UN peace and security decision-making processes. Thus, within the UN, the BRICS do not present themselves as a consistent block beforehand.

However, in the literature reviewed in the first section, we have seen that other member States also have disparities in their ability to influence decision-making. Middle powers, for example, either by their regional projection or by niche diplomacy, have greater possibilities for articulation than small countries. Thus, the second section of the model seeks to advance this issue by introducing other indicators that help in understanding these differences.

UN's Second Stratification Level: Control of organizational resources as elements of asymmetry between Member States

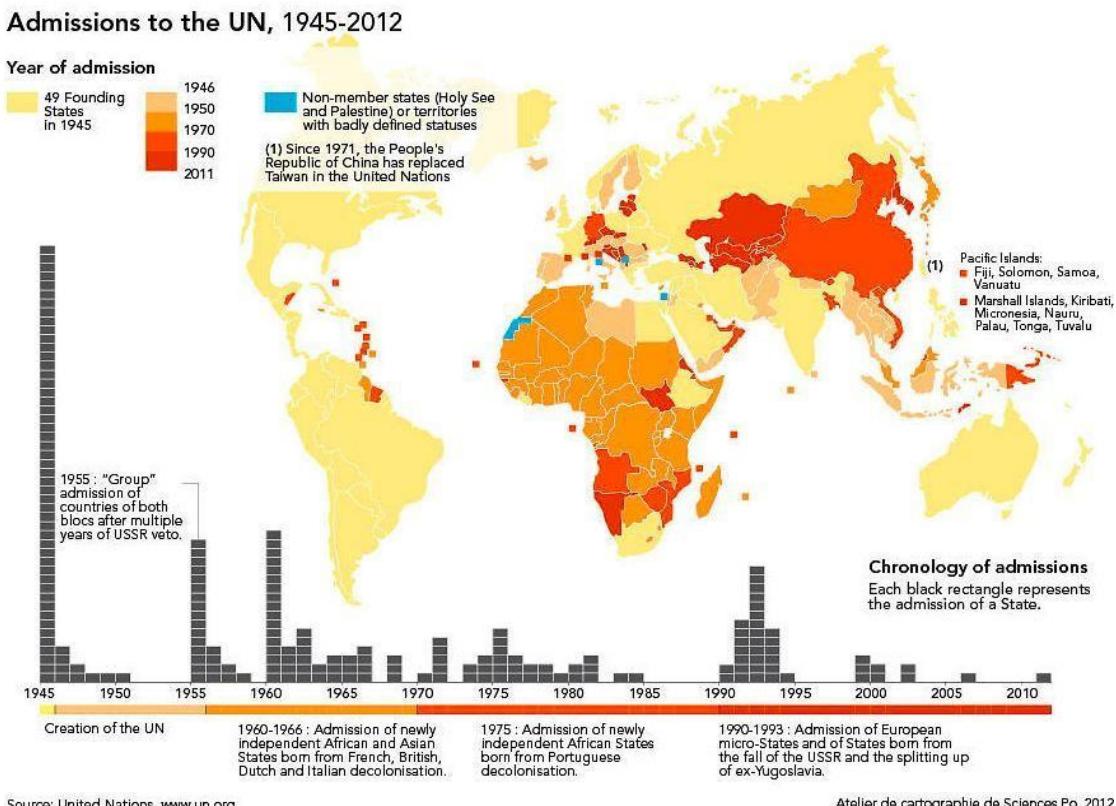
To move forward on the analytical model, we emphasize that, in addition to the UN structure, the asymmetries in member States' capacities to influence peace and security decision-making are also based on disparities in the control of organizational power resources. The definition of organizational power employed here is proposed by Hardy and Clegg (1996), who analyzed the control of informal resources as an institutional asset. According to the authors, this power is composed of technical knowledge of the organization's culture and sociability rites. Thus, actors who know the normative details and master the rules of procedures have a greater ability to maximize their earnings. In this regard, we consider that in the UN peace and security agenda, these resources are composed of the following elements.

Historical Commitment to the United Nations on International Peace and Security Issues

In this first element, we consider that the history of the State's participation in the peace and security organs endows it with practical knowledge, informational control, and agency capacity to present solutions and be recognized by others as a credible interlocutor (Baccarini, 2017). Therefore, the date of entry into the UN should be taken into account as it indicates the

time by which the State could start to learn and introduce practices into the organization. The image below compares the date of entry of member States, from the original members to the most recent entry (South Sudan, in 2012)

Image 1: Admissions to the UN (1945-2012)⁴



Along these lines, as the body that has the central prerogative to deal with the issue, one should also consider the background of participation in the Security Council. For non-permanent members, the quantity of mandates is an important indicator since, as it is an elective seat, it shows not only the recognition of other States in the voting process but also the greater possibilities of influencing decision-making. The image below illustrates the representation at the UNSC and highlights the countries with the most mandates.

⁴ Available at:
http://cartotheque.sciences-po.fr/media/Admissions_to_the_UN_1945-2012/1257/ (accessed on 29th November 2019)

Image 2: Mandates of Non-Permanent Members (1945-2016)⁵



Source: LIMA et al, 2017: 34⁶.

From this data, it is already possible to introduce preliminary considerations about the BRICS. All five are UN members, but UNSC membership differs: Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) and China (represented by Taiwan until 1971) have been permanent members since the organization's creation, and Brazil and India are among the countries with more rotating terms: 10 and 7 respectively. South Africa was represented at the UNSC only on three occasions—less than half that of India. The African country was also suspended from the organization and was the subject of several condemning resolutions during the apartheid regime. Thus, not only are Russia and China prominent in this criterion but there are gaps between Brazil, India and, above all, South Africa.

Besides, under Article 30 of the Charter, the UNSC has the prerogative to establish its own rules of procedure, which are governed by the Provisional Rules of Procedure (S/96)⁷, revised and amended on several occasions since its establishment in 1946. Because they are considered provisional, several changes in the working methods were conducted through informal mechanisms. Thus, the permanent members have the institutional memory and mastery of the working methods of the body, which gives them the technical knowledge to operationalize the rules in their favor.

⁵ None of the non-permanent members with the most mandates were in the UNSC between 2016 and 2019, the year of this paper's publication, which, therefore, does not alter the argument presented here.

⁶ The reference and the page of this source are part of the Portuguese version of the book mentioned. The English version is yet to be published. We thank the authors for kindly letting us use the images firsthand

⁷ The original document and the revisions can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/rules/> (accessed 19 Nov 2019)

Non-permanent members have a short term of only two years, which makes the number of mandates a relevant piece of information to verify the country's knowledge of the procedures. Once within the UNSC, the country also broadens the possibilities of being elected to lead UN subcommittees or to engage more directly in peacekeeping operations, as we will further develop below.

Ability to Act Continually at the United Nations

We also consider that in conjunction with the country's history of participation, it is necessary to observe qualitative criteria for such engagement, such as the size of the country's permanent delegation to the UN. A consistent number of diplomats are important both for attending meetings and leading working groups and for their ability to monitor and gather information. In this sense, according to Albaret (2013),

It has become a commonplace to stress that States do not have the same resources: the disparity in size of permanent missions at the United Nations (varying from 2 to 148 people), underlines the differences between States in relation to access to information and agenda items, the matrix of discussions, the ability to position themselves in negotiations, etc. These human and organizational resources contribute in some way to the reproduction of the international hierarchy within the UN game. (Albaret, 2013: 1, author's translation)

In addition to the number of members, it is also necessary to analyze the composition of the delegation by the career level of the diplomats working in the mission. A significant number of high-level employees indicate that the country attaches importance to the organization and is willing to direct qualified personnel to work.

In this realm, there are significant differences to be mentioned between the BRICS. Because they are permanent members, Russia and China need to have a greater number of representatives to attend simultaneous meetings and gather information on all the agenda items. According to data from 2018, Russia has a delegation of 81 employees on its permanent mission; of these, 22 hold the titles of Ambassador, Minister or Counselor (the highest positions available). Meanwhile, the Chinese delegation is composed of 89 employees, of which 27 occupy the three highest positions.

In turn, the Brazilian delegation has 40 staff members, and 10 are Ambassadors, Ministers or Counselors. Out of the 40, 4 are military personnel, who attend peacekeeping operations meetings. Even though it is half of the staff of Russia and China, the Brazilian delegation is larger than the other two BRICS members. India has 27 employees and only 6 are in the highest hierarchy. South Africa, despite having the smallest delegation among the BRICS with 24 employees, has more high-ranking representatives than Brazil and India;

among the 24, 11 are either Ambassadors, Ministers or Counselors.

Material Contribution to the United Nations in the Field of International Peace and Security

In addition to the human resources at the Permanent Mission, we should consider the contribution effectively made to international peace and security. To begin with, it could be analyzed through budget indicators, such as the share that the country represents in the general budget of the organization. Also, the contribution to the peacekeeping operations budget should be added to the analysis.

The table below shows the top ten contributors to the UN's regular budget and the percentage of their contribution. All member States need to pay a share, in percentages ranging from 22% to 0.001%. It is possible to see the great concentration of power in the hands of the P5, besides the expressive participation of Germany and Japan (countries that claim a permanent seat in the UNSC). Of the three BRICS countries that are not permanent members of the UNSC, only Brazil is among the top ten contributors. India contributes with 0.737% and South Africa with 0.364%, according to 2018 data.

Table 1: Top Ten Contributors to the UN's Regular Budget (2018)⁸

Member State	Share (%)	Gross (US\$)
1) United States	22,00%	591 388 114
2) Japan	9,680%	260 210 770
3) China	7,921%	212 926 602
4) Germany	6,389%	171 744 484
5) France	4,859%	130 616 129
6) United Kingdom	4,463%	119 971 143
7) Brazil	3,863%	102 767 125
8) Italy	3,748%	100 751 030
9) Russia	3,088%	83 009 386
10) Canada	2,921%	78 520 213

Source: author's elaboration based on data from the United Nations Contributions Committee (2018)⁹

In addition to contributing to the regular budget, financial contributions to

⁸ We could not find data for the same years for this section. Thus, some sources presented data from different years. However, there was no significant change in the UN in this period that could cause significant variations in the trends presented.

⁹ Annual data available at <<http://www.un.org/en/ga/contributions/budget.shtml>> (accessed 7th May 2019)

peacekeeping operations may also add to the analysis. As peacekeeping mandates are approved by the UNSC, permanent members, besides being able to interfere directly with the content of the resolutions, can also influence its implementation through its relevance to financial and personnel contributions. The chart below illustrates the distribution of payments and compares major powers (P5), middle powers and countries with lower projection.

Image 5: Contributions to Peacekeeping Budget (2014)



Source: LIMA *et al*, 2017: 34¹⁰.

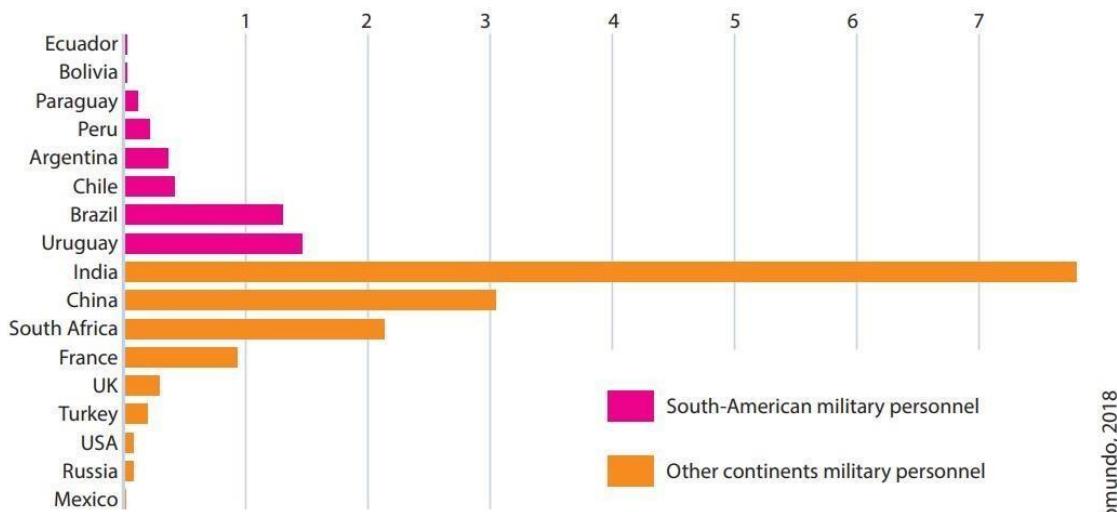
From the data, we can see that Russia and China contribute significantly more than the other members of the BRICS. Brazil is the major contributor among the countries of South America and the other emerging powers. South Africa and India contribute less than other emerging countries such as Turkey and Mexico.

¹⁰ The reference and the page of this source are part of the Portuguese version of the book mentioned. The English version is yet to be published. We thank the authors for kindly letting us use the images firsthand.

Image 6: Personnel to Peacekeeping Operations (2015)

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS MILITARY PERSONNEL

Main contributions by country, in million people, on 2015 December



Source: Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2016.

Labmundo, 2018

Source: LIMA *et al*, 2017: 34.

In the troop contribution, there is a reverse trend compared to the largest financiers. There is a tangible division of labor between those who pay and those who go to the field. India emerges as the largest personnel contributor, followed by China, both of whom are two emerging powers with more than 1 billion inhabitants. South Africa contributes more than Russia and Brazil.

Motivations for emerging countries to supply peacekeeping operations include training opportunities in real-world crisis and conflict scenarios, sharing of military doctrine with other States, and reimbursement of amounts spent on deployed troops. Contributions to peacekeeping operations are also one of the criteria used to compose the Peacebuilding Commission, established in 2006. The five largest financial contributors and the five largest troop contributors guarantee representation.

The Capacity of Coordinating International Negotiations

Besides the historic presence at the UN and its financial and human resources contribution to peace and security, we propose that the country's negotiating capacity also interferes with its ability to exercise real power and influence. To tackle this point, we should add an institutional policy-building capacity element to check if the country participates in the UN's negotiating groups.

We argue that membership in the United Nations' peace and security concertation groups alters the State's ability to influence the decision-making processes. This is because

these conditions modify the negotiating capacity of a state to the extent that: (i) by reconciling its position within the group, it has a greater capacity to consolidate a majority in voting processes; ii) by concerting its position within the group, the state can endow its position with greater representativeness (quantitative and qualitative).

As shown, the BRICS countries are not a negotiating coalition in the UN and have different interests to settle peace and security issues. For this reason, the UN is not the BRICS's main arena. As a result, they are not one of the negotiating groups recognized by the organization¹¹. An accurate example of the divergence of strategies among the five was the paradigmatic case of Resolution 1973 in 2011 concerning the establishment of an air ban zone in Libya. At the time, the five BRICS were simultaneously at the UNSC, but despite previously coordinating positions to abstain and thus question the legitimacy of the resolution, South Africa changed the vote and was in favor of the US proposal (Oliveira *et al*, 2015). This indicates that a particular interest prevailed over the group's concertation. Also, Onuki and Oliveira (2013) point out that there is no data to suggest that the BRICS adopted a convergent posture not even in the General Assembly.

Among the negotiating coalitions that these countries participate in are the G77 (from the BRICS, only Russia is not a member), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM, in which South Africa and India are full members, and Brazil and China are observers), and the Joint Coordinating Committee (which unites the G77 and the NAM). Furthermore, the UN divides States for electoral purposes into regional geopolitical groups. Brazil is part of the Latin America and Caribbean Group (GRULAC); Russia is part of the Eastern Europe Group; India and China are part of the Group of Asian States; and South Africa is part of the Group of African States. Therefore, there is a difference in agenda and identity that makes the BRICS countries seek other coalitions as priority discussion forums at the UN.

Capacity to Occupy Central Positions in Resolutions' Negotiations

Over time, mechanisms have been created to make the structural and institutional boundaries of the UNSC more flexible for decision-making and debate among States. Such a concession allows, for example, that States and negotiating groups not represented in the UNSC could attend meetings and voice their views in open debates. However, Baccarini (2017) presents some reflections that conclude that the proliferation of informal groups and negotiations has led to the emergence of a consensual decision-making pattern, where the ability to influence

¹¹ The list of negotiating groups recognized by the organization can be consulted here: <https://outreach.un.org/mun/content/groups-member-states> (access on 26th Nov 2019).

the outcome remains concentrated in P5. For the author, the permanent members decide in advance the terms that they are willing to agree and concede, and the documents that go to other States are previously negotiated and written.

Thus, such apparent openness to other States' engagement is counterbalanced by the practice of the penholder, a method instituted in 2010. The topics on the UNSC agenda are divided among its members, who are responsible for drafting the first resolution sketch. Data from the Security Council Report¹² confirms Baccarini's (2017) position that such a system has deepened the negotiating gap between P5 and non-permanent members, who rarely act as the penholder and are therefore relegated to the role of proposing minor amendments. When the document is already written, there is a substantial increase in the political cost of opposition.

In 2017, out of 39 themes in the Security Council agenda, permanent members are penholder in 25 themes. The convergence is even clearer by focusing on the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, which participate in 24 themes. It is noted here that, even among the permanent members, there are differences as to the centrality of the normative production process, with the Western powers controlling the initial versions of the documents. Even when the non-permanent members are the penholders, it is never a fulfilled work: they often inherit the drafts written by the previous penholder or leave them to the following one after they leave the UNSC.

In the second level of the analytical framework, regarding the control of organizational resources, we confirm once again the BRICS are subdivided into two strata, which is an obstacle to the joint formulation of strategies at the UN. Moreover, the control of organizational resources further separates the ability of these States to act jointly and differentiates States within the same stratum. We argue that, while differences do not impede concerted negotiation, the aspects that the BRICS have in common in the international system are not reflected in peace and security issues within the UN. The five have different agendas, interests, and strategies, and they have asymmetrical capacities to influence decision-making. Thus, the table below summarizes the two levels of the model and summarizes the criteria and classification levels of the UN member States.

Table 2: United Nations Member States Stratification Model in the Field of International Peace and Security

¹² Available at:<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/images/briefs/February%202017%20Insert.pdf> (access on 26th Nov 2019)

• *Great Powers*: Compared to the other member States, they form a particular category of countries that, because of their relative position in the asymmetry formalized by institutional design and the imbalance in the control of organizational power resources, have a greater capacity to influence the results of United Nations decision-making processes concerning the maintenance of international peace and security. This is because this category of member States has: (i) greater ability to influence the outcome of Security Council decision-making, ie the ability to directly influence all outcomes; ii) greater control of organizational resources. This stratum includes the five permanent members of the UNSC: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China.

• *Middle Powers*: Compared to the great powers, they form a particular category of Member States which, because of their relative position in the asymmetry formalized by institutional design and the imbalance in the control of organizational power resources, have less ability to influence the international peace and security negotiating process. Compared to the other member States, they are a stratum that has a greater capacity to influence the outcome of United Nations decision-making processes.

Emerging powers such as Brazil, India and South Africa are part of this stratum, and there are differences in resource control between them.

• *Other Member States*: Compared to the great and middle powers, they form a category of member States which, due to their relative position in the asymmetry formalized by the institutional design and the imbalance in the control of organizational power resources, have less capacity to influence the outcome of United Nations decision-making processes regarding the maintenance of international peace and security

Source: author's own work.

Therefore, we argue that the two levels must be taken into consideration to build a model that allows us to understand why the BRICS do not use the UN peace and security scope as a forum for interaction. We emphasize that this is due to the mismatches regarding the institutionalization of asymmetry in the UN Charter and the possession of organizational resources. The combination of the two levels highlights that the BRICS have different strategies, agendas, and possibilities in this area, which makes it difficult for the coalition to be effective. The five countries are divided into two strata and are not homogeneous with the

other countries in the category they are part of.

However, we would like to point out that the placement of a State in each of the strata presented by the model needs to be constantly reviewed, as there may be upward or downward mobility from one category to another. This alteration may occur due to a change in the organization's legal and institutional framework (though unlikely, it cannot be considered impossible). Also, this mobility may occur due to variations in the control of organizational power resources by member States over time. We, therefore, reaffirm that, in the conditions under which the UN operates today, there are several barriers to thinking about the BRICS as a group, especially in the agenda of international peace and security.

Final Remarks

Reading about the UN and experiencing the daily life of the organization are two distinct and often distant tasks. By entering the headquarters and observing the negotiating dynamics, the bargaining for votes, and the veiled threats, the literature seems to be an abstract production, detached from reality. International Relations courses and classical texts teach that States have different powers in the system but knowing this data and living this asymmetry are separate processes. Therefore, the main motivation of this work was the search for an analytical model that approaches the nuances within the largest multilateral organization in the world.

Thus, the main goal of this paper was to introduce an analytical model comprising the asymmetries of the different strata of countries in the United Nations, which gives them unequal capacities to influence the decision-making process. Although in other forums the BRICS countries are considered emerging powers, we indicate that in the case of UN peace and security scope the group is subdivided: as permanent members of the UNSC, Russia and China are great powers. Therefore, the first section sought to conceptualize the term “emergent power” and stressed that it is not possible to homogenize this intermediate stratum.

In the following section, the paper presented elements and indicators that were relevant to analyze the negotiating capacity of the BRICS in peace and security issues. These include the size and composition of the permanent mission to the UN, the material contribution to the UN (especially the peace and security sectors), and the capacity for international concertation.

Since the paper seeks to fill a gap in the literature, in which theory appears detached from practice, the model is open to future applications in case studies. New research agendas involve exploring the similarities and disparities between Russia and China, on one hand, and between Brazil, India and South Africa, on the other hand. It is also appropriate to adapt the model to fit countries that are not permanent members of the UNSC but also do not fit into the

emerging power category, like Germany and Japan. With this initial effort, we expect to contribute to the academic field with a model that can be adapted, applied and tested in future studies.

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International Relations Theory and the BRICS Phenomenon

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Abstract

This article examines the BRICS phenomenon through the prism of several International Relations theories. Particularly, power transition theory, soft power and peaceful coexistence concepts, the theory of “global regionalism” and status theories are reviewed. Each of them suggests its own theoretical interpretation of the BRICS phenomenon, as well as its own vision of this group’s role in world politics and economy. It is safe to assume that despite limitations of these theories each of them has some explanatory power. Being used together they can be helpful for studying - in an interdisciplinary way - a complex phenomenon, such as the BRICS. A number of modern theories hold that, along with the pursuit of purely material and pragmatic interests, the BRICS countries actively use this integration association to strengthen their positions in the world arena and elevate their international status.

It should be noted that the BRICS was rather successful in presenting itself as a new model of world order which is a serious alternative to the existing one dominated by the West. It is based on the principles of cooperation, mutual respect and balance of interests, rather than dictate, discrimination, hierarchy and balance of power. It is too early to ascertain that a principally new type of an international institution was born within the BRICS format. However, there is no doubt that some positive experience has already been accumulated by this forum, and that this grouping has some good prospects for the future. For this reason, it will remain of considerable interest for International Relations theory.

Keywords: BRICS, International Relations Theory, alternative world order

Introduction

From the very beginning, the BRICS intergovernmental forum was in the world academic community’s research focus. Despite its relatively young age, the BRICS already has a rather rich historiography in which several kinds of work can be distinguished. The first category includes publications on the BRICS’ history, including its sources and evolution over the time (Korshunov, 2013; Lukyanov, 2011; Nadkarni & Noonan, 2013; Simha, 2013; Toloraya, 2011 and 2014; Wolfe, 2008). In particular, researchers were interested in the motives of the founding States when they joined the grouping. This type of work was characteristic of the early stage in the study of the BRICS phenomenon.

The most typical research on the BRICS is done by economists who were interested in

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the study of the economic potential of individual BRICS countries, their impact on global economic and financial processes, and their cooperation with each other in the fields of economics, trade, finance, environmental protection and so on (Glinkin, 2014; Leksyutina, 2017; Nadkarni & Noonan, 2013; Toloraya, 2014; Toloraya & Chukov, 2016; Toloraya, Yurtaev & Ajdrus, 2016). In particular, a wide range of studies is devoted to the BRICS countries' strategies aimed to attract foreign direct investment to ensure their dynamic development. Economists also focus on the comparison of the aggregate economic power of the Group of 7 (G7) and the BRICS, as well as on the study of 'correlation of forces' between these two informal groups (Korshunov, 2013; Kuzmin, 2013; Okuneva, 2012; Panova, 2013).

Very few works examined the BRICS development as a special mechanism of interstate cooperation, including its ability to initiate changes in the global economic governance system (Fulquet, 2015; Glinkin, 2014; Leksyutina, 2016 and 2017; Okuneva, 2012; Toloraya, 2011 and 2014; Toloraya & Chukov, 2016; Toloraya, Yurtaev & Ajdrus, 2016; BRICS: New Configurations of Global Power, 2015).

Research that tries to interpret the BRICS theoretically as an embryo of an alternative economic and political world order is even less common (De Coning et al., 2015; Fulquet, 2015; Konyshov, Nocen & Sergunin, 2017; Stuenkel, 2014a and 2014b). It should be noted that the BRICS phenomenon requires not only applied analysis, but also theoretical comprehension. Theoretical reflection helps to avoid limitations of a purely empirical explanation of the nature, mechanisms and perspectives of the evolution of the BRICS. Is the BRICS just another institution of interstate cooperation which fits into a system of already existing structures, or is it a fundamentally different mode of international relations that can seriously change the present-day world politics? What drives the BRICS countries' policies? Can the BRICS group become an alternative to the domination of the Western powers, which is formalized in the present system of international institutions and regimes? Will this institution provide fundamentally new conditions which may lead to the development of international cooperation as opposed to power politics pursued by the U.S. and its allies? Can the BRICS be considered a new mechanism of global governance, or is it nothing more than a temporary/short-lived intergovernmental arrangement?

With no ambitions to attack all above questions, this study examines how the main International Relations theories (IRTs) interpret the BRICS phenomenon. The goal is not only to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of these theories, but also to identify their heuristic potential for studying such a complex phenomenon as the BRICS.

This study is based on the assumption that the BRICS is a promising integration association which so far has no formalized institutional or organizational nature and which is therefore best understood as an intergovernmental discussion forum rather than a full-fledged international organization. However, the BRICS has every chance of becoming an influential institution of global governance playing by rules different from those imposed on the international system by the most powerful Western States.

It should be noted that the BRICS' dynamic and multidimensional nature constantly challenges IRT in terms of explaining this phenomenon and predicting its future development. For this reason, among many IRTs dealing with the study of international institutions, we selected only those that, on the one hand, are the most influential within their respective IRT paradigms and, on the other, represent the most interesting conceptual interpretations of the BRICS.

Power Transition Theory

The power transition theory (PTT), first proposed by A.F.K. Organski (1958), is the most popular theoretical approach to the study of the BRICS phenomenon among the Western scholars. The PTT (being developed within the framework of the neorealist IRT paradigm) is based on the assumption that changes in power balance in world politics happen systematically. This theory believes that conflicts and wars are normally the results of the growing influence of States competing with the dominant powers. In this regard, all States are divided into two groups: those which support the status quo, and “revisionists.” Powerful and influential States, such as the United States, enjoy the advantages of the established world order and fall into the status quo category, while States dissatisfied with their place and role in the international relations system are considered revisionists. According to the PTT, the latter favor radical changes in the existing international order. In this sense, Russia and China are the primary candidates for the revisionist powers, while Brazil, India and South Africa are perceived by the PTT as the states with ‘moderate’ revisionist ambitions (mostly of a regional character, although Brazil and India have some global aspirations such as their intention to become permanent members of the UN Security Council).

According to the PTT, present-day Russia is a typical revisionist state. Experts from the Heritage Foundation, a conservative American think tank, see in this regard several problems that Russia creates for the United States and its allies. In their opinion, the Putin regime is challenging democratic values, as manifested by a combination of citizens' political, civil and economic rights violations and a weak economy. The restoration of Russia's military, political and diplomatic powers creates a strategic challenge to the West and its allies. In particular, they

believe that the threat to the U.S.-friendly countries, such as Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, the Baltic States, Finland and Sweden, is constantly growing. The problem is amplified by Russia's cooperation with the "rogue States," such as Syria, Iran and North Korea (Carafano, 2015). Similar assessments are made with regard to the PRC's (People's Republic of China) foreign policies (Cheng, 2016).

While the revisionist powers are viewed as a source of the international system's destabilization and their activities are automatically associated with negative consequences, the dominant (*status quo*) States' behavior is considered positive because they perform protective functions within the above system. Paradoxically, from this point of view, the cases, such as the NATO military intervention in Kosovo (1999) which led to the final collapse of Yugoslavia, U.S. ballistic missile defense system deployment in Europe, NATO's eastward expansion, Western sponsorship of a series of "color revolutions" in the post-Soviet space, bullying Iran, American military assistance to Taiwan, U.S. navy's regular demonstration of the free navigation principle in the South China Sea, etc., cannot be seen as revisionist acts and do not pose a threat to Russia, PRC or anyone (Carafano, 2015: 3).

The PTT proponents differ by their evaluation of revisionist behavior's sources and motivation. More moderate experts believe that sources of such behavior lie in Russia's and the PRC's failure to build democracy and market economy domestically, which prevents them from fully integrating into the world economy and global governance system (Granholm et al., 2014: 10, 26–29]. A more radical point of view is that, due to Russia's and China's historical/civilizational peculiarities, they are fundamentally unable to integrate with the West (Carafano, 2015: 3).

Brazil's, India's and South Africa's 'moderate' revisionist policies are explained first and foremost by their ambitions to play a role of 'regional hegemonies' in South America, South Asia and Africa, respectively. However, in contrast with Brazil and South Africa which have no 'hot' conflicts with their neighbors and primarily use the soft power arsenal to achieve dominant positions in their 'spheres of influence', India faces much more serious security challenges including territorial disputes with China and Pakistan and—occasionally—military confrontation with the latter.

It should be noted that individual BRICS countries' policies are assessed differently. One group of the PTT supporters sees the BRICS as an instrument allowing some of its members to secure their great power status and counterbalance the West at the regional and global levels. However, the majority of the PTT followers sees the BRICS countries' international standing

differently: while Brazil, China and India are viewed as rising powers, Russia and South Africa are seen as declining powers due to their economic problems. To respond to challenges posed by the PRC and Russia different variants of containment policy are suggested by the PTT proponents.

However, not all PTT theorists see BRICS countries as revisionist powers. Some of them take the view that even Putin's Ukraine policy can be seen as a status quo strategy that aims to secure Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space and counterbalance NATO's eastward expansion [Charap & Shapiro, 2014; Kühn, 2015]. These analysts believe that the same (status quo) motives drive Beijing's and Moscow's behavior at the global level. For example, the PRC and Russia are quite skeptical about the United Nations (UN) reform preferring to keep intact its structure and powers. However, other BRICS participants (e.g., Brazil, India and South Africa), on the contrary, express their interest in the UN reform in the hope that their status will be elevated both in the UN Security Council and generally in the UN system.

The status quo version of the PTT believes that many problems with BRICS countries stem from the fact that they were not integrated on an equal footing into the international security system which has emerged in the post-Cold War era. The West crossed some "red lines" which were established by Russia in the post-Soviet space. For example, the August 2008 Russian-Georgian armed conflict was a clear manifestation of such Western policy. The Saakashvili regime launched an attack against South Ossetia, being confident that it would be backed by both Washington and Brussels. The Ukrainian crisis, which started in 2014 and continues to this date, is another example. When the Kiev authorities who came into power after the removal of the Yanukovich regime openly stated their intention to join the European Union (EU) and NATO, Moscow reintegrated Crimea into Russia and supported pro-Russian rebels in the Donbass (southeastern part of Ukraine).

In this group's view, Russia's policy is determined not only by its geopolitical but also by its geo-economic interests. Particularly, there is an ongoing competition between two – Russian and EU's - integration projects in the post-Soviet space: Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union and the EU-run Eastern Partnership program (Collins, 2015: 3; Sergunin, 2013). Proponents of this point of view believe that it is better to cooperate rather than confront Russia. The same approach is suggested with regard to other BRICS countries including, for example, China's "Belt and Road" or "New Silk Road" initiative.

Despite a number of advantages, the PTT also has many shortcomings. This theory was more applicable to the period of the Cold War, when two superpowers were interested in

maintaining the status quo because of the threat of mutual destruction in the event of nuclear war. The present-day international relations system, including its structure, is still in its formative phase. In this context, the PTT can explain little about the BRICS States' behavior.

Moreover, the PTT does not take into account the existence of a third type of State— the reformist ones which do not fully agree with the existing international relations system, but prefer not to radically change the “rules of the game.” Instead, they try to adapt these rules to dynamic changes in the world order to make them more fair and comfortable for all the members of the international community. Quite often, these States do not behave as revisionists, but rather they favor the status quo by demanding that the previously established “rules of the game” and international legal norms should be observed. For example, the BRICS countries firmly oppose any attempts to revise the UN Charter regarding the use of military force and the principles of inviolability of state sovereignty and noninterference in the internal affairs of sovereign States (as opposed to the Western doctrine of “humanitarian intervention”) (Konyshhev, Kubyshkin & Sergunin, 2015; Sergunin, 2010].

At the same time, the BRICS countries are unhappy with the current order of things, in which a small group of highly developed countries dominates and tries to impose its rules on the rest of the world. The BRICS countries would like to change the existing world order, but in an evolutionary rather than radical (revolutionary) way, which justifies considering them reformist rather than revisionist powers (Hansen, Sergunin, 2015). The BRICS countries are also striving to cultivate an image of themselves not as spoilers or revisionists, but as reformers of the existing unfair international relations system. For instance, they are trying to create alternative financial institutions that would help prevent a new global financial and economic crisis (Mikhailenko, 2016; The Moscow Times, 2014).

As recent BRICS documents show, this forum also assumes responsibility in other areas of world politics – the environment, the fight against the negative effects of climate change, international terrorism, transnational organized crime, cybercrime and the reform of leading international organizations, including the UN (BRICS, 2017; 2018; 2019;2020). In general, the BRICS countries demonstrate their willingness to build a more efficient model of world order, and they try to do this in a non- confrontational way (Mikhailenko, 2016).

To sum up, if the PTT supporters want this theory to better fit into the present-day realities and retain its explanatory power, they need to revise the typology of States they use and supplement it with a new (“reformist”) type of powers.

Soft Power Concept

The neoliberal IR theorists believe that the BRICS phenomenon can be better explained by the soft power concept. They underline that in contrast with the Cold War era, when many countries preferred to rely on hard (military) power, nowadays soft power instruments are more effective. The neoliberals note that soft power strategy is attractive to the BRICS countries for a number of reasons. First, it can help them overcome their negative image in the international arena, the image that resulted from their systematic involvement in a series of international conflicts (Russia versus Georgia and Ukraine; China versus its neighbors in the South China Sea; India versus Pakistan and China; South Africa versus Angola and Namibia). Second, the soft power arsenal can also be helpful in diversifying BRICS countries' methods of geopolitical and geoeconomic expansion and making these methods more effective.

Some specifics in the BRICS countries' interpretation of the soft power concept should be noted. First and foremost, the BRICS States interpret soft power differently from its initial meaning advanced by Joseph Nye, who defined soft power as the power of attraction. In reality, however, BRICS (especially Russian and Chinese) soft power policies are often dominated by pragmatic interests rather than the aim to be attractive for other countries. For this reason, such soft power strategies do not always take into account international partners' preferences. In Nye's view, this is often unacceptable to BRICS countries' partners and may even provoke a hostile reaction to their soft power initiatives (Nye, 2013).

As some experts rightly note the BRICS' reading of the soft power concept is much broader than Nye's one. Nye (2004: 11) believed that the soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture, its political values and its foreign policies which should be attractive to foreign partners. The BRICS theorists, however, tend to include to the soft power problematique everything which cannot be attributed to the hard (military) security agenda. In other words, for the BRICS countries, the soft power concept is synonymous to the soft (non-military) security concept which includes not only diplomatic and socio-cultural components (according to Nye) but also other elements, such as, for example, economic and/or financial power [Gronskaya, Makarychev, 2010; Tsygankov, 2013; Sergunin, Karabeshkin, 2015; Tsygankov, 2012]. The latter was unacceptable for Nye who believed that economic and financial instruments can be tools of coercion and payment rather than attraction.

Furthermore, for the BRICS theorists, soft power is an umbrella concept which covers other closely related concepts – public diplomacy, peoples' diplomacy, the humanitarian dimension of politics and NGO-diplomacy. Among soft power instruments, economic and financial tools,

cultural cooperation, ethnic diasporas, and educational and religious institutions are preferable methods for the BRICS countries. The BRICS States established special bodies for soft power implementation: for example, China's Confucius Institutes, Russia's Rossotrudnichestvo (agency for cooperation with compatriots abroad), "Russian World", Gorchakov and Andrei Pervozvanny foundations are among others.

It should be also noted that BRICS interpretations of the soft power concept are rather instrumentalist. For them, the soft power potential is just one of many tools to protect their national interests, which should be used pragmatically and, if necessary, in combination with other methods, including the coercive ones.

In these countries, soft power policy is controlled and directed to a large extent by the government and this makes it less flexible and effective. In Nye's (2013) opinion, Russia and China made a mistake by underestimating the importance of civil society's institutes and initiatives, while, for instance, in the U.S. the main sources of soft power are universities, NGOs, cinema and pop culture rather than the government. According to Nye, the state should multiply the effect of the civil society's activities rather than limit them.

However, it would be wrong to depict BRICS soft power strategies as a complete failure. Along with some shortcomings, these strategies have certain achievements and competitive advantages. For example, the BRICS managed to successfully demonstrate the inclusive nature of its cooperative format. The BRICS countries are located on different continents and have different political systems, levels of economic development, histories and cultural traditions. However, the BRICS shows that different countries are able to overcome old conflicts, negative historical experiences, mutual misperceptions and successfully cooperate in a mutually beneficial way.

Moreover, in contrast with the West, over the last 20 years the BRICS has demonstrated its success in the field of socioeconomic development. In 1990–2015, the share of Western countries in the world gross domestic product (GDP) fell from 78.7% to 56.8%, while the share of emerging economies increased from 19.0% to 39.2% (UN database, 2018). Even Brazil's and Russia's economic hardships over the last five years did not reverse this trend.

Finally, India, China and Russia have long histories and unique cultures which have substantially enriched world culture and still remain very attractive for other nations.

Generally speaking, BRICS countries use soft power in their own way, trying to avoid copying the Western experience and going beyond Nye's "narrow" interpretation of the soft power concept. In practical terms, they stick to an instrumentalist and pragmatic approach to the

use of soft power which is oriented to the promotion and protection of national interests rather than taking into account international partners' preferences. It should be noted that these States' policy makers and expert/academic communities have not yet developed a clear terminology with regard to soft power and this negatively affects both theoretical understanding and effectiveness of this political instrument. At the same time, BRICS countries have a tremendous soft power potential which can strengthen their international positions if it is properly used. On a number of occasions, BRICS countries demonstrated successful use of the soft power arsenal: China's economic, financial and cultural expansion in South East Asia, Africa and Latin America; Beijing's "Belt and Road" initiative; Russia's rather successful integrationist projects in the post-Soviet space (Eurasian Economic Union, Collective Security Treaty Organization), etc.

Peaceful Coexistence Theory

Historically, the peaceful coexistence concept was and is one of the distinctive characteristics of Russia's, India's and China's foreign policies although Moscow and New Delhi do not use it in their official vocabularies since the end of the Cold War. It was developed – in various forms – by representatives of neoliberalism, globalism and neorealism.

In Russia, it emerged in the initial period of the Soviet state, during a time in which it had to operate in a hostile capitalist environment. Peaceful coexistence did not stop confrontation with world capitalism but, since the Soviet leadership led by Vladimir Lenin felt itself isolated, it preferred to transform its confrontation with the West from the military to nonmilitary spheres. In Lenin's interpretation, avoiding armed conflict did not mean peace with capitalism, which was seen as hostile by definition. On the contrary, he considered peaceful coexistence to be the transformation of war into other forms of rivalry, first and foremost economic competition that could demonstrate the advantages of the socialist development model (Lenin, 1970: 78).

This concept dominated the Soviet foreign policy thinking in the post-World War II period, including Mikhail Gorbachev's "perestroika," (restructuring). However, it turned out that with the end of the Cold War the concept was no longer interesting to the Russian political class partly because of its Marxist-Leninist connotations and also because in the 1990s Moscow aimed to integrate Russia to the world capitalist economic and political systems rather than coexist with them. The concept itself thus disappeared from Russian doctrinal documents.

China, in contrast with Russia, never abandoned the peaceful coexistence concept and elevated it to the status of a fundamental international relations principle after the 1999 NATO military intervention in Kosovo. According to Beijing, this concept includes postulates such as respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, noninterference in domestic affairs,

equality of States in international relations and the leading role of the UN in world politics because of its universal nature (Russian Newspaper, 1999). China suggested peaceful coexistence as an alternative concept to American “neo-interventionism.”

In India, the peaceful coexistence concept was transformed from its initial version (*Pancha Chila* or "Five Principles") into the *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* concept (“the whole world as one family”) which rejected the very idea of hegemony (Gupta & Chatterjee, 2015: 115–124).

In formal terms, Brazil’s foreign policy doctrinal documents stopped mentioning the peaceful coexistence concept in the 1960s; however, the state’s real international policies were in line with this principle. This included the establishment of bilateral cooperative links with other countries regardless of their political and economic regimes, respect for national sovereignty, and the development of multilateral cooperation (Abdenur, 2015).

In South Africa, the peaceful coexistence principle in the form of the *Ubuntu* concept was formally acknowledged in the 2011 white book on foreign policy. This concept was defined as “respect for all States, nations and cultures,” while the understanding of national security was based on the acknowledgement of the priority of human security (Mandrup & Smith, 2015: 150–151).

The BRICS countries’ renewed interest in the peaceful coexistence concept can be explained by several objective factors. At certain points, these States started to express their discontent with the existing model of relations with the West which they considered to be unviable and unacceptable. For example, Russia faced the failure of several ideas and models, such as the “comprehensive security” concept (Mikhail Gorbachev), Russia as a “younger partner” of the West (Boris Yeltsin) and “strategic partnership” with the U.S. (two initial presidencies of Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev’s administration). The West had no respect for BRICS countries’ regional and global interests; it heavily criticized them for “authoritarianism,” a democracy deficit and human rights violations. Such Western policies forced not only the BRICS countries but also other States – which did not want to accept the “golden billion’s” dictate – to realize that different/alternative social development models are preferable. For this reason, they believed, the peaceful coexistence concept could be helpful in building relations between States with different socioeconomic and political systems.

It should be noted that presently the peaceful coexistence concept has a different meaning as compared to the Cold War era because the antagonistic confrontation between the two sociopolitical systems – capitalism and socialism - has ended. The BRICS countries do not aim to defeat the world capitalist system as was the case with the socialist States in the past. They

just want integration into the world economy and global governance systems on an equal basis. In geopolitical terms, Russia has lost its superpower status and cannot compete with other poles of power as it could previously, while other BRICS countries try to avoid global confrontation with the U.S. altogether.

The updated interpretation of the peaceful coexistence concept by the BRICS countries can be summarized as follows:

- countries with different economic and sociopolitical systems can coexist peacefully;
- the dominance of one or several countries in world politics is unacceptable;
- preference should be given to the soft power tools, while military force should be used only as a last resort, on the exceptional level;
- Despite the numerous divergences with the West, the BRICS countries have a broad cooperative agenda with the U.S., EU, Japan, NATO and other Western-led institutions that includes weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation; arms control and disarmament; conflict prevention and resolution; fighting international terrorism and transnational crime; environment protection and climate change mitigation; civil protection; outer space and world ocean research; humanitarian and cultural cooperation, etc.

The peaceful coexistence concept has not yet entered the permanent political lexicon of the BRICS countries (with the exception of the PRC). This is partly due to a kind of “allergy” to Marxist-Leninist terminology. But in one form or another, this concept is present in their foreign policy arsenals (De Coning et al., 2015; Sergunin, 2016: 37–45).

However, as noted by a number of researchers, the peaceful coexistence concept cannot embrace the entire complexity and diversity of the BRICS and its international activities. It partly sheds light on the motivation and certain features of “the five” in the international arena. But it cannot give a full explanation as to why these countries have united into a group, and what long-term strategic goals they pursue. It also cannot explain where the limitations of the peaceful coexistence policy are, beyond which the BRICS countries are willing to resort to force, and what factors induce them to take such sometimes risky steps (De Coning, 2015; Sergunin, 2016: 45).

More generally, all of the theories and concepts discussed above suffer from one significant shortcoming: being based on the principles of rationalism, i.e., a perception of the BRICS countries as purely rational actors seeking to maximize their benefits and build their activities in a pragmatic way, they are unable to explain the emotional, unpredictable, illogical actions taken by these States which not only do not benefit them, but sometimes even harm their national interests.

Status Theories

Being rooted in psychology status theories are also used by social sciences, including IRT. They are particularly useful for explaining those cases in which the BRICS countries' policies seem emotional, irrational and unpredictable. Such policies do not fit into the theories built on the principles of rationalism, including the PTT, peaceful coexistence and soft power concepts. Status theories address policy motives related to self-esteem, reputation, honor and dignity, fame, sympathy, and other emotional and psychological categories that introduce an element of unpredictability into the political behavior of leaders, social groups and States. The first works on the correlation between international conflicts and state status inconsistency/underachievement were published in the late 1960s–early 1970s (Midlarsky, 1969; Wallace, 1973).

The return of status theories occurred in the 2000s, when representatives of various theoretical paradigms started to pay attention to non-rational, emotional factors in world politics. Schools such as neorealism and neoliberalism mainly focused on problems of survival and economic viability, considering a state's status to be a derivative of its military and economic power. For the post-positivist schools, initially, status was also not an important analytical category. For example, social constructivists believed that identity and norms were the driving forces of politics rather than considerations of status or prestige (Onuf, 2013). However it was critical thinkers belonging to the post- positivist IR paradigm who started to pay serious attention to the psychological aspects of foreign policy behavior.

As far as the BRICS countries' international behavior is concerned, the status- related issues were first raised in connection with the discussions on “resurgent Russia” and its efforts to return a great power status (Kanet, 2010; Kühn, 2015; Larson & Shevchenko, 2010; Neumann, 2005 and 2007). This turn in Moscow's policies was related to President Vladimir Putin's decision to more decisively defend Russia's national interests. The Russian president perceived the collapse of the USSR as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.” The status of Russia had lost certainty: while its nuclear potential and the permanent seat on the UN Security Council guaranteed it a place among the most influential countries, by other measures it had been reduced to the status of a peripheral state. In this regard, some western experts evaluated the state of Russian elites as “status panic” (Forsberg et al., 2014; Hansen & Sergunin, 2015: 94; Smith, 2014).

Interest in status theories has been fueled by discussions about the nature of the conflicts between Russia and Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014). The constructivists and post-

structuralists see these conflicts as manifestations of Russia's fear of finally losing its great power status. Moreover, this motivation may be even more important than concerns about security or economic well-being (Sergunin, 2014). Some authors go even further, claiming that Russia's status-oriented foreign policy has deep historical roots, because for centuries Moscow has sought to prove its great power status in Europe (Neumann, 2005).

With China, which previously did not have the great power status, the situation is somewhat different. Its rapid economic growth in the post-Cold War era has led to the situation where the old model of its political and economic relations with the West no longer worked. At first, China sought to achieve the great power status by adapting to capitalist norms, but it was never accepted as an equal in the Western community. Then Beijing took a more competitive position, but not in a confrontational way. It managed to positively change its image in the eyes of the West. The new image is based on the premise that China is a state that does not seek hegemony, but expects a respectful attitude from its international partners which corresponds to its new status.

India and Brazil also strive for the great power status, relying on their large territories and populations, economic and military potentials, and international authority. Their international behavior is often status-oriented and aims at increasing respect from other States (Mikhailenko, 2016; Larson & Shevchenko, 2010: 70]. For instance, the former Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's statement on hosting the 2016 Summer Olympic Games exemplifies such status-seeking course: according to him, the choice of Brazil as the host of the games elevated its status from second-class to first-class country (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010: 70). South Africa does not have the ambition to become a great power, but at the regional level it certainly seeks to play a leading role in the "black continent".

In terms of status-seeking strategies, States seeking to improve their international standing may try to pass into a higher-status group of States (mobility strategy), compete with the dominant group (competition strategy), or achieve preeminence in a different domain (creativity strategy) (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010: 71). The choice of one type of strategy over another depends on the openness of the status hierarchy as well as the values of the status-seeker and established powers.

For example, since the end of the Cold War, the BRICS States have embarked on liberal democratic reforms to enter the economic and political institutions of the West, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the Council of Europe and the G7. At the same time, the closed nature of organizations such as the OECD, EU or NATO prompted China and Russia to move to a strategy of competition (Larson, Shevchenko, 2010: 72–73). On

the path of creative strategy, Russia is trying to rely on the neoconservative ideas of collectivism, spirituality and orthodoxy as opposed to the individualism, materialism and liberal morality of the West (Laruelle, 2008; Sergunin, 2014). Creativity is also produced by charismatic leaders at the level of “grand” diplomacy. For example, due to these qualities, President Vladimir Putin has managed to achieve international recognition of his September 2015 plan to destroy Syrian chemical weapons and thus avoid the U.S. military intervention in this country. The “New Silk Road” concept of another charismatic leader, Xi Jinping, was perceived as a Eurasian economic integration project that can be mutually beneficial for all its participants.

Despite their attractiveness, status theories still leave unanswered a number of important questions. For example, the question about status indicators (that should help in measuring a state’s international rating) should be clarified. It is also important to clarify the question of when status becomes more important than material interests. In terms of content, the question of which instruments – peaceful or coercive - the state uses to change its status is of great importance. As for the internal aspects of the status- seeking strategies, it is necessary to examine the extent to which domestic political institutions can influence the growth or reduction of the feeling of status inconsistency/underachievement in the society. These questions status theories have yet to answer.

Theory of “Global Regionalism”

The BRICS is unique because it does not represent a typical geographical region consisting of a set of States that are geographically close to each other and form a single historical, economic, political and socio-cultural community (or at least seek to create such a community). According to the theory of “new regionalism” {Lagutina, 2009; Lagutina & Vasilyeva, 2012; Acharya, 2014; Heininen, 2016; Hettne et al., 1999; van Langenhove, 2011), the BRICS belongs to the category of the so-called “global regions” which are based on functional, network-type, identity, multi-actor and multifactor principles rather than on geographic proximity. Such regions have a cross- cutting nature: they easily permeate various levels – local, regional and global – to create a completely different type of world politics (Avdokushin & Zharikov, 2013; Meena, 2015). In addition to the BRICS, such global regions include, for example, the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Mercado Común del Sur, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Arctic.

Supporters of the global regionalism theory believe that during its existence, the BRICS has managed to form a common transnational agenda. Among the most important areas of the BRICS countries’ cooperation are the following:

- improvement of the global financial system;
- development of industrial and commercial relations;
- energy security;
- cooperation in the field of climate change and environmental protection;
- joint research projects;
- the fight against cyber terrorism, and
- coordination of these countries' activities in international organizations, including the UN and its specialized agencies.

In support of this global agenda, the BRICS created a number of its own financial institutions – the New Development Bank with a capital of \$100 billion and a Contingent Reserve Arrangement (\$100 billion as well).

In 2013, China has launched the New Silk Road (or Belt and Road) initiative (Lagutina & Batur, 2016; Leksyutina, 2017}. At first, it was aimed at the development of a land transport corridor through the territory of Eurasia. It was then supplemented by sea routes from East Asia to Europe, both southern (through the Suez Canal) and northern (Northern Sea Route) ones. In the end, the project has acquired a truly global dimension, incorporating the Asia-Pacific region and South America, where one of the BRICS members is located (Brazil).

At the same time, critics of the global regionalism theory note that in the framework of the BRICS, a truly unified agenda has not yet emerged. With rare exceptions, most of the cooperative ties within the BRICS are bilateral, not multilateral. In addition, there are numerous differences between the members of this international group. Particularly, there are serious disagreements between India and China, including territorial disputes between them that regularly lead to direct military-political confrontation. Opponents of this theory believe that it is too early to speak of the BRICS as a whole community comparable with other integration entities. For this reason, the BRICS is not yet able to play a truly influential role either in world politics or the global economy.

Conclusion

To sum up, various IRTs offer their explanations of the BRICS phenomenon, including the sources of this forum, motives for the member-States' behavior and the role that this group plays in the present-day world politics and global economy. Speaking about the relative value or explanatory power of each of these theories, it seems that they often complement rather than

exclude each other. Together, on the basis of an interdisciplinary approach, they form the foundation for studying a complex politico-economic phenomenon, such as the BRICS.

The newest IR theories (post-positivist schools) tend to hold that, along with the pursuit of purely material and pragmatic interests (hedging financial and economic risks in the era of globalization, developing joint industrial and infrastructure projects, counterbalancing Western expansionism, solving various common problems ranging from environmental protection to fighting international terrorism and transnational crime), the BRICS countries are actively using this forum to strengthen their positions on the world stage and elevate their international statuses.

In their status-seeking policies, the BRICS member-States apply various methods - from the mobility and competition strategies to different types of creativity. These foreign policy strategies have had some effect, with the exception of Russia whose international reputation has suffered because of the Ukrainian crisis. In general, most of the BRICS countries have managed to create an image of themselves as constructive and peaceful States preferring cooperation to confrontation, respecting international rules and their international partners. Even for Russia, participation in BRICS has proved to be very useful from a reputational/status point of view. Since the BRICS countries did not support Western sanctions against Moscow, Russia managed not only to avoid complete international isolation, but also to actively influence international developments, both regionally and globally.

In general, the BRICS has managed to shape its image as an alternative model of world order based on principles and rules of interstate cooperation which exclude discriminatory and hierarchical types of relations. It is too early to say that a fundamentally new type of international relations or international institution has been created within the BRICS framework, but, undoubtedly, some positive experience has been accumulated by this association. It is safe to assume that in the foreseeable future the BRICS phenomenon will remain a subject of the closest attention from IR theorists.

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Russia, BRICS and Cyber Power: Evoking Synergies under Conjectures of Deviation

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Abstract

When one thinks about powerful and influential traditional actors of the International system, Russia cannot be ruled out of this select group. Despite the oscillations by which the State had been through in the post-Cold War period, the international community witnessed, since the beginning of the 21st century, the recovery of its *status quo* as an influential power among both the developed countries and, mainly, the developing countries, and the BRICS is perhaps the greatest expression of this rise. As the dynamics of power within the system become more flexible on the threshold of the 21st century, moving from a traditional range of military resources to covering new demands linked to new technologies, especially the internet, Russia seeks to use them as a resource of power. Thus, this paper aims to understand how cyber resources takes part of the Russian strategy to rebuild its power in the International System and how significant these resources are to the new understanding of the State capacity of the Russian Federation. It's then believed that cyber resources act as a profitable power tool for Russia's reentering the international arena. It is supported by the concept of "strategic deterrence" assumed in the country's Military Doctrine (2014), which sustains military (conventional and nuclear) and non-military tools (political, economic, scientific measures).

Keywords: Russia. Power. Cyber Resources.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War seems to be a much more significant timeframe for international politics than just the ending of the bipolarity between the United States of America (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This historic moment marked the construction of a new way of understanding the world reality from the social, political, economic and security points of view.

Throughout the 1990s, the world experienced an exponential improvement in its interactivity, but at the same time it moved towards a homogenization process that promised to be the solution to the inequalities so far faced worldwide. Thanks to globalization, every person

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would be equal, with the same possibilities and challenges. As warned by Manuel Castell (2011), Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010), Joseph Stiglitz (2003) and many others, this scenario did not happen. What in fact occurred was an increase in violence, inequality and the continuity of the political processes that preserved the promotion of benefits to the most powerful countries of the International System.

However, despite the fact that the globalization did not fulfill its promise, it would still bring to the system the rise of new actors who no longer needed to hide under the umbrella of the system's traditional powers. These actors emerged, prioritizing a new rhetoric of power and using new power resources to sustain it. Thus, in 1997, we witnessed the BRICS⁴ (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) appear as the promise of a new power pole coming from the peripheral countries and bringing to the system a new way of interaction. Alongside the BRICS, society will see the growing influence and dependence that the advancement of digital technologies is bringing on people's daily lives. And, naturally, such resources will become a new important aspect to building the State's power in the international sphere.

However, it is a fact that Russia, the central theme of this article, cannot effectively be considered as a new power pole. Its history and influence on the system are noticeable, yet the collapse of the USSR and its reorganization as the Russian Federation imposed a new way of interacting with the system, as well as a new perception of what space it intended to occupy in international politics. This new state perspective, as a Russian Federation, put that country as a kind of new power pole, being part of the select group of those States who have decision-making capacity in the International system. Russia also acts as a potential State, which reappears and regains its importance in the international arena by envisioning new strategic dimensions as the foundation of its external actions.

Before this scenario, the article proposes that we should think about how Russia, a central power in the bipolarity of the Cold War, rose in the 21st century to become an exponent of power. It should also be considered as to how cyber resources became a part of the new strategy of international insertion of that State. Our proposal is to analyze the recovery of Russia's *status quo* in the 21st century and how it is directly related to the BRICS and to new technologies as power resources. Based on the concept of "Strategic Deterrence", adopted by

⁴ It is an English acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was first mentioned by the British economist Jim O'Neil in a 2001 study for Goldman Sachs called "Building Better Economic BRICs". The British economist pointed that, regarding their economic development, those "BRICs" countries were qualified as emerging markets.

the 2014 Russian Military Doctrine, a preliminary guiding hypothesis can be assumed: by prioritizing conventional and unconventional military means to build its reinsertion into the system, Russia deems cyber technology as an important power resource, making use of it in the international power struggle throughout the 21st century.

Power: from the Cold War end to the 21st century

To think of power in international politics is usually to associate coercive actions and resources with a strategy that increasingly seeks to satisfy State demands within the international sphere. This rhetoric seemed to prevail in the international system throughout the 20th century, especially during the Cold War and its arms race context.

However, as argued by Byung Chul-Han (2019, p. 12) “the coercive model does not live up to the complexity of power. Power as coercion consists in imposing one's own decisions *against* the will of the other”. With the end of bipolar cleavage, the coercive rhetoric is losing ground, mainly because there is no longer *the other*, the enemy, once the world is now intertwined in a single globalized society.

This is the context that led Joseph Nye to introduce his perception of *soft power* in the 1990s debate on international politics and power. This concept does not imply to coerce the counterpart but to convince it, through cultural resources, political values, and foreign policy actions, (Nye, 2004) that it benefits from following the preference of the State that exerts power—and it certainly could be the case, but it is, in fact, not guaranteed.

Thus, Nye translates soft power as follows:

A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries—admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness—want to follow it. [...] This soft power – getting others to want the outcomes that you want – co-opts people rather than coerces them. (Nye, 2004: 5).

In sum, example and identity gain more importance than the effective ability to coerce and compel others to do something that a powerful state wants. In a connected and borderless world, as proposed by globalization, where there is no *other* but in fact an integration, the logic of power changes. New cyber technologies, especially the internet, emerged in this perspective as a means of bringing people and countries closer together. The resource that was born to be military spread out to civil society in the post-Cold War period and now determines the way in which society develops and communicates, thus becoming an essential resource for human life (Ayres Pinto; Pagliari, 2019; Kuehl, 2009; Flournay; Sulmeyer, 2018).

Nevertheless, another historic event would change this perception of power that arose in the 1990s: the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York. This attack undermined the perception of the non-existence of the *other*, showing that instead of Western values and culture being praised, they were actually devalued and attacked due to constant attempts by the US to control other States and utilise warlike behavior against these aforementioned States in the 1990s.

The American response to the September 11 attack was a return to a coercive, threatening, will-imposing, and invading country model of power, using violence as a *modus operandi*. However, the world no longer effectively bears this kind of bellicose interaction because of the increasing costs of coercion, both from an economic point of view and, mainly, from the relational point of view. The effective interdependence of the system actors made coercive actions increasingly objectionable and thus unhelpful in meeting the demands of the actors. An example of this is the US military action in Afghanistan and Iraq post 2001 and the high political and economic costs imposed to the Americans without the expected earning—the elimination of those it considered its enemies.

Faced with this scenario, a dilemma emerges: the traditional resources of power cannot be abandoned, meanwhile, on the basis of coercive logic, as they no longer make the same effect as they would have done previously. At this point, Joseph Nye (2011) would sharpen his understanding of power in the 21st century by providing his perception on the concept of *smart power*⁵. The first idea is to dispel the misperception that *smart power* is an improved *soft power*. According to Nye (2011: XIV) “Smart Power is not simply 'soft power 2.0'”.

For the author, this new perception involves more than power resources—it concretely includes an effective capacity to mold an international insertion strategy that understands the dynamics of interdependence in the system. In this sense, the author affirms that:

A smart power narrative for the twenty-first century is not about maximizing power or preserving hegemony. It is about finding ways to combine resources into successful strategies in the new context of power diffusion and 'rise of rest' (Nye, 2011: 207-208).

For Nye (2011) there are two new post-September 11 dynamics in the system: a transition of power (new state actors are achieving more influence) and a diffusion of power

⁵ The concept of smart power was coined by the lawyer and international analyst Suzzane Nossel in a 2004 for Foreign Affairs article. The researcher defines this concept as follows: “Smart power means knowing that the United States’ own hand is not always its best tool: U.S. interests are furthered by enlisting others on behalf of U.S. goals, through alliances, international institutions, careful diplomacy, and the power of ideals” (NOSSEL, 2004, p.138). But this will be an analysis exclusively focused on the USA, and Nye's perception will have a broader dimension.

(new *non-state* actors are earning the ability to exercise power). This trend is directly linked to new technological resources and their lower costs.

In this context of transition and diffusion of power, cyber resources become essential, as stated by Richard Haass:

The principal characteristic of twenty-first-century international relations is turning out to be nonpolarity: a world dominated not by one or two or even several states but rather by dozens of actors possessing and exercising various kinds of power. This represents a tectonic shift from the past. [...] the proliferation of information is as much a cause of nonpolarity as is the proliferation of weaponry (Haass, 2008: N/A).

Hence, cyber power becomes an effective resource for the new system dynamics, and its concept can be defined as the “ability to use cyberspace to create advantages and influence events in others operational environments and across the instruments of power” (Nye, 2010: 4). The logic of power does not change; what differs is the consideration of technological resources as means for the exercise of power, both in the virtual world as well as in the non-virtual world. Therefore, the States that possess such resources need to understand how to use them and also the role they play in the strategy of insertion into the international system. As was mentioned before, considering its official documents, the Russian Federation seems to have understood the importance of defining such precepts for its own insertion strategy.

However, within a more explanatory approach, it is important to observe the table established by Joseph Nye to determine cyber power resources:

Physical and Virtual Dimensions of Cyber Power

TARGET OF CYBERPOWER		
	INTRA-CYBERSPACE	EXTRA-CYBERSPACE
INFORMATION INSTRUMENTS	Hard: denial of service attacks	Hard: attack on SCADA systems
	Soft: setting of norms and standards	Soft: public diplomacy campaign to sway opinion
PHYSICAL INSTRUMENTS	Hard: government control of companies	Hard: bomb routers or cutting cables
	Soft: softwares to help human rights activists	Soft: protests to name and shame cyberproviders

Source: Nye, 2010: 5.

In this sense, it is reasonable to realize that not only the control and dissemination of information but also the use of cyber systems to damage critical infrastructures (which are extra-cyberspace) are possible actions in this new logic of power in the 21st century.

Accordingly, those that are determined by States as *cyber* resources (or as composing resources of this sphere of action) can be used in an insertion strategy not only as coercive means but also in a logic of co-optation. What seems to be decisive for the course of action is the actual political, economic and security costs involved and how states can afford them.

Bearing in mind the above theoretical framework, next we will proceed with analyzing how Russia, through its strategic documents—especially its 2014 Military Doctrine—defines the use of these cyber resources and also what role the BRICS play in this Russian strategy.

Russia and the new power resource: cyber power enters the country doctrinal conceptions

Analyzing Russia's strategic positioning in the 21st century international system inevitably entails understanding—even briefly—the unfolding systemic chaos that plagued the country in the 1990s. As aforementioned, in a context of redefinition and rearrangements of power in the international system, the political-economic system and the Russian social fabric deteriorated, weakening the country's position in the new established order. The State reorganization experienced since the year 2000 indicates a reinsertion in the international system. Such a process benefited, on the one hand, from the maintenance of its great power status (based on its strategic nuclear military capabilities) and, on the other, by the new power dynamics that emerged in the post-Cold War period.

The decline and subsequent dissolution of the USSR was caused by a combination of political, economic and military factors exacerbated by Gorbachev's reformist policies (*Perestroika* and *Glasnost*) and nationalist mobilizations in the Soviet republics. The Belavezha Accords marked the end of the USSR, the Cold War and the bipolarity of the international system. A period of transition began and it was initially characterized by the US hegemony in the scenario of a globalized capitalist world where Russian insertion took place in a nefarious way.

The 1990s was a disastrous and traumatic period in Russia. Economic decline plagued the country with GDP falling by almost half in the early years.

On the political sphere, the “democratic” government of President Yeltsin has gradually presented itself as a failed and controlling administration, conducting absurd episodes such as the bombing of the Duma (Parliament) to dislodge political opponents. The country's erratic privatization process has promoted the formation of groups of billionaires who squandered national heritage while the population drowned in poverty. The Russian society witnessed a major decline in the size of the population, as well as in the life expectancy of the population.

Further issues were seen due to high unemployment rates, uncontrolled growth in the number of mafias, crime, violence and conflict—the last ones being demonstrated by both Chechen Wars in 1994 and 1999 (Visentini, 2017).

In short, what was seen in the 1990s in Russia was a breakdown of the State and a lack of administrative capacity generated an internal systemic chaos that was soon reflected in the external position of the country. In this regard, a wholly Western-oriented foreign policy kept relations with the United States as a priority in the hope that rapprochement with Western institutions would provide the necessary support for the resumption of economic growth and political stabilization. It was not long before Moscow showed its discontent with the contradictory Western aid unveiled in invasive policies consolidated in the Kosovo military onslaught and in the NATO expansion process.

The new millennium renews the framework of competition through the resurgence of centrifugal forces that, on the one hand, remove the predominance of power from the unipolar core and, on the other, reshape the conceptual core of power by encompassing new tools for its execution in the international arena. Thus, after a period of predominance of unipolar configuration of the international order, we are in the process of consolidating a restructured international system which is now multipolar. Among the new poles of power, Russia reappears in a position of political, military and economic importance, thereby safeguarding its interests in this new configuration of the system (Piccoli, 2012; Piccoli, Dall’Agnol, Pereira, 2018).

Thus, after the turmoil of the 1990s, Moscow began to rebuild its political unity and reestablish itself in economic terms which allowed the country to orient a project for its reinsertion in the international system. The governments of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev were able to manage the political stability (achieved through a process of state centralization and strengthening of executive power) and economic growth (driven by hydrocarbon exports), which were fundamental to achieving their goals in the face of the new world order. Likewise, the governments were mindful of the changes in the capacity building of States, expanding its range of tools to a niche beyond traditional capabilities. For that matter, it started to consider the role of cyber resources as a source of power in the international arena.

In the course of the 2000s, the construction of cyber power resources is noticeably concurrent with the development of the country's security strategy documents which, after all, are a reflection of the evolution of the risks and threats arising from the external realm—and of Moscow's stance towards these. It follows that the doctrinal meaning of the term “strategic

“deterrence” consolidates Moscow's assimilation of the reality of an international system whose security dynamics encompass a diverse range of capabilities, including cyber power.

The recent versions of the country strategy papers, Military Doctrine (2014), National Security Strategy (2015), Foreign Policy Concept, and Information Security Doctrine (2016), generally signal Moscow's perception of a security environment characterized by:

increasing global competition, the tension in the various areas interstate and interregional interaction, values and rivalry development patterns and processes of economic instability political developments at the global and regional levels background of the complications of international relations. [...], unresolved [...] conflicts [to which there] is a tendency to force their resolution, in including in the regions bordering on the Russian Federation. [...] (Russia, 2014, §9, §10).

For Moscow the existing “architecture [of] international security does not provide equal security for all States” (Russia, 2014, §10). In sum, its evolved in a tendency toward a scenario of complication of international relations

Moscow still points to the West's inability to govern world politics and the economy (Russia, 2016, §4). The papers argue that attempts to impose Western values (as a result of the globalization process of the 1990s) as a means of democratization and growth for other countries, as well as an attempt to contain the emergence of alternative power centers, incite the instability of international systems, impacting on numerous regional conflicts. In other words, Russia points out that the current security instability is a product of the Western, and more specifically the United States', unwillingness to share its dominant role in the system—which means not accepting the already settled polycentric/multipolar reality. In this sense, Moscow is well aware of the role played by the use of cyber resources in government destabilization processes when it points out that, while the use of technological resources contributes to the economic development and better functioning of state institutions, they embody a range of new threats.

The possibilities of transboundary information circulation are increasingly used for geopolitical goals, goals of a military-political nature contravening international law or for terrorist, extremist, criminal and other unlawful ends detrimental for international security and strategic stability [...] [A] number of foreign countries are building up their information technology capacities to influence the information infrastructure in pursuing military purposes (Russia, 2016, 10-11).

From this finding, Moscow assumes that the use of cyber power in the sphere of national security is characterized for the: growing use by certain States and organizations of information technologies for military and political purposes, including for actions inconsistent with

international law and seek to undermine the sovereignty, political and social stability and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation and its allies, and pose a threat to international peace, global and regional security (Russia, 2016, §15).

The argument above, brought by the Russian Information Security Doctrine, verbalizes the propositions encompassed by the other strategic documents of the country regarding the political destabilization movements in the surroundings of the Russian territory. Moscow explains that such movements, like the Color Revolutions, make direct use of communication and information technologies for military purposes, acting against the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of States (Russia, 2014, §12, 1- n. 13). The documents, albeit indirectly, allude to the similarity between the Color Revolutions and the Ukrainian Crisis, but mainly to the possibility of such movements spreading to the Russian domestic sphere. For the Russians, these movements are the basis of contemporary military conflicts which use indirect and asymmetrical operations, such as the use of political forces and public associations with external funding.

For this purpose, the State must be prepared to deal with these new threats through non-military channels, meanwhile it must also secure its traditional military means, considering the chances of escalating conflicts and real threats to State integrity and sovereignty. In this respect, they reserve themselves the right to incur in military means to deter non-military actions and/or conventional military aggression that threatens Russian security, whether occurred in its territory or in the territory of allies, endangering the very existence of the State. In the same document, they postulate the right to use nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear or even non-nuclear attack of mass destruction against themselves and/or their allies (Russia, 2000, §8; Russia 2010, §22; Russia, 2014, §27). This is the logic behind the doctrinal meaning of “strategic deterrence” postulated in the Military Doctrine (2014): to have an effective link between military and non-military capabilities for the defense of the country. The concept is elucidated as:

a coordinated system of military and non-military measures carried out consecutively or simultaneously for the purpose of deterring military action by the opposing State (or coalition of States) involving strategic damage to the other party [...]. Strategic Deterrence is aimed at establishing a political-military situation [...] in order to influence an adversary within a predetermined framework or to de-escalate the military conflict [...] Strategic deterrence measures are carried out continuously in both peacetime and conflict. [...] Non-military measures include actions in several spheres, such as political, diplomatic, legal, economic, ideological, scientific and technical. [...] Military measures include: intelligence and information actions; demonstration of military presence and military strength; actions to ensure the safety of State economic activity; peacekeeping operations; air defense; protection and defense of the State border in air, sea and land

space; [...]; to make (or threaten to) precise (including nuclear) attacks (MD, 2019: online).

There can be seen to be a linearity of strategic documents regarding the defensive character of the Russian actions in the system, either through the use of traditional military capabilities (conventional and nuclear weapons) or through the use of new power resources and tools, such as cyber capabilities. Regarding the latter, it must be made clear that there are significant differences in Russian and Western approaches to cyber power which makes understanding between the parties very difficult. As an example, it can be mentioned the controlling of the flow of information in cyber networks. For Russians, the circulation of information perceived as threats to society, strategic interests and state sovereignty is dealt as a security issue, with the government having the power to limit such threats. This is a reality that does not happen in the West, where the free circulation of information through networks prevails (Giles, 2012). Giles also make aware of the fact that Russia's vision of "information warfare" is not restricted to the circulation of information, having a far "more holistic concept than its literal translation suggests, carrying cyber operations implicitly within it alongside disciplines such as electronic warfare (EW), psychological operations (PsyOps), strategic communications and Influence" (Giles, 2012, p. 74).

Since the collapse of the USSR and the restructuring of Russian capabilities, the use of cyber power resources has gone through a process of consolidation in the doctrines that embody Russia's strategic positioning. Some alleged Russian military action in the Georgian conflict (2008) have characteristics that give evidence of the use of cyber resources in the conduct of the conflict. It was also considered as a rehearsal for a more intense conflict with the West. David Hollis (2011) points out that Russian military actions were combined across four dimensions: air, land, sea and cyberspace. The Russian Forces were actually accused by the Georgian government of assaulting more than fifty-four websites in the neighboring country (linked to communication, finance and even government websites). The alleged actions by Moscow were aimed at hampering communications and limiting the decision-making process in Georgia. Hollis (2011) states that the Russian strategy was not intended to attack critical infrastructures but rather to hold sufficient capacity to enable them to do so.

From the lessons learned from the alleged Russian actions, it should be noted that the lack of mastery of cyberspace has altered Georgia's ability to conduct communication strategies at the national level. In turn, the Russian capabilities allowed an integration between the different dimensions of the Armed Forces, with the cyber power and the outer space command

capabilities being essential in this case, serving for inter-force communications and also as a destabilizing tool of enemy forces in the conflict.

In summary, there can be notice that Moscow is aware of the importance of using cyber resources to secure their status in the international political arena. To this end, it uses a defensive rhetoric, characteristic of its international strategic insertion design.

BRICS and Cyber Resources: An Alternative Power Scenario for Russia?

As presented above, 21st century Russia clearly understands two important issues regarding its dynamics in the international system: (1) that it is a relevant actor and will regain its power *status quo* on the international stage; (2) that non-military (or non-traditionally military) resources, such as cybernetics, are central to this Russian ambition.

However, it can be seen that, when Russia thinks about its international insertion processes, it has an effectively independent method of strategic planning, bringing to themselves the demands of such insertion. So, in this perspective, where would be the BRICS' place, especially when we talk about cyber power?

The BRICS appear as an effective zone of importance in the late twentieth century, when the foundation of this importance was directly related to the capacities of economic growth and development (Davydov, 2018; Abdenur, 2017) that those countries seemed to possess in the opinion of Goldman & Sachs analysts.

In this perspective, the BRICS engaged in dynamics of confrontation with the hegemonic power that the USA had in the international system. The proposal was not to confront and replace this *hegemon*, but rather to create alternative power spaces where developing and poorer countries saw the possibility of gains in the BRICS. At the same time, increasing the relative power of the countries can be considered to be part of this acronym.

But the relationship was strictly based on an economic and cooperative dynamic in international organizations, in order to face insertion challenges together. In the dynamics of power resources and international security challenges, their joint action did not unfold as being effective. Their interaction in this area appeared at official meetings held by the BRICS. Yet the focus was always on a more generalist debate which privileged a perception of how to understand security issues and weigh them on the international agenda, rather than actually creating an alliance between countries to promote a cooperative security process. Topics such as cybercrime, terrorism and others were dealt with at conferences such as Fortaleza in 2015,

but they were nothing more than debates about conjunctures, not effectively turning into joint actions (Abdenur, 2017).

On the other hand, when we think of Russia, China and cyber power, what we see is a battle in international space for the control of two distinct action dynamics over this new security dimension. The first one is the USA and Europe seeking to determine how cyberspace will work. The second dimension is Russia and China trying to show themselves as exponents in this space, bringing new understandings and technologies, thus emerging as effective cyber power poles (Forsyth, 2013).

In this sense, when thinking of Russia, BRICS and cyber power, it is not possible to see an effective collaboration of these actors in order to create a cohesive group that determines and conducts cyber-dimension security actions.

What we see is Russia being effectively centered on becoming a power pole in a multipolar system and using the cheapest, and least physically destructive, cyber resources to support its strategy. The BRICS in this dynamic appear more as a possible area of influence than effective cooperative partners (Davydov, 2018).

Final Remarks

In this brief essay, we sought to clarify the transition from traditional military capabilities to a wider range of resources, such as the Internet, and how Russia is adapting to the use of such capabilities as a power resource in the international arena. Therefore, from the analysis of the Russian military doctrine documents, the evolution of cyber power was considered as a mechanism for rebuilding its power in the international system of the new millennium, serving as a useful tool for Moscow.

It is believed that, if at first Moscow would use available *soft power* resources for a multifaceted insertion, when restructuring its State capacity it has employed those we assume here as the precepts of *smart power* to counter external offensives on its surroundings and also to assume its position of power in a new multipolar world order.

However, this strategy turns to a Russian international insertion that privileges its independence in the international system. Hence, the BRICS in this scenario is much more a space for the exercise of Russian power than for effective cooperation in cyber security. However, given the volatility of the international system, caution is needed in the analysis so definitive conclusions on the topic are left open. Likewise, from this first essay arises a vast

agenda of topics to be researched in the scope of the proposed theme, postulating continuity to the work developed.

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

Marcos Valle Machado da Silva¹

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).

Polacheck (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. Polacheck 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 (Fallet, 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 Rousseff 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 Rousseff 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 Rousseff (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: África*. Available at <http://www.mdic.gov.br/comercio-exterior/estatisticas-de-comercio-exterior/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: África*. 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-exterior/estatisticas-de-comercio-exterior/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-exterior/estatisticas-de-comercio-exterior/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.

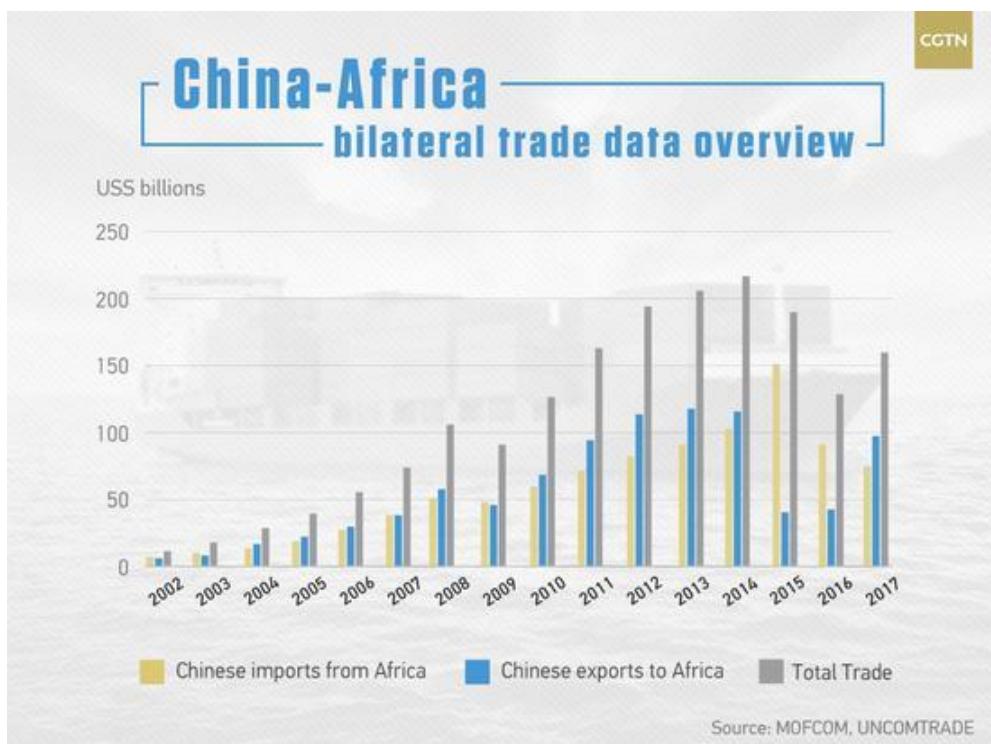
China has become Africa's largest trade partner, and Africa is now China's major import source, second largest overseas construction project contract market and fourth largest investment destination (China, 2013).

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-ifxpqun1875058.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 2,000 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 paralyses 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 steady 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 FOCAC, 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.
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).	
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.	
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]	

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Brazilian New Foreign Policy and Implications within BRICS: A Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

On the dawn of the 2008 financial crisis, Brazil, Russia, India, and China celebrated the first BRIC's Summit, in 2009, till the bloc foundation in 2006. At that time, the four countries were responsible for 65 percent of the world's total economic growth and was aimed at the reform of the international institutions so that they would reflect the emerging countries' economic rise in international politics. The group was directly related to each of the members' goals of development, which was a historical purpose of Brazilian foreign policy articulated at that time in Celso Amorim's "Active and Generous Foreign Policy." Nevertheless, the election of Jair Bolsonaro for the Brazilian presidency in 2018 brought a revision of the country's foreign policy. Since Ernesto Araujo took office as Brazil's current Minister of Foreign, in January 2019, he proposed a rebrand under the name of "New Foreign Policy," reformulating basic principles as a return to the concepts of Americanism over the previous Multilateralism, a denouncement of "Globalism," and a strong defense of Christianity. This article will provide a discourse analysis of the first year of this mandate to observe how Brazil's "New Foreign Policy" could affect the BRICS bloc. The preliminary evidence points to the retraction of the BRICS agenda in Brazilian external actions due to the new Brazilian political approach.

Keywords: Brazilian Foreign Policy, BRICS, Americanism, Multilateralism

Introduction

As an observer watches today's news regarding Brazilian domestic and foreign policies, it may seem that the recent past of leadership and proactivity the country became known for in the 2000s is part of another dimension reality. In 2001, a Goldman Sachs report (O'Neil, 2001) indicated that the country—along with Russia, India, and China—would become a prominent player in international politics in the course of the next 30 years, a period during which they would exceed the G7 in size of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Ten years after the publication of Jim O'Neill's report, Brazilian international agencies managed to change other developing countries' perceptions regarding Brazil. The South American country assumed significant roles in regards to addressing issues previously exclusive to great powers, at the same time as it diversified its partnerships with the Global

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South, actions that accredited its plea of reform of the international institutions and that seemed to grant it the desired leadership position.

The building of the BRICS took place in 2009 at a summit meeting in Yekaterinburg in Russia, bringing together countries such as Brazil, Russia, India and China. In 2010, South Africa joined the same bloc. Unlike most blocks with a regional integration model, the BRICS does not have as many political, cultural, geopolitical, economic or even historical similarities.

In 2019, the Brazilian foreign policy seemed much more aligned to the United States' interests than to the goal of becoming a significant international player. Under Jair Bolsonaro's presidency, and with Ernesto Araujo as the Foreign Minister, the Itamaraty (the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) unfolded the "New Foreign Policy," imposing a profound change in the guidance it was following.

Considering the changes in the external agenda, this paper aims to introduce the new features of the Brazilian foreign policy, identifying the possible implications for multilateralism and the BRICS bloc. In order to guide this study, a literature review will be carried out in the first section focusing on the historical contextualization of the elements that shape the Brazilian international identity and the tradition of its foreign policy. Following on from this, the aspects that characterize Brazilian participation and engagement in the BRICS will be approached. In the last section, we will present the empirical elements and the methods employed in this study. The analysis of the recent speeches of Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs brings forward evidence that points to the decrease in the degree of priority given in the south-south cooperation and consequently in the BRICS, despite some turn backs on some of the public discourses after the 11th Summit of the BRICS in Brasilia.

Brazilian Foreign Policy in historical perspective

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Brazil has aspired to achieve international recognition as a "great country", and as a consequence, to have greater influence in the formulation of rules and regimes on a global scale. In the face of such an aspiration, Brazilian foreign policy has been shaped in such a way as to allow the international insertion of a "second-order" country and it is thus not surprising that this action would enhance the chances of reaching the Brazilian objectives. In general, Brazilian foreign policy has favored the use of *softpower* as well as respect for international law and multilateral action.

During the Cold War, according to Gelson da Fonseca (1998), Brazil had historically used three different forms of action at the international level. Although the country adopted a

capitalist ideological position, a closer or lesser approach to Washington depended on the political dynamics and ideological orientation of the internal bloc. In the period immediately following World War II, under the Dutra government, Brazil traced a strategic alliance with the United States, meaning that it adhered to Western values; this model became known as the ‘Western Pure’.

Furthering on from this, from the second Vargas government to the administration of Jânio Quadros, a developmental regime was built that combined economic activism and trade protectionism. At that time, even though Brazil continued to be aligned with Western ideologies, the approach to the United States suffered a differentiation which proved to be quite significant. Thus, the ‘Qualified Western’ paradigm was inaugurated (Fonseca, 1998).

The third and last model is the ‘Autonomous Western’. An international identity for Brazil was designed which led to the diversification of political and economic relations. This paradigm was used at very different times from our foreign policy. The first one occurred under the democratic government of João Goulart, which resulted in the creation of the Independent Foreign Policy (PEI). This policy aimed at diversifying relations between countries as opposed to automatic alignment with the United States and the countries of the North, which implied the creation of a third-world identity. The second instance was led by the Geisel government. During this period, known as responsible pragmatism, in addition to forming a closer relationship with the countries of the South, a project was added that aimed at shaping Brazil as a power (Fonseca, 1998).

It is possible to verify that the Brazilian relations of the center-periphery order have changed according to the paradigm of international insertion adopted by the governments that assumed power. These, in turn, were shaped by the desire for economic development and political autonomy. In any case, Brazilian external conduct expresses some elements of continuity: the struggle for self-determination and non-intervention, the promotion of cooperative and non-confrontational nationalism, preferences for multilateralism, respect for international norms and rules, and preference for the peaceful solution of controversies (Lafer, 2001; Pinheiro, 2002; Lima, 2010).

The context of the end of the Cold War led to the crisis of international insertion paradigms in the early 1990s. According to Maria Regina S. Lima (2010), the systemic transformation brought about by the end of bipolarity has generated great consequences for countries like Brazil. First, with the removal of political and geographic obstacles that allowed the global expansion of capitalism, this phenomenon was called globalization. The second

consequence generated by the disappearance of the socialist model was the Third World crisis, which was aggravated by the external debt crisis, the fiscal crisis and the exhaustion of the import substitution industrialization model (ISI). This new conjuncture eroded the third-world regimes that guided Brazilian diplomacy throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

We must highlight that the combined effect of globalization and the Third World crisis caused a structural asymmetry between the countries that comprised this group. On the one hand, some countries have integrated themselves more actively into the global economy through the creation of productive chains in peripheral countries, leading to the formation of the emerging economies that makes up BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, for example). On the other hand, we see that the current stage of globalization has led to the economic and political decline of some countries, which have become part of the group of “Failed States” (Lima, 2010).

Ergo, Brazil assumed a rational attitude that led to a gradual convergence—after all, we must not forget that the country underwent a scenario of redemocratization and crises—of Brazilian foreign policy in order to maximize the new opportunities presented by economic globalization from the implementation of a new paradigm. (Pinheiro, 2002). The pragmatic institutionalism, as defined by Pinheiro (2002), is the hallmark of the President Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration (1994-1998 / 1999-2002). The consolidation of this new foreign policy model dates back to this period. But even so, President Collor's government (1990-1992) was already undergoing a significant shift in vision toward the traditional and relatively conservative standards of diplomacy at that time. For this administration, Brazil already enjoyed the status of a developing country. In addition, this period was marked by “unconditional adherence to emerging trade rules and unilateral opening of trade.” (Lima, 2010)

Brazilian political redemocratization can be understood as an important factor that propelled the country towards better visibility at the international level since it made possible, both symbolically and materially, the universalization of Brazilian international relations, in addition to implying a less defensive stance in the multilateral bodies that negotiated human rights and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT) issues. The unprecedented rapprochement with Argentina and the creation of Mercosur both represent such universalization. During Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government, Brazil led a process of economic liberalization. This administration favored the use of presidential diplomacy and focused on economic gains to the detriment of politics.

Brazil has clearly demonstrated its intention to expand its role and assume greater responsibilities, whether regionally, in the Third World agenda or in multilateral institutions. We take as an example the initiatives towards the creation of the South American Community, its policies and active positions in hemispheric and global trade negotiations; the construction of South-South axis of cooperation, especially with India and South Africa; and, last but not least, the campaign for reform of the UN Security Council and the plea for a permanent member seat (Hirst, 2008).

The uncertainties created by the end of bipolarity and the consequent discussions about the construction of a new global order aroused the interest of Brazilian elites for the construction of a more influential role in international relations. We can identify two new forms of strategic insertion for medium powers that are able to mitigate the excessive unipolarity of this new scenario. In 2000, a study (Sousa, 2008) elaborated on the vision of the Brazilian elite and it was found that this had a consensus regarding the valorization of a leading role for the country. However, members of the elite did not agree on the form of insertion that should be used by Brazil. Thus, we point to the existence of two main models.

The first of them aims to seek credibility in the international sphere, focusing from the outside in. In this context, globalization is seen as a parameter for the elaboration of external action, however, the success of this enterprise depends on reforms in the country's internal structures, especially in relation to the market economy and enabling international competition (Lima, 2010). For this aspect, Brazil has to reinforce multilateralism, as it does not have surplus power resources. This means that the country should adopt a more cautious stance and should only commit itself to issues that are consistent with its real capacity. National autonomy is seen as a result of the country's collaboration on global governance issues through cooperation in the creation of international standards and institutions.

The alternative model to the previous one, which is usually called autonomist, proposes the construction of a more flexible foreign policy in order to achieve a large-scale international projection. The defenders of this paradigm defend the use of a more active development and the construction of a national project to reduce domestic asymmetries and imbalances. In addition, they criticize the fruits of trade liberalization and unrestricted participation in international regimes. The alliance with countries whose interests are similar, and which are willing to face the impositions of the Global North, is seen as a strategic insertion option. This perspective is contrary to the model previously presented, as it does not believe that there is any

kind of power insufficiency and, therefore, it is not necessary to adopt a defensive posture (Hirst, Lima; 2003; Hirst, 2008).

The autonomists are very concerned about the fact that Brazil does not have elements of military deterrence, nor veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that support relations with the powers. The sovereign dimension is prevalent in this chain, so multilateral agreements are viewed with some fear as they imply the loss of state authority in favor of supranational bodies. Roughly speaking, we believe that foreign policy management in the era of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso came closer to the “credibility for participation in order” model, while that of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the “autonomy for order change” paradigm (Vigevani, Cepalune, 2007).

The debate between autonomy and freedom focuses on Brazil's ability to eventually expand the possibilities of choosing partners, which is also a way to guarantee decision-making autonomy for agendas that have a strategic character. Among the foreign policy paradigms, according to Letícia Pinheiro (2000), a more globalist and a more North Americanist view took turns as dominant proposals based on the characterization of professional diplomacy, which also expanded the space for diversification and multilateralism that characterized Brazilian diplomatic history (Pinheiro, 2000; Lacerda, Nóbrega, 2015).

Brazil and the BRICS

In 2001, when Jim O’Neil published the report “Building Better Global Economic BRIC,” Brazil was perceived as an emerging power that, together with China, Russia, and India, would play a defining role in the world economy for the years to come. At that time, Brazil was the country that in the 1990s managed to stabilize its economy and design its foreign policy to diversify its partnerships, while its neighboring countries in South America dived in instability.

Under the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration, Brazil managed to stabilize the economy and review its foreign policy to pursue the goal of becoming a global player. For that, the government employed a series of efforts to change the country’s image from that built during the military government through cooperation and participation in international regimes, especially those of human rights, environmental policies and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

To increase its recognition as a global player, Itamaraty defined five priority axes to focus its foreign policy. Three of them were addressed to traditional partners in Mercosur, the United States, and Europe, including the Pacific (focused on Japan) and other regional powers

(in which the countries that later constituted the BRICS forum would be a part) on the list of its main partners (Lessa, 1998). Brazil realized that, as a regional power, it had to join forces with countries at the same level to defend common interests and to increase its influence.

As a matter of fact, the relationship between Brazil and some of the other BRICS countries preclude the 1990s. China was already a growing partner since the 1980s, after the two countries established diplomatic relations on August 15th, 1974 during the Geisel administration. In 1988, they joined forces to develop the aerospace industry, celebrating the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS) program which was responsible for the launch of five satellites, and with the sixth programmed for launch until the end of 2019.

Brazil was the first country to celebrate a strategic partnership with China in 1993, and throughout the following two decades, they increased their cooperation until 2009, when the Asian country became Brazil's most significant trade partner. Cooperation between the two countries focuses on areas such as infrastructure, energy, raw material, heavy industry, and aerospace (LESSA, 1998). In 2012, the relations between the two countries had an upgrade to a global strategic partnership, and in 2017 they established the Brazil-China Cooperation Fund for the Expansion of Production Capacity, with US\$20bi invested for infrastructure and industrial modernization projects.

Despite the maxi-devaluation of the Real (Brazilian currency) and the internal uncertainty in 2002 caused by the fear that Lula could affect the macroeconomic stability achieved, the early 2000s brought new basis for the foreign policy with a diversification of partnerships, such as when the country engaged in the approach of those who would form in the future; along with it was the BRICS. The reduction of Brazilian embassies abroad during the 1990s reflected the country's new focus in areas it believed to be vital to the expansion of its international recognition, establishing five priority axes.

The strategic partnership with Russia has been deepened since 1994, having the foreign minister at the time, Celso Amorim, as its biggest articulator. However, it was only in October 1997, with the visit of Primakov—Russian foreign minister at the time—to Brazil that the two countries were able to deepen their relationship and sign an agreement for the establishment of the Brazilian-Russian Commission of High-Level Cooperation. According to Bacigalupo, Primakov "pondered that the resumption of the relation with Brazil was important not only because of the country's 'leading' position in Latin America, but also because of the current conditions of globalization after many years of Cold War" (Bacigalupo, 2000: 66).

During the same period, India had become an important ally in multilateral forums, particularly with regard to the regulation of international trade. As NAM's historic leader, India established a foreign policy strategy, that had been effective since the 1960s, which was guided by the ideals of economic development, combating poverty and the struggle for decolonization. During the start of the negotiations on agriculture within the Doha Round World Trade Organization (WTO), launched in November 2001, Brazil and India were skilled in articulating developing countries around a single group, the G20, in order to contain the United States' and Europe's proposals, though the two countries disagreed regarding the liberalization of markets for agricultural products. The joint effort of the Global South countries influenced the way that the Doha Work Programme presented a social dimension of trade, expressing its dissatisfaction with the way that international trade reflected the interests of developed countries.

Finally, South Africa became an important ally of Brazil in Africa after the end of apartheid and the democratization of the country. Its importance was enhanced by the perception of the South Atlantic as a strategic area to Brazilian interests, becoming part of its strategy for security. Africa became considered the Western border of South America and the growing concern over the presence of external actors in the region meant the rise, in 1986, of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS). More recently, under the Dialogue Forum IBSA, the three countries began in 2008 a series of naval operations called IBSAMAR (India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime) in order to monitor dangerous cargoes in the Atlantic South.

According to Monica Hirst, "the economic expectations that led to the creation of this bloc [BRIC] are the central reason why China and Brazil share interests in select multilateral forums, reinforcing the idea that both are perceived by the North as significant players in the global economic agenda" (Hirst, 2008, p. 92-3). Nevertheless, the interaction with these countries would be expanded with the consolidation of the political arrangement inspired by the predictions that the four countries, that later would include the African member, would be the bricks to build the new world order.

The first BRIC Summit occurred on June 16th, 2009, raising skepticism by some international analysts who saw the arrangement as artificial and uneven and that it would have taken advantage of a concept created by an investment bank to obtain visibility, while others believed in the possibility of "re-balancing and democratizing the international order" as expressed by the Brazilian government itself.

The summit planned to address issues related to the international economic crisis, pleading for a reform of international financial institutions, including in the agenda the Chinese proposal of working toward an alternative to the dollar. Yet, the joint statement was restricted to target a “stable, predictable and more diversified international monetary system” (BRICS, 2009). It has become clear that the leading role in the international system had as a background the economic interests of each country.

The conditions that make Brazil an important link for the BRICS are also associated with the common development needs among developing countries. Prerogatives of economic domination and of the international system on the part of great powers of the West were strongly shaken with the growth of countries of the axis of the BRICS, turning these great markets into a new front yet to create opportunities of all kinds. An important part of these demands associated with development are part of the financing mechanisms available to the economies of less developed or booming countries.

As of 2015, with the creation of the Bank of the BRICS, renamed as the New Development Bank more recently, the projects associated with these needs for the development of institutions and programs in the countries that are members of the BRICS took place through widely available resources, mainly through Chinese capital (Abdenur, Folly, 2015).

Adriana Abdenur and Mayara Folly point out that the infrastructure demands of BRICS countries increased significantly in the final decades of the 21st century, mainly because the availability of capital for this purpose decreased significantly during this time among Bretton Woods institutions (Abdenur, Folly, 2015). Between 2017 and 2018 alone, the NDB (New Development Bank) increased the number of operations it was carrying out in the form of direct financing by approximately 120% (Annual Report, NDB, 2018).

Ramos et al. (2018) argue that areas such as economic and development policy, as well as international security, could suffer a great impact given the bloc pressures arising from domestic political changes as in Brazil, as well as in the generation of a Russian-Chinese relationship for different reasons to the United States. For the authors, the Russian interests associated with security and the Chinese economic interests, in creating this opposition between the BRICS project and the United States, could see the densification of institutions and partnerships within the BRICS diminished.

For Abdenur & Folly (2018; 2015), the creation of the New Development Bank points to an institutionalization process that normatively empowers the project and deepens it. Otherwise, the creation of the project also faces the hegemonic manifestation of the West in the

matter, however, this does not make the project anti-Western. But, if the Bank's project seems to have strengthened the commitment in question, the BRICS still have the presence of a series of narratives that invoke disputes of all kinds and, for that reason, manifest domestic political transitions in the bloc. In this regard, the influence of development projects is less than that of foreign policy narratives.

The relevant link between foreign policy and development is centered on the eventual autonomy that the actors retain in terms of negotiating power and reliability in the international system. Thus, development demands are of the utmost importance to the various ways a state actor could negotiate inside an international system and, as so, they are an imperative condition of autonomy. At this point, the creation of a robust international policy, through its own funds and alternatives to the prevailing capital of great powers on the western axis, seems to be in line with the historical pragmatism that traced Brazil through a professional profile of its diplomacy.

At the same time, it is possible to observe that, among the other countries of the bloc, the expansion of collaboration axes, especially those related to the respective regions, also stand out as a foreign policy project. As in Brazil, the experimentation of the last decades of focus in the South Atlantic and in South America, South Africa, India, China and Russia, significantly increased the number of agreements and the diversity of interests of establishment and regional projection. In this regard, Southeast Asia and the South Atlantic drew attention to the propulsion of projects both associated with commercial collaboration and international governance structures in matters such as security and defense.

BRICS on the Brazilian “New Foreign Policy” agenda

Faced with a new Brazilian conjuncture in terms of its foreign policy, this topic of the article seeks to carry out a discourse analysis of official speeches from Ernesto Araújo in order to understand the “paths” of the new Brazilian foreign policy agenda and the capacity for negotiation given to its partners in the BRICS group. Therefore, we have as an initiative a brief analysis about Brazil-BRICS relations and the new agenda proposed by the newly elected government (mandate from 2019) in order to verify new demands, new partnerships and the deepening [(or not) of this relationship].

The greatest approximation of these countries at that time would be the need to break with the international order established in the main forums of economic and political power,

where there is still the focus of power and influence of developed countries and also where the process of making decisions occurs.

This process of implementing and presenting the BRICS to the international community demonstrated the support and common interest of the group's countries in breaking with the rigidity of developed countries in international decision-making forums. In this case, it is not a question of breaking with these countries, since they are recognized for their great economic impact, but instead a matter of "forcing" international institutions and bodies to have more dynamic and democratic structures.

Since its creation, BRICS members have established bilateral and trilateral partnerships with the purpose of strengthening institutional and commercial relations. The commercial and financial agreements and the proposal to create a bank that gave rise to the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014 were some cooperation mechanisms on the BRICS agenda. In terms of strengthening institutional and commercial relations and the economic impact of such changes, the NDB has so far approved 46 projects worth US \$12.8 billion in member countries, according to a report available after the 11th BRICS Summit in Brasilia. (NDB, 2019)

Neumann (2008) pointed out that the discourse analysis of social actors aims to highlight the characteristics that promote the formal character of representations through a post-structuralist lens. In the field of politics, especially foreign policy, the meaning of this type of analysis is linked to the narrative we want to emphasize, constituting the represented subject and the entity exposed by his speech. In the case of official speeches present at formal meetings, it has a different repercussion from those speeches whose treatment is diverse, given that it is diffused by the media in the spontaneous form of its unstructured outlines. Among structured and unstructured speeches, Brazilian foreign policy is a project historically endowed with the professionalism and formalism of the diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil (Itamaraty), which is accompanied by presidential participation in non-formal speeches and guided by ordinary dynamics.

In the case of the New Foreign Policy, inaugurated in Jair Bolsonaro's presidency under Ernesto Araujo's coordination, the dynamics of deconstruction of speeches from the previous paradigm which was dominated by the Workers' Party for 12 years were intensified in the first year of mandate (2019). Considering the desire to align with the United States and to maintain Brazilian foreign policy on this trend, subsequent choices in the matter ended up being influenced by the interpretations derived from this alignment, since the other choices could not subdue the first.

This alignment reflects the impersonation of the administration's perspective on national identity. In opposition to what he calls as "globalist ideology," Ernesto Araujo expressed in his inauguration speech the version of "Nationalist" foreign policy that Brazil would pursue starting from 2019, enumerating some of its dearest allies.

So we admire those who fight, we admire those who fight for their homeland and those who love each other as a people, so we admire, for example, Israel, which never stopped being a nation, even when it had no soil—in contrast to some nations today, that even though they have their soil, their churches and their castles they no longer want to be a nation. That is why we admire the United States of America: those people who fly their flag and worship their heroes. We admire the Latin American countries that freed themselves from the regimes of the São Paulo Forum. We admire our brothers on the other side of the Atlantic, who are building a vibrant and free Africa. We admire those who struggle against tyranny in Venezuela and elsewhere. That is why we admire the new Italy, why we admire Hungary and Poland, we admire those who assert themselves and not those who deny themselves. (Araujo, 2019).

This nationalism that welcomes Western principles is directly linked to the merge of economic freedom and moral values. In this sense, the new Brazilian nationalism that arose from the 2018 election has its foundation based on principles brought by conservative Christianity. According to this version of national identity, everything that represents diversity and plurality in society seems like a menace for the prosperity and the longevity of the humankind. All of that is labeled as "globalism", an ideology that the government claims it has beaten in the polls.

In Brazil, voters chose a path that combines economic freedom with a strong sense of national identity and its values. We are convinced that these two dimensions—that of economic freedom and that of values—are mutually reinforcing. The only reliable basis for a competitive liberal economy is a coherent, authentic, and free society. (Araujo, 2019b).

The New Brazilian Foreign Policy and the approach to the United States in terms of the agenda are experiencing a new conjuncture about foreign relations. In international forums, the narrative of this new perspective, seen under the leadership of Ernesto de Araújo, has addressed issues such as nationalism, national identity, the Brazilian people, values and morals that the new government considers "lost". This new discourse, aimed at the binomial democracy and freedom, has permeated the agenda in several government presentation meetings to countries in the region and others.

For verification, below is an excerpt from the speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto de Araújo, on the New Foreign Policy of Brazil and its commercial aspect at Firjan in August 2019.⁴

I would like to talk a little more about trade policy and our foreign policy as a whole. Sometimes, we see our foreign policy not having a structure. Once I was making a stopover at Madrid airport and I saw a sign: "Spain is not in the city". Nor is Brazil covered by the hand, Brazil's foreign policy is not covered by the hand either. It requires a little effort to understand what you are trying to do: try to open up democracy, economic openness, sovereignty, the defense of values with one hand and to demand everything, the concept of freedom. I think any of the actions that we are trying to take, like things that we are changing, like things that we are deepening, fit into some of these domains, which fit together. Democracy, openness, sovereignty, values. (Araujo, 2019c)

However, speeches that address realism and the need to look at the demands of the people and interests of Brazil can cause strangeness with a plural and multilateral agenda of foreign policy that has always been used with the cooperative parameter, especially with our strategic environment and other partners and multilateral groups. The strand of discourse based on nationalism and, at the same time, on trade openness and the use of private capital demonstrates a government that shares its internal agenda and priorities with those of the Brazilian foreign policy.

Despite the automatic alignment with the United States, which made the president announce his son as a possible United States Ambassador (later withdrawn nomination by opposing public pressure), his government's electoral support was great in relation to the liberal and focused growth, centered on the Minister of Economy, Paulo Guedes. Hence, economic pressures demonstrated that such an alignment should not be made by creating ruptures or splits with relevant commercial partners, especially in relation to China (the main Brazilian trading partner in the current situation), which would also be the case for the BRICS.

Thus, it is possible to perceive a progressive change over the first year in terms of pronouncements and positions until the summit meeting in Brasilia, for which his coordination was admittedly more pragmatic. In January, Ernesto Araujo expressed critique that seemed addressed to China, in the Informal Ministerial Meeting of the WTO, saying that "trade can also function as a force that leads to the opposite of liberal democracy. It is up to us to make

⁴ <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/discursos-artigos-e-entrevistas-categoria/ministro-das-relacoes-exterieiros-discursos/20749-palestra-do-ministro-de-estado-das-relacoes-exterieiros-sobre-a-nova-politica-externa-do-brasil-e-sua-vertente-comercial-firjan-28-8-2019>.

trade a force for good, freedom, and human progress" (2019b). Over time, his speech became less critical towards China.

The pragmatism that was strong during the military regime in Brazil is also part of the influence of the military professional corps that keep the government from less moderate and more dichotomic options in sectors such as defense, energy and foreign policy. Not surprisingly, the 2019 BRICS Summit had as its agenda the expansion of cooperation between members.

The agenda focused on the commercial partnership and mainly on development in strategic areas. This made the Development Bank invest in sectors of great interest in the member countries. The projects which are to be implemented in the 2020 agenda of the BRICS bank are related across a wide range of different niches, from infrastructure sectors and logistics hubs in Brazil to investments in energy and water resources in South Africa. Other projects are focused on environmental issues, digital systems and greater accessibility in remote accesses and investment in transport. Some of these examples are demonstrations of a cooperation agenda in strategic sectors in view of the development needs of the BRICS countries.

Faced with a new model of foreign policy and the prioritization of commercial issues on the PEB agenda, the BRICS started to play a major role in Brazil. In 2019, Brazil led the group under the motto "BRICS: economic growth for an innovative future," emphasizing the promotion of science, technology and innovation, digital access and the increase of relations between the productive sector and the NDB.

At an informal meeting of the BRICS at the G20 meeting in June 2019 in Japan, member countries reiterated the importance of the group for global economic growth, stating that structural changes would further strengthen countries' potential growth. They also emphasized the need to invest in innovation to promote development to expand the areas of science and technology, to deepen cooperation and exchange of experiences to reduce poverty and to increase digital access in remote regions.

This joint agenda of the BRICS countries was defended in a speech by President Jair Bolsonaro at the Plenary Session of the 11th BRICS Summit, reaffirming the group's economic potential, the importance of intra-BRICS partnership, the need to implement science and innovation as a driving force development, and that "in international trade, we adopt a realistic and pragmatic perspective. We celebrated a Memorandum of Understanding between our trade and investment promotion agencies, which will help each of our countries to learn from the best

practices of other BRICS members" (Bolsonaro, 2019), when addressing the vision and role of Brazil.

Even though Bolsonaro's administration managed to move closer to pragmatism during the BRICS Summit, it did not mean that it changed the roots of its foreign policy. In a discourse addressed to Angola's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in December 2019, Ernesto Araujo once again repeated his interpretation on Brazil as an integral part of the West:

We will return to ourselves, and in this return to ourself, the Brazilian people want to recover their roots, want to live again as part of the West, as part of the great adventure that begins there with the Greeks and Romans. And sometimes, when I say that, they call me Eurocentric, but it is just the opposite; it is to say that Europe does not have a monopoly on this Western adventure; we are as much or more part of that story. Precisely, I say that the West does not end in Europe. (Araujo, 2019.d)

In the process of identifying Brazil's New Foreign Policy as funded on Western principles, Araújo compared the movement observed in the United Kingdom for Brexit with the process started in Brazil since Bolsonaro's election. According to him, both events are symbols of nations claiming for a kind of freedom that goes beyond the democratic system, one that is directly linked to the national sentiment. This argument is deeply embedded with a religious component with messianic elements that associate the President as shepherd to its people.

The book, which many of us believe, says, in the Gospel of Matthew: "Do not be afraid!", "Mē phobeisthe" (Μὴ φοβεῖσθε) in Greek. This is an inspiring phrase, which inspires those who believe in President Jair Bolsonaro's project, which is not an electoral project, but a political project; and that it is not just a political project, but a nation project, a project of the Brazilian nation that chose President Jair Bolsonaro as its vehicle. (Araújo, 2019.d).

In this sense, notwithstanding that the New Foreign Policy changed its approach to a more pragmatic one on the eve and throughout the BRICS Summit, it does not mean it abandoned the focus on the economic freedom and the moral values linked to the Western principles that act as the foundation for this version of Nationalism. Back to Gelson da Fonseca's classification for the different types of Brazilian foreign policy from a historical perspective, the current New Foreign Policy can be directly associated with the "Western Pure" form.

In addition to the return to a model of foreign policy that identifies the country as an integral part of Western culture, and that justifies all its actions corresponding to it when it comes to the model of insertion, the New Foreign Policy seems to have abandoned the autonomy that led to the creation of the BRICS. Brazil should accept the absence of surplus

power resources and embrace the liberalization of its economy following the American prescripts.

This return to an Americanist approach to the foreign policy identifies the interests of the Northern partner as being similar to its own. In the name of the alignment, the New Foreign Policy seems to renounce the basic principles that have governed the Brazilian foreign policy for years. From the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration onward, we attested a widening in the variety of Brazilian partnerships. Now we see a return to the focus on the Western countries, especially the USA. This does not mean that Brazil abandoned all the multilateral initiatives it had with other developing countries, such as other BRICS members, but that it underwent a significant decrease in the importance it had.

From assuming the Western values, including Christianity, the New Foreign Policy assumes an ideological position that can harm long-term partnerships with countries that are not part of this group. That is not only the case for China—Brazil's most important trade partner—but also of some of the Middle Eastern countries with whom Brazil has maintained relationships with since colonial times, and that could interpret this movement as a support to a new cultural Crusade.

Final Remarks

When the BRICS were first brought together in 2009, it was a symbol of the rise of a group of emerging countries that wanted to reform the international institutions for them to reflect the new configuration of economic and political power. The Brazilian autonomous "Active and Generous Foreign Policy" believed that the country could achieve international projection through the diversification of partnerships and the assertiveness in international forums, which are elements that would grant it the position of leadership within the developing countries.

After the 2018 election and the nomination of Ernesto Araújo for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brazil inaugurated the New Foreign Policy, reframing its international insertion from autonomy to alignment to the United States. This revision expressed a shift in the country's perception of who should be its priority partners, a change represented in images of Eduardo Bolsonaro using a Donald Trump 2020 campaign cap where one could read "Make America great."

The article aimed to understand how the "New Foreign Policy" could affect the BRICS bloc. To achieve this goal, it started with a literature review that focused on understanding the elements that influenced Brazil's international identity and action. The second section

addressed, through a historical analysis of the BRICS bloc, how it symbolized to Brazil an opportunity to become a leader for the developing countries. In the third part of the article, we conducted a discourse analysis of Ernesto Araújo's speeches in the first year of the "New Foreign Policy".

Through the discourse analysis of Ernesto Araújo's speeches, we could identify a focus on two major themes: the claim of a type of nationalism and the advocacy for trade liberalization. Through the nationalism, the New Foreign Policy merged Western values with conservative Christianity to differentiate itself from the previous multilateralist foreign policy; meanwhile, through the commercial liberalism, it aligned itself with the procedures recommended by the Western international institutions.

Those movements repositioned the Brazilian foreign policy closer to the United States' interests, in a similar strategy to what was once deployed by Dutra and Castelo Branco, and that Gerson da Fonseca calls "Western." Nonetheless, it did not mean that this rebranding came as prejudice toward the BRICS Summit of 2019, where Brazil occupied the rotative presidency of the bloc. The "New Foreign Policy" was pragmatic to what it brings to the group's summit, choosing as the motto "BRICS: economic growth for an innovative future," even though the full embrace of Western principles could have an impact on how other developing countries perceive Brasil.

In any case, the trade of the "Building BRICS" policy focused on multilateralism for "Make America[nism] great again," a reference to Trump's campaign motto mixed with the new "Americanist" orientation for Brazilian foreign policy. However, this new policy and motto could harm the country's relations with traditional partners, not only in the BRICS bloc but all over the Global South.

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