

## **A BRAZILIAN STATUS DILEMMA IN THE UKRAINE WAR? BETWEEN BEING A 'DO-GOOD' STATE AND A BRICS MEMBER**

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### **Abstract**

Brazil's position concerning the war in Ukraine has been the target of harsh criticism. Once it did not impose sanctions, due to its close its political ties with Russia, some perceive that Brazil has prioritized its alliances to the detriment of establishing peace conditions in the region. However, the Brazilian president, Lula da Silva, has recurrently affirmed that he strives to promote peace in Ukraine. His discourses exemplify Brazil's strategy of being a 'do-good' state, to gain international status. Applying the 'social identity theory' and analyzing official discourses and mass media posts, this study concluded that Brazil attempted to gain status by utilizing a 'creativity' strategy. This strategy vowed to portray Brazil as a peace promoter. However, this strategy failed because of Brazil's proximity to Russia. Paradoxically, this proximity to Russia also happens due to status-seeking. As a forum where Brazil has close contacts with China and other powers, the BRICS works as a fundamental space for Brazil to acquire international recognition. Therefore, I propose that Brazil has faced a status dilemma: capitalize its image within the BRICS or maintain a 'do-good' state image.

### **Keywords**

Brazil, international status, Ukraine War, BRICS, Social Identity Theory.

### **Resumo**

A posição do Brasil em relação à guerra na Ucrânia tem sido alvo de duras críticas. Na verdade, pelo facto de não ter imposto sanções e devido aos seus estreitos laços políticos com a Rússia, alguns percebem que o Brasil priorizou suas alianças em detrimento de estabelecer condições de paz na região. No entanto, o presidente brasileiro, Lula da Silva, tem afirmado repetidamente que se esforça para promover a paz na Ucrânia. Os seus discursos exemplificam a estratégia do Brasil de ser um Estado que faz o bem, para capitalizar o seu estatuto internacional. Aplicando a "teoria da identidade social" e analisando os discursos oficiais e as publicações nos meios de comunicação de massa, este estudo concluiu que o Brasil tentou capitalizar o seu estatuto internacional utilizando uma estratégia de "criatividade". Essa estratégia prometia retratar o Brasil como um promotor da paz. Contudo, esta estratégia falhou devido à proximidade do Brasil com a Rússia. Paradoxalmente, esta proximidade com a Rússia também acontece devido à necessidade de capitalizar o seu estatuto internacional. Sendo um fórum onde o Brasil mantém contatos estreitos com a China e outras potências, o BRICS funciona como um espaço fundamental para o Brasil adquirir reconhecimento internacional. Assim, este texto sugere que o Brasil esteja a enfrentar um dilema de estatuto: capitalizar sua imagem dentro dos BRICS ou manter uma imagem de Estado "que faz o bem".



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### Palavras-chave

Brasil, Estatuto Internacional, Guerra Ucrânia, BRICS, Teoria da Identidade Social.

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## **A BRAZILIAN STATUS DILEMMA IN THE UKRAINE WAR? BETWEEN BEING A 'DO-GOOD' STATE AND A BRICS MEMBER<sup>1</sup>**

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### **1 - Introduction**

Since the election of Lula da Silva, the Brazilian president has attempted to lead a potential mediation for an agreement to end the War in Ukraine. His positions were, however, considerably criticized by some political forces, especially in Western media. For some, his positions, sometimes criticizing Russia and other times criticizing the West, demonstrated a lack of proper position in favor of peace. Applying the "Social Identity Theory" (SIT), this piece argues that Lula da Silva's position was an attempt to gain international status for Brazil. More specifically, Lula da Silva endeavored to apply strategies that some authors call "creativity" (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010; Ward, 2017) to gain status.

Although status has gained rampant attention in IR, most studies still focus on the Great Powers (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, 2014a). A recent trend in the literature has consolidated new efforts to widen the analysis to emerging, middle, or small powers (Wohlforth et al., 2018; Chagas-Bastos & Franzone, 2019; Bilgic & Pilcher, 2023). This literature has demonstrated how examining emerging and minor powers can shed light on dynamics usually unnoticed in studies on the Great Powers' status. One example of it concerns incentives for conflicts. Studies on major powers usually refer to how status-seeking fosters conflicts (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010; Forsberg, 2014; Tsygankov, 2014). However, when authors look at middle or emerging powers, non-conflictual dynamics emerge (Larson & Shevchenko, 2014b; Neumann & de Carvalho, 2015; Wohlforth et al., 2018). These states usually utilize creativity to gain status, trying to find a 'niche,' something distinctive about themselves (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). One possibility is to become a 'good state' (Neumann & de Carvalho, 2015) or a 'do-good state' (Wohlforth et al., 2018). For instance, states such as Norway managed to construct an image of a humanitarian, peace settler state to gain status.

Brazil historically utilizes this image of a 'good' state to gain status (Neumann & De Carvalho, 2015; De Carvalho et al., 2020). Nevertheless, his approach faced a

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fundamental problem in the Ukraine case, because Brazil's participation in BRICS is also a fundamental step of the country's foreign policy. More so, it offers a space for direct contact with China, Brazil's most important commercial partner. Consequently, the South American country cannot neglect such a forum. With closer connections with Russia because of this organization, the ties with the aggressor in Ukraine hindered the Brazilian strategy to act as a "do-good" state. This became evident, for instance, when the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, affirmed that Brazil and China prefer to maintain their alliances with Russia rather than establish peace in Ukraine (Poder360, 2024). Additionally, Lula da Silva's declarations even provided more argument to this position as some perceived his views as reproducing Vladimir Putin's discourses (Wright, 2023). Hence, I argue that Brazil has achieved a status dilemma. While ties with Russia within BRICS represent a crucial factor for Brazilian status, it also hampers the success of the Brazilian status strategy concerning the Ukraine War.

Such debate contributes to the existing literature, focusing on the under-studied role of peaceful behaviors in shaping status (Wohlforth et al., 2018; De Carvalho et al., 2020). Moreover, it offers promising conclusions for the literature on emerging powers. Hence, the following three sections will discuss status. First, I will provide a more exhaustive overview of my theoretical approach. Second, I will discuss the literature on Brazilian status-seeking. Then, I will analyze the Brazilian strategies in Ukraine and evaluate their results.

## 2 - Status-seeking

According to Renshon (2017: 5), the importance of status in international politics is so evident that it is consensual among different epistemologies and theories in international relations. Status might arguably contribute to a state's security, influence on others, and economic prosperity (Renshon, 2017: 3). For Duque (2018: 2), the absence of an international authority increases the importance of status since it influences "who gets what, when, and how." Surprisingly, despite some definitional nuances, status tends to be defined in similar terms by different authors. It is usually connected with "filling a place in a social hierarchy." (Wohlforth et al., 2018: 528). Moreover, to achieve a particular status, other states must recognize a state's status (Dafoe et al., 2014).

A common approach to status in International Relations usually arises from Social Identity Theory (SIT), which asserts that "social groups strive to achieve a positively distinctive identity" (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010: 66). SIT proposes three approaches usually used by states to gain status: 1- mobility, 2- competition, and 3- creativity. I must mention that there are some divergences concerning this division. While Larson and Shevchenko (2010) consider the three strategies simultaneously, Ward says this perspective is inaccurate. For him, SIT makes a clear distinction between individual strategy (mobility) and group strategy (competition and creativity) (Ward, 2017). Thus, Ward affirms that the approach proposed by Larson and Shevchenko is problematic because it confuses different levels of analysis and blurs the distinction between mobility and competitiveness. Nonetheless, this debate is irrelevant to this piece, because my



further analysis will focus on creativity, which both agree can be applied to the group level.

Presenting an overview of these three strategies, “mobility” arguably refers to conforming to existing norms, aspiring to obtain a higher place in a hierarchy (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010)<sup>2</sup>. It presupposes a space and acceptance of newcomers in such hierarchies (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010).

Meanwhile, “competition” refers to a strategy followed by a state where it competes with others, in specific domains, aiming to gain status (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). This can occur, for instance, through technological competition. In this case, obtaining new technologies can represent a positive characterization of a country, achieving a higher ranking in the social hierarchy.

The other strategy is “creativity”, which does not aim “to achieve a higher rank for the in-group along a consensually valued dimension of comparison, but to reinterpret the comparative situation in a way that mitigates the in-group’s experience of low status” (Ward, 2017: 823). According to Larson & Shevchenko (2010), creativity can occur by: 1- changing a negative meaning of status to become a positive one; and, 2- creating a new dimension in which the state can emerge as superior. Different creative strategies contribute to improve a state’s status, such as participating in elite clubs (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). When mobility is not desirable, due to an avoidance of reproducing existing rules, and competition is not an option, due to power discrepancies, creativity is the most promising strategy, especially for emerging states (Larson & Shevchenko, 2014b).

Considering these three potential strategies, most literature strives to comprehend how status-seeking fuels conflict among states (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, 2014a; Dafoe et al., 2014; Forsberg, 2014). Many turn to Russia and its conflictual relationship with the West (Larson & Shevchenko, 2014a; Tsygankov, 2014; Forsberg, 2014). Others affirm that accommodating China and Russia's status concerns could be fundamental to guarantee their peaceful participation in the international order (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). Status, or social recognition, allegedly causes conflicts because it is an uncontrollable human desire (Dafoe et al., 2014).

However, these studies focus mainly on major powers (Neumann & De Carvalho, 2015). When opening the investigation boundaries to smaller states, other relevant dimensions emerge. For instance, Latin American scholars identified the necessity of formulating new concepts connected to status, such as international insertion (Chagas-Bastos & Franzoni, 2019). According to this perspective, being accepted, or inserted, by those at the higher hierarchical stances precludes acquiring status (Chagas-Bastos & Franzoni, 2019). Looking at middle powers also overcomes the recurrent connection between status and conflict. Wohlforth et al. (2018) argue that small and middle powers can have other strategic choices to gain status, including being a peace defender or avoiding conflict. As mentioned above, Norway utilizes the image of a “do-good” state to gain status

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<sup>2</sup> As mentioned above, Ward (2017) affirms that Larson & Shevchenko misinterpreted SIT and mobility should not be included in IR analyses.



(Wohlforth et al., 2018). The same arguably happens with Brazil, whose participation in peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian actions, attempted to gain the status of 'doing good' (De Carvalho et al., 2020). Such attempts, however, have been barely effective (Beaumont & Roren, 2020: 45).

### **3 - The Global South; Brazil; and Status**

A rising interest in identity formation in the Global South has emerged. Nevertheless, as Chagas-Bastos & Franzoni (2019) allure, the literature on status still misses explanatory capacity regarding how states from the Global South act to gain status. Some talk about how the colonial past creates an identity of post-colonial anxiety in those countries (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2022). The shared history of being explored also fosters cooperation in some areas, including the non-aligned movement (Vieira, 2016). The colonized past also severely influences how these states seek to gain status (Bilgic & Pilcher, 2022). As some have identified, in recent decades, Global South emerging Powers have increased their actions to gain status (Dal & Dipama, 2019). Brazil, the object of this analysis, is far from being an exception.

De Carvalho et al. (2020) affirms that in the Brazilian case, there is an attempt to gain status by emulating the Great Powers' actions (e.g., participating in peacekeeping) and challenging existing governance channels. However, there are some disagreements about the country's status objectives. Some argue that Brazil strives to be between a Great Power and a Global South state (De Carvalho, 2020). Meanwhile, others perceive Brazil as aspiring to become a Great Power (Larson & Shevchenko, 2014b; Stolte, 2015). Independently of its final aim, Brazil has utilized a few strategies to gain recognition for its emergence. Its participation in regional and international blocs, such as Mercosur, BRICS, and IBSA, is one meaningful example of the Brazilian strategy to get space in multilateral forums (Chagas-Bastos & Franzoni, 2019; Stuenkel, 2019). Furthermore, its presence in Africa during Lula da Silva's first two mandates was arguably an attempt to get a major power status (Stolte, 2015).

BRICS is significant since it is a group with annual meetings in which Brazil has direct access to other major powers like China, Russia, and India. The recent BRICS expansion to BRICS+, with the entrance of Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, propelled this group's geopolitical and economic importance even more. The emergence of BRICS has direct linkages with creating the IBSA Dialogue Forum formed by India, Brazil, and South Africa (Stuenkel, 2015, 2019; Brosig, 2019). One illustrative anecdote of IBSA creation is that the three Global South leaders joined cooperative efforts after participating in a G7 meeting, in which the three only observed without participating in the crucial discussions (Stuenkel, 2015, 2019). The Brazilian president at that time, Lula da Silva, queried about the sense of the three being there only 'to eat the dessert', once they wanted the 'main course, the dessert and then coffee' (Lula da Silva in Stuenkel, 2019:16). Thus, creating IBSA arose for a concise discontentment of the status given to Brazil, India, and South Africa by the G7 members. These countries could not join an elite club, so they created their own club.



While IBSA has a diminutive global impact, BRICS is paramount for these countries to gain status (Stuenkel, 2019: 43). To Brazil, constant and direct contact with China represented an opportunity to advance its economic and political interests. Notably, China is Brazil's most significant commercial partner, and Brazil is one of the few states with a positive trade balance with China (Bermúdez, 2024). BRICS is usually described as crucial to such commercial development (Stuenkel, 2019). Not surprisingly, some authors have argued that BRICS members have refused to take measurements against Russia (Junior & Branco, 2022; Sjoli, 2023). Brazil avoids breaking up with a partner in BRICS, since the forum represents an opportunity to advance its own interests.

Nevertheless, in a quantitative comparison of BRICS member's status recognition, Brazil appears to underperform the most, considering its potential (Beaumont & Roren, 2020). Beaumont and Roren (2020) also identify this lack of status as a recurrent characteristic of Latin American countries. Regardless of not fulfilling its potentiality, in his first two terms as Brazilian president (2003-2010), Lula da Silva was responsible for an expressive effort to improve the Brazilian international position (Chagas-Bastos & Franzoni, 2019). Beyond joining new international forums, Brazil bolstered its participation in peacekeeping operations, evidenced by its leading role in MINUSTAH, hosted the 2016 Olympics and the 2014 FIFA men's World Cup, and ignited its claims for a permanent seat in the Security Council (De Carvalho, 2020; De Carvalho et al., 2020). Notwithstanding, some have argued that since the 2010s, Brazil has stopped pursuing actions to reinforce its status as a regional power (Nolte & Schenoni, 2024).

In the literature about Brazilian status-seeking, a recurrent tendency is the perspective of Brazil attempting to gain status through an image of a 'good state', respectful of international law and a contributor to peacekeeping (Chagas-Bastos & Franzoni, 2019; De Carvalho et al., 2020). The idea of "good power" proposed by Neumann and De Carvalho (2015) highlights those states that utilize their "moral authority" to gain status. Larson and Shevchenko (2014b) consider the Brazilian strategies as examples of creativity. The 'good state' strategy might represent another creative pathway to gain status. In the next section, we will apply this perspective to analyze Brazilian behaviors concerning the Ukraine War.

#### **4 - Lula da Silva and the War in Ukraine**

In this section, I will analyze speeches and statements issued by the Brazilian government since January 2023, when Lula da Silva reassumed the presidency. As mentioned in the introduction, the Brazilian president's position concerning the Ukraine War was considerably questioned, especially by Western media. Indeed, as studies identified, Brazil has not opposed Russia since the (February 2022) invasion of Ukraine, following a BRICS pattern of criticizing while maintaining political and economic relations with Putin's regime (Júnior & Branco, 2022; Sjoli, 2023).

The Brazilian position, however, can be better explained as a creative attempt to gain status. After becoming president, Lula da Silva claimed to cease the hostilities in Ukraine (gov.br, 2023a, 2023b). Such claims arose with a discourse of "Brazil is back" (gov.br,



2023a, 2023b). The Brazilian president recurrently referred to the years of Bolsonaro's presidency as lost years in Brazilian international participation (gov.br, 2023a). The Worker's Party leader perceived that his country had lost status, which he vowed to regain.

As mentioned above, one aspect usually associated with status is the participation in 'elite groups' (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). In the case of Ukraine, Lula da Silva proposed a few times the creation of a new elite club. In his words: "When there was the 2008 economic crisis, quickly, we created the G20 attempting to save the economy. Now, it is important to create another G20 to end the war and to establish peace" (gov.br, 2023c, author's translation<sup>3</sup>).

In May 2023, after a meeting in London with the British Prime Minister, Lula da Silva said: "I believe in constructing a mechanism that can establish the possibility of making that the world returns to having peace" (gov.br, 2023b, author's translation<sup>4</sup>). He then added that he has talked about the War in Ukraine at the G20 and at the G7 and in bilateral meetings with the Indian, Indonesian, and Chinese leaders (gov.br, 2023b). His main proposal was the creation of a 'Peace Group' to deal with the war (gov.br, 2023c). This demonstrates a robust attempt to reinforce the Brazilian position as a peace defender. Historically, Brazil has tried to gain status through a peaceful image (De Carvalho, 2020; De Carvalho et al., 2020).

Still, in 2023, Lula da Silva also defended the creation of a G20 of peace when meeting the Spanish Prime Minister, Pedro Sanchez. This declaration is meaningful because he connects this new 'elite club' with the failure of the existing Security Council (gov.br, 2023a). The Brazilian claims for a permanent seat in the Security Council also emerges as an attempt to gain status (De Carvalho et al., 2020). The declarations by the Brazilian president also indicate that the country's behavior concerning Ukraine sought to solidify the country's position to achieve this objective. Lula da Silva's speech at the 2023 G7 meeting in Hiroshima also includes a sharp criticism of the Security Council (Da Silva, 2023). Furthermore, this speech attests to how he proposes Brazilian peaceful behavior as a matter of national identity. He said:

*Brazil has lived in peace with its neighbors for over 150 years. We made Latin America a region without nuclear weapons. We are also proud to have built, together with our African neighbors, a zone of peace and nuclear non-proliferation in the South Atlantic (Da Silva, 2023:1, author's translation)<sup>5</sup>.*

<sup>3</sup> Original Text: "Quando houve a crise econômica de 2008, rapidamente, nós criamos o G20 para tentar salvar a economia. Agora é importante criar um outro G20 para acabar com a guerra e estabelecer a paz."

<sup>4</sup> Original Text: acredito na construção de um mecanismo que possa estabelecer a possibilidade da gente fazer com que o mundo volte a ter paz.

<sup>5</sup> Original Text: "O Brasil vive em paz com seus vizinhos há mais de 150 anos. Fizemos da América Latina uma região sem armas nucleares. Também nos orgulhamos de ter construído, junto com vizinhos africanos, uma zona de paz e não proliferação nuclear no Atlântico Sul."





Such statement is an attempt to gain international status. SIT proposes that states seek status because human beings want to feel proud of participating in a group (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). According to the Brazilian president, peace with its neighbors for over 150 years is a reason for national pride. However, as the literature indicates, status also requires recognition. Speaking in these terms in a G7 meeting indicates an attempt to obtain recognition of Brazilian peaceful conduct.

Comparison is another essential feature of status-seeking (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010). In Lula da Silva's 2023 G7 speech, he compares the peaceful Brazil abovementioned with the bellicose attitude of some Security Council permanent members, who "continue the long-term tradition of waging wars non-authorized by the council." (Da Silva, 2023, author's translation)<sup>6</sup> Such narrative indicates an approach similar to some characteristics of a creativity strategy to gain status in some authors' perspectives (Larson & Shevchenko, 2010, 2014b; Ward, 2017). Lula da Silva tries to create new status measurements, such as a non-nuclear state as a positive feature and a new 'elite club,' the 'Peace Club,' to gain recognition. This strategy encapsulates what some authors call a 'good state' or a 'do-good state' strategy (Neumann & de Carvalho, 2015; Wohlforth et al., 2018).

## 5 - The Brazilian dilemma: when status-seeking strategies overlap

The Brazilian strategy concerning the Ukraine War failed in its central claims. After less than one year of making the War in Ukraine a pivotal matter in its foreign policy strategy, Lula da Silva lost much of his appeal to this matter. The eruption of the Israeli invasion of Gaza and the turbulence in its neighborhood with Venezuela and Guiana forced Brazil to minimize its rhetoric about Ukraine. Domestic dynamics also forced Lula da Silva to decrease his official international visits to other states (Moreno, 2023). Furthermore, Western media mainly perceived the Brazilian posture negatively, creating some diplomatic embarrassment to Lula da Silva. In this section, we will discuss why this strategy fails.

As mentioned, Brazil's participation in the BRICS is vital for the country to gain status (Larson & Shevchenko, 2014b; Chagas-Bastos & Franzone, 2019; De Carvalho et al., 2020; Stuenkel, 2019). Russia is one of the leading states in BRICS, and some argue that Wladimir Putin used this group to overcome isolationism since the 2014 Crimea invasion (Stuenkel, 2019). Some studies identify that Brazil did not effectively act in dissonance with Russia's interests (Júnior & Branco, 2022; Sjoli, 2023). As expected, Brazil maintains its agenda closer to BRICS, including Russia, in Lula da Silva's third mandate.

A meaningful event in this regard was Sergey Lavrov's trip to Brazil in April 2023. The official page of the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations refers to the visit: "Beyond the historical ties of friendship and cooperation between Brazil and Russia, the countries maintain expressive commercial relations. Russia is the main supplier of fertilizers to

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<sup>6</sup> Original Text: "continuam a longa tradição de fazerem guerras não autorizadas pelo Conselho".



Brazil.”<sup>7</sup> (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2023: 1, author’s translation). Lavrov even affirmed in Brasília that Russia was “grateful to our Brazilian friends for their clear understanding of the genesis of the situation.” (Paraguassu & Boadle, 2023:1). Western platforms recurrently mentioned this visit to suggest that Brazil was getting farther away from its traditional non-alignment and closer to Russia (Harris & Pooler, 2023).

After the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a prison mandate to Putin, some questioned whether he could participate in the G20 meeting in Brazil in 2024. Lula da Silva affirmed that, as long as he was the Brazilian president, Putin would not be arrested in Brazil, despite the country being an ICC signatory (Reuters, 2023). This kind of statement becomes even more meaningful, considering that Putin did not participate in the BRICS 2023 summit in South Africa (Aljazeera, 2023a). Although the official reason was a ‘mutual agreement,’ some affirm that he did not participate in the summit because of the ICC mandate (Aljazeera, 2023a). Thus, the Brazilian president’s statement becomes even more problematic.

Beyond Lavrov’s visit and Putin’s discourse, Lula da Silva’s assertions that the US and the EU were fueling the war in Ukraine created significant criticism by Western powers. The US spokesperson, John Kirby, even said that “Brazil is parroting Russian and Chinese propaganda without at all looking at the facts,” affirming that Lula’s comments were “simply misguided” (Wright, 2023: 1). According to an anonymous ambassador’s interview to Reuters, this criticism also resonated within the European Union (Paraguassu & Boadle, 2023). The EU spokesman, Peter Stano, rejected the Brazilian affirmations (Paraguassu & Boadle, 2023). In a direct answer to Lula’s declarations, Stano enforced that Russia was the only aggressor responsible for the conflict (Poder360, 2023).

The criticisms also surged when Lula da Silva visited Portugal for the commemorations of the Portuguese Revolution. Ukrainian refugees protested against the Brazilian president and his proximity to Russia (Aljazeera, 2023b). Referring to Lula da Silva, the leader of the Portuguese Liberal Party said that having a friend of Putin in the Parliament was outrageous (Lusa, 2023). The major oppositional party, *PSD* (currently in power), also asked the government to issue a statement demarcating Portugal’s policy from Lula da Silva’s affirmations (Lusa, 2023). Moreover, *Chega*, the Portuguese far-right party currently the third major force in the Portuguese Parliament, called for protests against Lula’s presence in Portugal (Amato, 2023).

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, fueled the critics, affirming that Brazil was misinterpreting the war and who was the real aggressor (Gazeta do Povo, 2023). For Zelensky, Lula da Silva reproduced Putin’s ideas about the war, which does not contribute to peace (Duarte, 2023). The Ukrainian president even sarcastically affirmed that he was happy that Lula da Silva criticized him (CNN Brasil, 2023). As mentioned, the Ukrainian president has recently argued that Brazil and China prioritize their alliance with Russia; rather than establishing peace in Ukraine (Poder360, 2024). Considering that the

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<sup>7</sup> Original Text: Além dos laços históricos de amizade e cooperação entre Brasil e Rússia, os países mantêm expressivo relacionamento comercial. A Rússia é o principal fornecedor de fertilizantes para o Brasil.



Europeans, and the North Americans, share a considerably positive perspective on Zelensky, such statements negatively impact Lula da Silva's image in the West.

The analysis of news reports and feature articles from Western media suggests that the 'good guy' image can hardly stand if you 'walk with' a 'bad guy.' Lavrov's visit to Brazil hardened Europeans' acceptance of Brazil's position. As demonstrated in the previous section, Brazil attempted to gain status with the war in Ukraine. This strategy, however, failed. The peace group never materialized, and Lula da Silva was never invited to mediate peace talks. This does not mean that Brazil has not gotten the world's attention because it substantiated Lula da Silva's discourse of "Brazil is back", hence achieving greater success. However, considering precisely the 'creative' strategy concerning the Ukraine War, the polemic positions of Brazil hardly improved the country's status.

## 6 – Conclusion

This paper proposes that the Brazilian posture regarding the War in Ukraine can be qualified as a (failed) attempt to gain status. Although the literature on status focuses mainly on how it fosters conflicts, this analysis demonstrates that seizing conflicts can also be utilized when a state seeks status. As the Brazilian president's declarations attest, it attempted a few creative strategies, including creating a new elite club (G20 for peace) and claiming the necessity of bringing non-nuclear states to the Security Council. This conclusion contributes to the literature proposing that Brazil attempted to be a 'do-good' state (De Carvalho et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the failure of Lula da Silva's strategy of using creativity in the Ukrainian case demonstrates that there are other dynamics that have still not been identified by these authors.

Lula da Silva failed for different reasons. The perspective among the status gatekeepers was so polarized that the Brazilian 'pro-peace perspective' appeared as an acceptance of Russia's behavior. Thus, Western states barely acknowledged Brazil's status in resolving the Ukraine War. Moreover, Lavrov's presence in Brasília increased Western suspicion of Brazil's position regarding Ukraine. It indicated a vital conclusion for the literature on 'good states' or 'do-good states': it is difficult to maintain the image of a 'good state' while, simultaneously, being a friend of a state perceived by status gatekeepers as a 'bad state.'

In the Brazilian case, it faced a status dilemma. On the one hand, its participation in BRICS with Russia constitutes a fundamental part of its status-seeking. One must always bear in mind that China's presence in BRICS represents a unique opportunity for Brazil to advance its economic and political interests with that rising Asian superpower. However, it also strengthens Brazil's proximity to Russia, which hinders the country's approach to gaining status as a 'do-good' state with its position in the Ukraine War. As Zelensky criticizes, it seems to other states that Brazil prioritizes its alliance with 'the aggressor.'

More importantly, this conclusion demonstrates the necessity of a deeper analysis of emerging powers' status-seeking. It is necessary to go beyond focusing on how status creates conflicts and try to comprehend how peaceful behaviors can be a tool to gain or



lose status. The dynamics identified in this study contribute to this comprehension, proposing that a 'do-good' strategy requires a few steps to be successful, including the political assessment of that state's partnerships. The Brazilian status dilemma is a case study that might be reproduced by other Global South states. Further study is needed to comprehend how Global South states utilize peace to improve their international status.

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