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Brazil-China relations: The rise of modern International Order

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EDITORIAL

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BRAZIL-CHINA RELATIONS: THE RISE OF MODERN INTERNATIONAL ORDER

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Why are Brazil-China Relations Important?

"The Brazil Federation is neither sufficiently small to be ignored, nor sufficiently strong to leverage the global stage on its own. However, Brazil is an important player in South-South relations, and China discerningly values that role" (Leandro, 2024).



Brazil-China relations are an unavoidable topic in the context of international relations. They are both major developing countries and emerging markets in the Global South and have broad common strategic interests (MFA-PRC, 2024). This bilateral relationship is the result of a prolonged process, dating from the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974. The physical distance between Brazil and China is another factor that has tended to bring them together, as the two countries do not bear the weight of historical disputes or rivalries. They are both undeniably important in their respective regional environments, and both play a relevant role in their neighbors' development. The relationship "(...) has been built around two main lines of action: (1) joint efforts to promote economic development; (2) multilateral collaboration in search of a multipolar world" (Santoro, 2022, p. xi).

The idea behind this special issue is also associated with the "International as an Everyday Practice". Within the field of international studies, the everyday can be read as a text that illuminates central practices at the heart of the production of "international" representations, the reproduction of relations of domination — gendered, economic, social — at the international "level," as well as the consumption of "international" goods, ideas and norms" (Guillaume, 2011). In the light of this, what is current practice in the context of Brazil-China relations?

Brazil and China are regional pivot states, are states displaying interregional interests — namely in Africa — are among the largest developing economies, are both members of large economic organizations such as BRICS+ and MERCOSUR, are perceived as key states in the context of the Global South, and have been developing a strong bilateral commercial relationship. In 2000, China became Brazil's largest trading partner in Asia and Brazil's position in Mercosur has not been overlooked by China. Since 2009, China has been its largest trading partner and in 2012, it became the main supplier of products imported by Brazil (GOV.BR, 2024). In fact, the sector that best illustrates their commercial complementarity is the agricultural sector as Brazil contributes decisively to China's food security — an issue of strategic importance for the Chinese government and people. In 1974, "China accounted for 0.24% of Brazilian exports but by 2023, China was the major destination for Brazilian exports, accounting for 30.7% of foreign sales" (CEBC, 2024, p. 19). Indeed, in 2023, approximately a quarter of all imports of agricultural products in China came from Brazil.

Brazil was the first country to establish a strategic partnership with China in 1993. As Table 1 illustrates, this partnership has been one of the most dynamic and has been deepened five times. Particularly important is the fact that the strategic partnership was upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2012. This made Brazil the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to establish such a partnership with China (Xinhua, 2023).



Table 1- China-Brazil Partnerships and Economic Spaces

China and Brazil	1993	Strategic Partnership (战略伙伴关系)	In July 2024, Brazil revealed a plan to join the Belt and Road initiative (MoU) (SCMP, 2024).	Brazil is a leading state in the Southern Common Market (Mercosur)
	2009	Further strengthened		
	2012	Comprehensive strategic partnership (全面战略伙伴关系)		
	2014	Further strengthened		
	2019	Strengthened and deepened		
	2023	Deepened		

Source: Authors

The Brazil-China High-Level Commission for Coordination and Cooperation (COSBAN) was established in 2004. This has played a significant role in strengthening bilateral relations and in promoting dialogue and cooperation in various fields. Furthermore, in 2014, the China-Brazil Foreign Ministerial-Level Comprehensive Strategic Dialogue was created, and four of these have been held to date. Technology, the digital sector, aviation (Embraer), infrastructure, agriculture, mining, energy and sustainability are the leading sectors in Sino-Brazilian relations. Brazil has one of the world’s largest offshore oil and gas reserves, and cooperation in the area of green energies, including hydrogen and electric vehicles, is extremely promising.

Two projects are likely to have a significant impact on the global south. One is the Brazil-Peru Transcontinental (Bi-Oceanic) Railway, in which China continues to be involved, despite the challenges. “The Chinese side became the leading player in the development of the basic feasibility study of the Brazil–Peru Transcontinental Railway project (...) the Chinese state-owned company China Railway Eryuan Engineering Group (CREEC) was in charge of preparing the study (...). Meanwhile, Brazil and Peru assigned governmental institutions to perform supporting tasks and review the inception, interim and final reports prepared by the Chinese company (MOU on the Joint Conduction of the Basic Feasibility Studies for a Bioceanic Railway Connection 2015)” (Dourado, 2022). The second project is the China–Brazil Earth Resources Satellite program (CBERS), which is emblematic as it is the first high technology project in the context of South-South cooperation.

Brazil-China relations also have a multilateral dimension, particularly in the context of the WTO, G20 and BRICS+. Both strongly oppose unilateralism, protectionism and the decoupling and rupture of industrial chains. They defend inclusive economic globalization and the promotion of an open world economy. The relations between the two countries therefore also reflect China’s interest in Latin America: “China has always given priority to its relations with Brazil in its overall diplomacy and its diplomacy with Latin America, and supports Brazil in promoting state development and national rejuvenation (China Daily, 2024).” China regards Brazil as an important member of BRICS+ and Brazil uses this organization to leverage its international bargaining power and it hosted the G20 in 2024. Its agenda priorities were aligned with China’s global interests: (1) The fight against hunger, poverty and inequality; (2) The three dimensions of sustainable



development (economic, social and environmental); (3) Reform of the global governance institutions. Brazil has adopted a hedging position, seeking to maintain a position close to China, but without producing adverse effects on the US - China Great Game. In fact, although Brazil did condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Lula's government expressed its neutrality in the conflict, and denied direct material support to Ukraine. In May 2024, China and Brazil released "Common Understandings Between China and Brazil on Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis". Thus far, this has gained widespread support (110 countries) (RUBRYKA, 2024). In addition, Brazil seeks China's support for its candidacy to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and Brazil shares most of China's views on the reform of the United Nations.

Structure of this Special Issue

This special issue is divided into two sections. The first consists of 15 articles and the second contains four short articles (these short articles included the participation of junior researchers). The articles cover issues such as: economics, partnerships, multilateralism, political relations, gender, health, technology, international security, foreign policy, the Lusophone world, climate change and energy – which we believe is part of the "International as an Everyday Practice". The range of themes is designed to encourage more research on this topic, as well as contribute to decoding the current scholarly discourse on Sino-Brazilian relations, and also anticipate the future state of affairs between Brazil and China.

The first paper by **Rodrigo Franklin Frogeri, Pedro dos Santos Portugal Júnior, Francisco José Leandro, Fabrício Pelloso Piurcosky, and Sheldon William Silva** presents an overview and a critical analysis of international relations between Brazil and China in areas of mutual interest to the two countries. The authors suggest that it is important for Brazil and China to develop initiatives reflecting mutual and sovereign interests and that are aimed at establishing environmentally sustainable trade with reduced asymmetry. The second article, by **António Tavares, Asya Gasparyan, Cátia M. Costa, José Palmeira, Paulo Afonso B. Duarte, and Sabrina Evangelista Medeiros**, examines the role of bilateralism, multilateralism and mini-multilateralism in Sino-Brazilian relations. The authors focus on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank, the BRICS, the Basic Four, and the G20. They conclude that the interplay between bilateralism, multilateralism and mini-multilateralism will play an increasing and complementary role in Sino-Brazilian relations.

The article by **Mohamad Zreik** focuses on how the BRICS, in particular, serve as a platform for enhancing relations between China and Brazil and explores the future development prospects within this framework. The author argues that the strengthened partnership between China and Brazil not only promotes mutual development but also facilitates broader South-South cooperation, positioning the BRICS as a crucial player in shaping a multipolar world order.

In January 2023, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was re-elected President of Brazil and began his third term. The article by **Pedro Steenhagen** focuses on why the reform of global governance was (re)prioritized in Brazil's foreign policy during the first year of "Lula 3". The author seeks to give readers a better understanding of the importance of this for an



examination of the interactions between domestic and international politics and the demands of Brazilian foreign policy.

Maintaining the focus on Brazilian foreign policy, the article by **Florencia Rubiolo** and **Gonzalo Fiore Viani** provides an in-depth analysis of Jair Bolsonaro's foreign policy towards China from 2018 to 2022 and the first year of Lula da Silva's administration in 2023. The focus is on the diplomatic and economic dimensions of their respective approaches towards China, highlighting both changes and continuities. The authors believe that China retained a crucial role in Brazil's economic agenda and that the bilateral and multilateral relationship was restored when Lula returned to power in 2023.

The article by **Xuheng Wang** and **Carmen Amado Mendes** uses Guanxi theory as the theoretical framework for an analysis of China's attitude and policies towards Brazil during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors point out that, because China prefers to maintain the existing mutually beneficial model, the Lula government smoothed over the legacy of tense Sino-Brazilian relations inherited from the Bolsonaro government and has promoted the expansion of China-Brazil interaction to more and new areas.

Over the past three decades, China and Brazil have developed a robust and multifaceted relationship characterized by cooperation across various sectors. The article by **Rodrigo Franklin Frogeri** and **Yichao Li** is based on an extensive Systematic Literature Review that also applied bibliometric and lexical analyses to a total of 208 studies. The bibliometric analyses revealed that the peak of publications covering Brazil and China was in 2016. The authors further identify four central research lines that could be developed in future studies.

The article by **Luis Gouveia** draws on social identity theory to analyze official discourse and mass media posts relating to Brazil's position on the war in Ukraine. The author concludes that Brazil attempted to gain status by utilizing a 'creativity' strategy. Meanwhile, Brazil also faced a dilemma as to whether to capitalize on its image within the BRICS or maintain a 'do-good' state image.

Natalia Ceppi and **Gisela Pereyra Doval** examine the rise of China in Brazil's diplomatic agenda in the 21st century, with a focus on existing commercial interests. Based on a qualitative methodological design, the authors state that identification of the same objective, i.e. generating a business agenda with a medium- to long-term impact, means that strategic cooperation between China and Brazil is sustained, at least in economic terms and mainly in the energy sector.

Further exploring the evolving multifaceted engagement between China and Brazil, **Lorhan de Oliveira Pereira** and **Kai Yin Allison Haga** focus on the catalytic role of the iron ore trade in shaping the strategic partnership. The authors argue that the partnership, fueled by a mutual reliance on iron ore, exemplifies how resource-driven partnerships can evolve into strategic alliances that have significant implications for global politics and economics.

The article by **Baiba Biteniece** and **Dana Dūda** examines the strategic collaboration between China and Brazil in the renewable wind energy sector. Drawing on the theoretical framework of Liberal and Economic Interdependence, the authors consider that China's strategic engagement drives collaboration and growth in the wind energy sector in Brazil,



and that there are mutual interdependencies between the two countries. However, these interdependencies are asymmetrical, resulting in greater dependencies for Brazil compared to China.

João Simões and **Daniel Veras** draw on Cooper's (1989) framework on the international promotion of languages to explore Brazil's role in promoting the Portuguese language globally. The authors investigate the intertwined political, economic and cultural motivations behind language promotion initiatives. They emphasize the need for Brazil to effectively leverage Macau's strategic position to capitalize on these opportunities.

Teli Chen, **Suzana Lopes Salgado Ribeiro**, and **Francisco José Leandro** investigate the reversal of gender disparities in enrolment in higher education in Brazil and China. The authors explore factors contributing to this transition, such as feminist movements, the legal framework, economic development, the expansion of higher education, and demographic factors.

In recent decades, health has become a top priority in global governance. **Anabela Rodrigues Santiago** and **Carlos Eduardo de Andrade Lima da Rocha** therefore adopt a perspective based on bilateralism to outline both China's and Brazil's positioning in relation to health diplomacy between 2013 and 2023 and to analyze their articulation within the context of the BRICS. The authors believe that both Brazil and China have leveraged health diplomacy to strengthen their global influence. Also, that they use multilateral platforms like BRICS to strengthen collaboration in order to enhance their soft power and contribute to global health governance.

The Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS) established in 1986 aims to promote regional cooperation and maintain peace and security in the region. **António Gonçalves Alexandre** explores how ZOPACAS can contribute to improving maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. The author states that ZOPACAS appears to be an opportunity for Brazil to expand its role in the Gulf of Guinea, especially as it is seeking to increase its influence in the international arena and on countries in the Global South.

The second part of this special issue consists of four articles by junior scholars. The first, by **Alberto J. Lebron** and **Carlos M. Martin**, presents their view that empirical evidence is crucial to complement political considerations in their research. The authors measure the overall effects of Trade-in-Value-Added (TiVA) exchanges with both China and US on the Brazilian labor market, and determine which countries/industries might become the most optimal choice for Brazil in terms of TiVA.

The article by **André Luiz Reis da Silva**, **Juli Arusiewicz Berta**, and **Maiara de Almeida Cardozo Nunes** analyzes relations between Brazil and China since 2003 to identify major lines of continuity and change. The authors argue that changes in Brazilian Foreign Policy, especially in terms of how Brazil perceives its position in the world and its relationship with the major powers, have conditioned relations with China since 2003, causing fluctuations in the political relationship despite their growing economic interaction.

Henoch Gabriel Mandelbaum dissects Macau's role in evolving China-Brazil relations over twenty-five years. The author draws on soft power and paradiplomacy frameworks to explore how China has utilized Macau as an instrument of attraction in its dealings with Brazil. The author concludes that, while Macau has made significant strides in



enhancing China-Brazil relations, several challenges remain, and addressing these is crucial in order to fully capitalize on Macau's strategic position.

The last article, by **Chen Jianfei**, explores opportunities, challenges, and prospects for enhanced cooperation between China and Brazil on climate action and sustainable development. The author states that, despite the challenges presented by domestic politics and external pressures, Brazil and China have built common ground based on their interest in protecting vital and important ecosystems and solving climate change issues.

Why this Special Issue?

This special issue on Brazil-China relations marks a number of milestones: the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Brazil and China, the 31st anniversary of the establishment of their strategic partnership, the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the COSBAN, the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Brazil Foreign Ministerial-Level Comprehensive Strategic Dialogue, and the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Brazil-China Business Council (CEBC). It is the result of meaningful collaboration between scholars from the University of Macau (China), the Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University (China), and the Autonomia University of Lisbon (Portugal). As such, it contains contributions from renowned international scholars as well as from junior researchers publishing for the first time.

We believe that it is important to support young and emerging scholars from China and the Portuguese-speaking countries and regions and the special issue is intended to provide a safe space for critical learning and discussion. Several of the research projects have involved graduate students, providing exposure for young scholars and incorporating them within the academic community.

Our initiative brings together experts, scholars and students interested in Brazil and its international forays, and examines what the future may hold for emerging partners hailing from as far away as China. The contributing scholars have adopted qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches. The special issue attracted interest from International Relations departments, and we are pleased to have received high-quality proposals from scholars of cognate disciplines. All of the articles have been double peer reviewed and all are focused on Brazil and/or China and their global connections.

This special issue proposes new epistemologies for the study of Brazil with a focus on its world engagement preparedness. It also examines novel conceptualizations that advance our knowledge of Brazil-China relations. The studies are generally up-to-date and pertinent, and they consolidate Lusophone perspectives on “the rise of modern international”. Overall, the studies agree on the need to adapt western epistemologies in view of the multifaceted realities on the ground and to problematize universal assumptions about international systems and operations. The authors highlight the importance of knowledge production from within the Global South and its subsequent international dissemination. They show that expertise on Brazil and the South Atlantic is transferable and can benefit debates on China, Brazil-China Relations, and International Relations, broadly defined. This collection of articles is important in promoting greater



awareness of world connectivity and interdependence, while also pointing the way forward for area studies scholars.

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SINO-BRAZILIAN MUTUAL INTERESTS: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Brazil-China relationship is two-fold, influencing both economic development and geopolitical strategy in Latin America. On one hand, China views Brazil as an emerging market with abundant natural resources, making sectors such as agriculture, energy, and infrastructure attractive for Chinese investment. On the other hand, Chinese investments often come with infrastructure development projects, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which can help Brazil improve its transportation and energy sectors, as seen in the Transoceanic Railway



project. Furthermore, the countries have mutually cooperated in other areas, such as in the integration of the BRICS group, the launch of satellites through the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS) program telecommunications (e.g., 5G technology), the wind energy sector, and green technologies, as well as the integration of Brazil into global value chains. Thus, this study aims to discuss the Sino-Brazilian mutual interests and contribute to the understanding of this broad subject. Our discussions and analyses suggest that it is important for Brazil and China to develop initiatives with mutual and sovereign interests aimed at establishing environmentally sustainable trade with reduced asymmetry. Areas such as the bioeconomy and global governance are of great interest to Brazil and China. The collaborative efforts of these nations can enable new initiatives with prospects to balance forces with the USA. From a macro perspective, the economic and commercial strengthening of BRICS and its relationship with the Global South could serve as a counterpoint to American influence. While BRICS may redefine global power relations, member countries of the group may face influences in managing their regional relations.

Keywords

Brazil, Bioeconomic, BRICS, China, Trade, Innovation, South-South cooperation.

Resumo

A relação Brasil-China é dupla e influencia tanto o desenvolvimento econômico quanto a estratégia geopolítica na América Latina. Por um lado, a China vê o Brasil como um mercado emergente com recursos naturais abundantes, o que torna setores como agricultura, energia e infraestrutura atraentes para o investimento chinês. Por outro lado, os investimentos chineses geralmente vêm acompanhados de projetos de desenvolvimento de infraestrutura, como a Iniciativa Cinturão e Rota (BRI), que pode ajudar o Brasil a melhorar seus setores de transporte e energia, como visto no projeto da Ferrovia Transoceânica. Além disso, os países têm cooperado mutuamente em outras áreas, como na integração do grupo BRICS, no lançamento de satélites por meio do programa China-Brasil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS), em telecomunicações (por exemplo, tecnologia 5G), no setor de energia eólica e em tecnologias verdes, bem como na integração do Brasil em cadeias globais de valor. Assim, este estudo tem como objetivo discutir os interesses mútuos sino-brasileiros e contribuir para a compreensão desse amplo assunto. Nossas discussões e análises sugerem que é importante que o Brasil e a China desenvolvam iniciativas com interesses mútuos e soberanos, visando estabelecer um comércio ambientalmente sustentável com assimetria reduzida. Áreas como a bioeconomia e a governança global são de grande interesse para o Brasil e a China. Os esforços de colaboração dessas nações podem viabilizar novas iniciativas com perspectivas de equilibrar forças com os EUA. De uma perspectiva macro, o fortalecimento econômico e comercial do BRICS e seu relacionamento com o Sul Global podem servir como um contraponto à influência americana. Embora o BRICS possa redefinir as relações de poder globais, os países membros do grupo podem enfrentar influências no gerenciamento de suas relações regionais.

Palavras-chave

Brasil, Bioeconomia, BRICS, China, Comércio, Inovação, Cooperação Sul-Sul.



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SINO-BRAZILIAN MUTUAL INTERESTS: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

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Introduction

The establishment of official relations between Brazil and China occurred through their first treaty, the Treaty of Friendship, Trade and Navigation, signed in 1881. Following this, Brazil opened a consulate in Shanghai in 1883. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Brazil's interactions with Asia were limited to Japanese workers and unofficial Chinese migration (Oliveira, 2004). During the Cold War period, Brazil initially recognized Taiwan but later established diplomatic ties with mainland China. Throughout this era, Brazil engaged in commercial missions (both official and unofficial) to China and signed the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS) agreement. The country developed economic interactions with China while focusing more on political ties with the Asian nation and maintaining economic relations with Japan (Oliveira, 2010). In the 1990s, Brazil began to deepen its economic engagement with China, accompanied by significant political elements. During this period, Brazil and China signed the Sino-Brazilian strategic partnership, which was the first such partnership promoted by China globally (Oliveira, 2010). This shift was driven by China's rapid economic growth and the challenges posed by the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) (Oliveira, 2004). The deepening economic ties between Brazil and China included Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Trade relations, and loans to Brazil. These factors pressured Brazil to adopt a more favorable stance towards China (Blanchard, 2019).

The commercial rapprochement between Brazil and China developed considerably during the administrations of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2011) and his successor,



Dilma Rousseff (2011-2015) (Haibin, 2010). In subsequent years, there were some fluctuations in imports and exports between the two countries. However, Brazil's exports to China consistently grew, reaching a peak in 2023 (US\$ 49.93 billion) under the new administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2023-2026) (MDIC, 2024). Despite the commercial ties between Brazil and China being maintained during the administration of former Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022), Brazilian foreign policy during this period was based on the pillars of anti-globalism, anti-communism, and religious nationalism (Casarões & Farias, 2022; Jesus, 2022). During Bolsonaro's government, diplomatic relations between Brazil and China experienced the greatest distancing seen in the last three decades (Jesus, 2022).

Under the current administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2023-2026), China remains Brazil's largest trading partner, with exports to China twice the value of imports. This trend has been consistent since 2009, including during the Bolsonaro administration (MDIC, 2024). At the International Conference "50 Years of Brazil-China Relations: Cooperation for a Sustainable World," held on April 17, 2024, Brazilian Vice President Geraldo Alckmin stated: "It is difficult to find an area where there is no partnership between Brazil and China, a friendship that only consolidates and advances" (Alckmin, 2024).

In the economic field, international relations between Brazil and China are based on the sale of commodities to China, while Brazil imports manufactured goods. Otherwise, the countries have mutually cooperated in other areas, such as in the integration of the BRICS group, the launch of satellites through the CBERS program (Lulla, Duane Nellis, & Rundquist, 2013), telecommunications (e.g., 5G technology) (Li, 2023), the wind energy sector (Gandenberger & Strauch, 2018), and green technologies (Miranda, Moletta, Pedroso, Pilatti, & Picinin, 2021), as well as the integration of Brazil into global value chains.

Brazil-China relationship is two-fold, influencing both economic development and geopolitical strategy in Latin America. On one hand, China views Brazil as an emerging market with abundant natural resources, making sectors such as agriculture, energy, and infrastructure attractive for Chinese investment (Gallagher, 2010). Furthermore, China's interest in enhancing its geopolitical standing in Latin America positions Brazil as a strategic partner (Becard & Lessa, 2021). On the other hand, Chinese investments often come with infrastructure development projects, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Almeida Ferreira Abrão & Amineh, 2024), which can help Brazil improve its transportation and energy sectors, as seen in the Transoceanic Railway project that can connect Brazil, Peru, and Chile (Almeida, Seleme, & Neto, 2013; Marques, Borges, De Souza Pires, & Bezerra de Souza, 2023). Thus, this study aims to discuss the Sino-Brazilian mutual interests and contribute to the understanding of this broad subject.

To address this objective, we conducted searches on the central theme of this research using generative Artificial Intelligences (generative AI) due to their ability to index and analyze large volumes of data (Morgan, 2023; The Lancet, 2024). Subsequently, we analyzed the mutual areas of interest identified in the GAIs consulted and supplemented these analyses with a Systematic Literature Review considering these areas of interest.



This approach allowed the study to be divided into four areas: (i) Sino-Brazilian mutual trade interests; (ii) Sino-Brazilian mutual economic and bioeconomic interests (e.g., Environmental Sustainability - Green Technology, Climate Change, Renewable Energy); (iii) Sino-Brazilian mutual interests in technology, research, development, and innovation; (iv) South-South Cooperation and the BRICS Alliance.

Methodology

Our study is characterized by a qualitative approach and follows an inductive logic. Due to the broad scope of the theme 'Brazil-China bilateral relationship,' we chose to use generative AI (Fonseca, Chimenti, & Suarez, 2023) to identify areas of mutual interest between the two countries. Generative AI are based on large language models (LLM) that have the ability to analyze and summarize large amounts of information, though still without the critical evaluation and original thinking of a human being (The Lancet, 2024).

To identify which LLM would be most suitable for the objectives of this study, we applied the following criteria: (i) the model must be a popular tool with a recognized capability to index both historical and current data available on the internet; and (ii) the model must be capable of searching through large volumes of scientific data. These criteria ensure that both publications by governments, official agencies, and the general media, as well as scientific publications, are considered in the searches. No temporal restrictions were applied to the results presented.

Thus, we identified the following LLM as meeting the first criterion: OpenAI's ChatGPT, Alphabet/Google's Gemini, and Microsoft's CoPilot (Masinde, 2024; Syriani, David, & Kumar, 2024). The LLM selected for this study for its ability to conduct specific searches across large volumes of academic data (e.g., Semantic Scholar) was Perplexity (<https://www.perplexity.ai/>). Although there are other tools similar to Perplexity (e.g., Scispace, Scite, Elicit, Consensus, etc.), we chose this one for its simplicity and for presenting results in a manner similar to the aforementioned LLM (Bolanos, Salatino, Osborne, & Motta, 2024), thereby facilitating the creation of Table 1.

Table 1. Searches in generative AI and its respective results

Generative AI	Prompt	Results
Perplexity (Pro search - academic) https://www.perplexity.ai/	What are the mutual interests in Brazil-China bilateral relations?	Economic Cooperation (Trade Relations, Investment)
		Technological Cooperation (Science and Technology, Space Cooperation)
		Environmental Sustainability (Green Technology, Climate Change Initiatives)
		Strategic Partnerships (Defense Cooperation, South-South Cooperation)
ChatGPT 4o (free version) https://chat.openai.com/		Trade and Investment (Commodities Trade, Chinese Investment in Brazil, Brazilian Exports to China)



		Infrastructure Development (Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Energy Cooperation)
		Technology and Innovation (5G and Telecommunications, Research and Development)
		Environmental Cooperation (Sustainable Agriculture, Climate Change)
		Multilateral Cooperation (BRICS Alliance, Global Governance)
		Cultural Exchange (Educational and Cultural Programs)
		Trade
		Investment
		Economic cooperation
		Climate change
		South-South cooperation
		Trade and Investment
		Infrastructure and Industry Development
		Technological Cooperation
		Renewable Energy
		Strategic Alignment
Gemini 1.5 (free version) https://gemini.google.com/		
Copilot https://copilot.microsoft.com/		

Source: Developed by the authors.

Note. We chose to use the term 'Brazil-China' instead of 'Sino-Brazilian' to allow for broader search results when using AI tools.

After identifying the areas of mutual interest between Brazil and China (Table 1), the authors of this study grouped the results into four central topics: (i) Sino-Brazilian mutual trade interests; (ii) Sino-Brazilian mutual economic and bioeconomic interests (e.g., Environmental Sustainability - Green Technology, Climate Change, Renewable Energy); (iii) Sino-Brazilian mutual interests in technology, research, development, and innovation; (iv) South-South Cooperation and the BRICS Alliance.

Next, after identifying and grouping the areas of mutual interest between Brazil and China, we conducted a Systematic Literature Review on each of the topics to support the subsequent discussions. We adopt the standard PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology for conducting and reporting the systematic review (Page, McKenzie, Bossuyt, Boutron, Hoffmann, Mulrow, Shamseer, Tetzlaff, & Moher, 2021; Page, McKenzie, Bossuyt, Boutron, Hoffmann, Mulrow, Shamseer, Tetzlaff, Akl, et al., 2021). According to Webster and Watson (2002), the most influential articles in the literature are typically found in leading academic journals. Consequently, the authors conducted searches on the topics identified in the previous step using SCOPUS, one of the foremost indexing databases for academic journals in social sciences.



Table 2. Systematic Literature Review framing

Database	Search string	Results	Included
SCOPUS	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (Sino-brazilian) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (trade))	16	15
	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (Sino-brazilian) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (economic) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (bioeconomic))	11	10
	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (Sino-brazilian) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (technology) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (research) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (development) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (innovation))	16	15
	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (south-south AND cooperation) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (BRICS))	72	59
Total:		115	99

Source: Developed by the authors.

We adopted the following exclusion criteria for the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR): duplicate records found in multiple searches and lack of relevance to the theme of "Sino-Brazilian mutual interests." Our SLR identified a total of 115 studies, of which 16 were excluded based on the aforementioned criteria. The remaining 99 studies were used to support the discussions in the following sections. However, due to the large number of documents to be considered and the limited number of pages to write this paper, the authors chose to cite more recent publications or those that provide adequate support for the discussions. The snowball technique (searching for studies cited in the SLR results but not initially identified) was used to further expand and substantiate the discussions.

Sino-Brazilian mutual trade interests

The crisis of the agro-export model in the 1930s, leads Brazil to import substitution industrialization and the shift in the 1990s from a "protected industry" model to competitive global integration (Legler, 2013). The agro-export model crisis, adopting an import substitution industrialization strategy. This led to rapid industrial growth in the latter half of the 20th century, with Brazil incorporating exports into its industrial policy by the 1960s and 1970s. Brazil's foreign policy played a crucial role, advocating for preferential treatment for developing nations in global trade, opening new markets, and fostering cooperation with other Southern hemisphere countries (Rodrigues, Urdinez, & De Oliveira, 2019).

Brazil's transition to democracy was driven by economic challenges and a severe fiscal crisis. This period saw the liberalization of Brazil's industrial sector to global competition, coinciding with the end of the Cold War and the shift from military to democratic rule (Santarcangelo, Schteingart, & Porta, 2017). The new foreign policy paradigm of "autonomy through participation" (Amorim Neto & Malamud, 2015; Fonseca Jr, 1998) marked a departure from the defensive postures of the military regime, advocating for

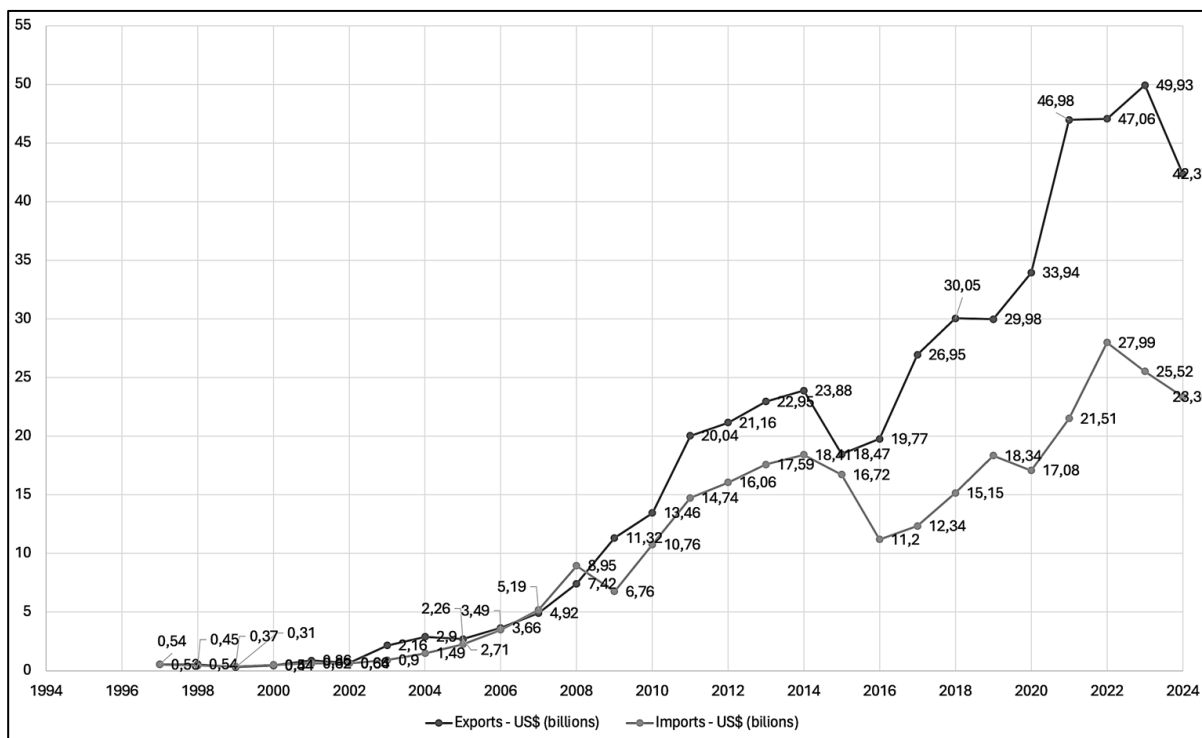


active engagement in international regimes. Following this new approach, Brazil experienced its first significant commercial alignment with China, marked by the signing of the Sino-Brazilian strategic partnership in the 1990s (Oliveira, 2010). This was the first of several important engagements that followed (Arbache & Condi, 2022; Cardoso, 2013; Whalley & Medianu, 2013).

Currently (2024), the trade balance between Brazil and China shows that exports (2023 – US\$ 49.93 billion) are double the value of imports (2023 – US\$ 25.52 billion). These data suggest an economic interdependence, particularly in sectors such as soybean production (2023 – 37% of Brazilian exports to China), crude petroleum oils (19%), and iron ore and its concentrates (19%) (MDIC, 2024).

According to Figure 1, Brazil's imports from and exports to China began increasing throughout the 1990s. In 2009, the value of exports to China surpassed the value of imports for the first time in history.

Figure 1. Graph of Imports and Exports from Brazil to China



*Values are showed in billions of US dollars per year.

**Data updated in June 6, 2024.

Source: <https://comexstat.mdic.gov.br/en/geral>

Brazil's export portfolio to China is characterized by a diverse range of products, predominantly raw materials and agricultural goods (Jenkins, 2012). This composition underscores the bilateral trade dynamics between the two countries, with Brazil serving as a fundamental supplier of essential commodities to China's burgeoning economy.



Soybeans are the most significant export from Brazil to China, accounting for 37% of the total exports (MDIC, 2024). This high percentage reflects China's demand for soybeans, driven by its extensive use in animal feed and as a raw material for various food products. Brazil's vast arable land and favorable climate conditions position it as a leading global producer and exporter of soybeans (Rocha, Majo, & Silva, 2022).

Crude petroleum oils and bituminous minerals constitute 23% of Brazil's exports to China (MDIC, 2024). On one hand this category underscores the strategic importance of energy resources in the trade relationship (Cáceres, 2011; Castro, Peiter, & Góes, 2020). On the other hand, Brazil seeks technology transfer from China for energy resources in Brazil (Castro et al., 2020). Iron ore and its concentrates represent 19% of the export share, highlighting Brazil's role as a key supplier of raw materials for China's steel industry (Castro et al., 2020). The extensive iron ore reserves in Brazil provide a steady supply to meet China's infrastructure and construction needs (Cáceres, 2011). The export of fresh, chilled, or frozen beef accounts for 5% of the total exports and Cellulose exports make up 3.8% of the trade. Pulp trade between Brazil and China intensified after the BRICs were formed (Soares, Viana, & Rego, 2020). Finally, raw cotton constitutes 2.5% of exports between Brazil and China, underscoring the agricultural sector's contribution to the trade mix.

After analyzing Brazil's exports to China, we will now examine the Chinese products imported by Brazil.

Products imported by Brazil from China highlight a diverse array of goods with varying degrees of technological complexity and industrial application. Leading the imports are thermionic valves and tubes, cold cathode or photo-cathode, diodes, and transistors, which collectively constitute 8.9% of the total (MDIC, 2024), reflecting Brazil's substantial demand for advanced electronic components vital for both consumer electronics and industrial applications (Hauser, Zen, Selao, & Garcia, 2007). Following closely are telecommunications equipment, including parts and accessories, which account for 5.5% (MDIC, 2024), underscoring the significance of the telecommunications sector in Brazil's economy and its reliance on Chinese technology. Other categories include various products from the manufacturing industry (4.9%) (MDIC, 2024), passenger motor vehicles (4.9%), and a range of organo-inorganic compounds, heterocyclic compounds, nucleic acids, and their salts, as well as sulfonamides (3.6%) (MDIC, 2024), which are essential for both pharmaceutical and chemical industries.

In general, soybeans, crude oil, and iron ore are the main products exported by Brazil to China, while China exports to Brazil products with varying degrees of technological complexity (Giraudó, 2020; MDIC, 2024). This difference in the level of complexity (Gala, 2017) of imported and exported products between the two countries is a source of criticism (China exports manufactured goods to Brazil, while Brazil exports commodities to China) (Giraudó, 2020; Rodríguez & Hounie, 2016) and raises questions about the symmetry of Brazil-China cooperation, which resembles a center-periphery dynamic (Romano Schutte & Campos, 2022). The two conceptual paradigms of center-periphery thinking significantly influence the policy formulations and strategic perspectives of the



Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (Bonzanini, Menuzzi Diverio, Zuliani da Silva, & Olesiak, 2018).

ECLAC's efforts primarily focus on shaping the region's development through initiatives aimed at economic diversification, with the goal of reducing vulnerabilities in the face of global dynamics (Gala, Camargo, & Freitas, 2018). This focus has been a constant feature of ECLAC's framework since its 1968 founding document, where Prebisch critiqued David Ricardo's theory of static comparative advantage (Marca, Bertol, Fernando, & Filho, 2021). Prebisch highlighted the deterioration in terms of trade, which favored manufactured goods over primary goods (Souza, 1999)¹.

ECLAC's structuralist perspective advocated for transforming Latin American economies through an import substitution program. This approach involved establishing domestic industries to produce goods that were previously imported (Marca et al., 2021). Countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina implemented this policy most directly between the 1950s and 1970s (Souza, 1999).

Sino-Brazilian mutual economic and bioeconomic interests

As noted in the previous section, the Sino-Brazilian commercial dynamic is characterized by Brazil's export of commodities (e.g., soybeans) and its import of manufactured goods from China. In this context, Brazilian commodities, particularly grains and meat, contribute to China's food security policies, as well as its social stability and development (Romano Schutte & Campos, 2022). While China pursues a broader development strategy, Brazil relies on its commodities (e.g., soybeans and iron ore) as its primary export products (Romano Schutte & Campos, 2022).

The process of Brazil's productive reprimarization began in the late 1990s and early 2000s, driven by the robust economic growth of developing countries such as China, which led to a surge in international demand for agricultural and mineral commodities, both metallic and non-metallic (Portugal Júnior, Reydon, & Portugal, 2012). During this period, Brazil-China trade grew at an average rate of 29% per year, making China Brazil's largest trading partner and primary destination for agricultural exports by 2009 (Lima, 2016). This closer relationship was facilitated by the geopolitical alignment between the two countries, further reinforced during the Lula and Dilma administrations (Lima, 2016).

China itself has assisted in the expansion of soybean production in South America, particularly in Brazil (Giraudó, 2020). Despite Chinese companies investing in soybean production in Brazil, Chinese investors are not the dominant players in Brazilian agricultural land acquisitions (Oliveira, 2018). Investors from the Global North (e.g., the USA and EU countries) surpass China in land acquisitions in Brazil (Oliveira, 2018).

Brazil's trade dependence on China, particularly in exporting resources like soybeans, oil, and iron ore, imposes structural constraints on Brazil's ability to transition to a low-

¹ Prebisch demonstrated that the terms of trade between primary goods and manufactured goods, which stood at 1:1 at the end of the 19th century, shifted to 0.687:1 by the mid-20th century (Prebisch, 1949).



carbon bioeconomy (Rodríguez, 2021). On one hand, China aims to peak carbon emissions before 2030 (Liu, Jiang, Tang, & Han, 2022) and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 (Jia & Lin, 2021). On the other hand, Brazil's heavy reliance on exporting its high-environmental-impact agricultural commodities faces social, environmental, and corporate governance challenges to meet Chinese demands (Bulla, Denny, Burnquist, & Peneluppi Junior, 2022). From a Brazilian internal perspective, large conglomerates in soy, sugarcane, and meatpacking dominate the bioeconomy agenda (Lima, 2021). The significant dominance of agribusiness in Brazil negatively influences natural ecosystems (Rodríguez-Morales, 2018), as the main drivers of deforestation and land-use change (e.g., soybean plantations, cattle ranching) may gain economic and political incentives, as well as greater social legitimacy under the bioeconomy framework (Lima, 2021).

Finally, in the quest to replace fossil fuels, Brazil has recently facilitated the construction of a factory by the Chinese electric vehicle company BYD. This initiative aims to reduce the costs of such vehicles for the Brazilian market and to begin replacing the national fleet with electric vehicles. Brazil has a particular interest in transitioning its fleet to electric vehicles because, despite its significant potential for domestic fossil fuel production (e.g., pre-salt oil and ethanol), the country's electricity is generated from renewable sources (Baran & Legey, 2013). The production of the Chinese factory in Brazil, combined with the country's self-sufficiency in electricity production, could make electric vehicles an attractive alternative for a low-carbon economy (e.g., Al-Wreikat and Sodré, 2023; Liu, 2022).

Sino-Brazilian mutual interests in technology, research, development, and innovation

For decades, China has consistently financed science and technology development, focusing particularly on so-called cross-cutting technologies with the potential to permeate and transform various productive sectors (IPEA, 2024). Technological relations between China and Brazil have evolved over the years, emphasizing collaboration and mutual benefits. Both countries have strengthened their ties through various initiatives (Haibin, 2010).

The China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS) program, operational since 1999, exemplifies technological cooperation between the two countries and has contributed to the use of remote sensing technologies and geoinformation (Lulla et al., 2013). In the 2010s, Chinese technology firms such as Huawei and ZTE began playing a significant role in Latin America's telecommunications sector (Ellis, 2013). Huawei established a strong presence in Brazil, becoming a key player in developing the country's telecommunications infrastructure, including the deployment of 4G networks and preparations for 5G networks (D. S. R. Becard & Macedo, 2014). In the subsequent decade (2020), despite geopolitical pressures favoring American 5G technology adoption (Li, 2023), Brazil opted for Huawei in developing its 5G telecommunications network (Zeng, 2024).



In the field of green technologies, China has initiated more programs compared to Brazil, including sustainable agriculture, water treatment, waste management, green energy, and carbon reduction (Bulla et al., 2022). While Brazil has potential in these areas, it has not matched China and India, its BRICS partners, in implementing such practices to the same extent (Miranda et al., 2021).

In the wind energy sector, Brazil and China have developed significant initiatives. Despite both countries being latecomers in this sector, their approaches to balancing national and foreign technology differ (Gandenberger & Strauch, 2018). In China's case, the balance has gradually shifted from foreign to domestic technology. Brazil has successfully attracted foreign direct investment and built a domestic supply chain (Gandenberger & Strauch, 2018). However, Brazil remains highly dependent on foreign technologies and has a negative trade balance in high-tech goods, indicating reliance on imported technologically advanced products while specializing in low to medium-low technology goods (Chiarini & da Silva, 2019).

We observe that Brazil's integration into global value chains (GVC) has been focused on technological groups where the country holds static comparative advantages. However, China has moved towards more dynamic technological groups, indicating a more advanced position in GVC (Araújo & Diegues, 2022). The Chinese economy maintains an advantage in participating in more dynamic sectors with higher levels of technological intensity, whereas Brazil concentrates its participation in less technologically intensive sectors (Araújo & Diegues, 2022).

Nevertheless, due to political and diplomatic alignment between Brazil and China in the early years of the Lula government, their participation in the BRICS group, bilateral agreements (e.g., Sixth Meeting of the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Commission for Consultation and Cooperation - COSBAN) (Brasil, 2024c) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) may offer opportunities for scientific (Leta, Machado, & Canchumani, 2019) and technological cooperation between the two countries, despite existing asymmetries (Oliveira & Myers, 2021).

Even during the period of Brazil's economic re-primarization, policies and efforts were made to promote local industry (Portugal Jr; Reydon & Portugal, 2012). Examples include initiatives such as the Industrial, Technological, and Foreign Trade Policy (ITFTP) from 2004 to 2007, the Growth Acceleration Program (GAP) in 2007, the Productive Development Policy (PDP) from 2008 to 2010, and the Greater Brazil Plan in 2011 (Portugal Júnior et al., 2012). In more recent years, particularly from 2016 to 2022, Brazil did not effectively implement an industrial policy. However, with the new government under Lula, the New Brazil Industry (NBI) was established, focusing on neo-industrialization and grounded in strategic investment areas with potential impacts on social and economic development for the period 2023-2033 (Brasil, 2024a). The NIB is organized into six missions, aiming to integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives while complementing other public policies (Mazzucato, 2024).

The NBI's Action Plan encompasses the following missions: i) sustainable and digital agro-industrial chains; ii) the health economic-industrial complex; iii) sustainable infrastructure, sanitation, housing, and mobility; iv) digital transformation of industry;



v) bioeconomy, decarbonization, energy transition, and security; and vi) technologies of interest for national sovereignty and defense (Brasil, 2024b). To achieve these missions, key instruments include local content requirements, government procurement, technology transfer, public investment, and preferential margins (Brasil, 2024b), which may influence Brazil's external relations and contribute to the enhancement of Brazilian products in global value chains.

South-South Cooperation and the BRICS Alliance

Brazil has emerged as a regional power in Latin America, particularly in the southern region, due to its economic and territorial advantages (Bernal-Meza, 2022). Its geographic stability allowed Brazil to resolve territorial and border issues earlier than its neighbors, facilitating regional consolidation post-mid-20th century (Kozlova, 2023). This aligns with Brazil's ambitions to play a significant role in global affairs, aspiring for parity with northern hemisphere powers (Berringer & Ferreira, 2022).

Brazil's participation as a belligerent in World War I ensured its representation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where it advocated for minor states' rights and sought to reform the League of Nations' collective security framework (United Nations, n.d.). Brazil's founding membership in the United Nations (UN) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) exemplifies its active involvement in international affairs. The presidencies of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2011) and Dilma Rousseff (2011–2015) (Silva & Pérez, 2019), emphasized engagement within the South-South axis amid rising protectionism and challenges in Northern markets (Rizzi & Antunes, 2017). Furthermore, Brazil has been pivotal in regional blocs like MERCOSUR (Almeida, 2018) and UNASUR (Vaz, Fuccille, & Rezende, 2018), promoting regional integration through "autonomy through participation" (Amorim Neto & Malamud, 2015; Giacalone, 2012; Lima & Hirst, 2006).

Brazil aspires to be recognized as a global player, aiming for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) (Valença & Carvalho, 2014). However, this ambition faces resistance from regional players like Argentina and Mexico, which prefer increasing non-permanent UNSC members (Valença & Carvalho, 2014). Lacking regional support, Brazil sought backing from sympathetic nations, forming the IBSA (India-Brazil-South Africa) initiative (Visentini, 2019). This coalition underscores a regionalist argument for representation from Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America in global decision-making bodies (Leisering, 2021). Brazil's foreign policy has evolved significantly, marked by strategic shifts in response to economic challenges and global dynamics. While maintaining a focus on economic development and regional stability, Brazil has increasingly sought active participation in international affairs, aspiring to assert itself as a global player on par with industrialized powers (e.g., China) (Oliveira, 2010).

However, over the decades, Brazil and China have developed an asymmetrical strategic partnership (Romano Schutte & Campos, 2022), but at the same time one of dependence, especially on the Chinese side with regard to Brazilian commodities. Both countries exhibit markedly distinct economic, military, and political characteristics. China



holds a seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), is a nuclear power, and boasts the world's second-largest economy (Cardoso, 2017). Chinese international engagement strategies focus on infrastructure investments, direct aid programs to countries, debt forgiveness for poorer nations, and a policy of non-interference to secure privileged access to markets and resources (Pecequilo, 2014). While China is Brazil's largest trading partner, the reverse is not true.

Despite significant power asymmetries between the two countries, Brazil has proven to be a key partner in establishing and expanding BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and its extension to BRICS+ (including Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) (Coquidé, Lages, & Shepelyansky, 2023). In 2023, during a visit to China, Brazilian President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva proposed to President Xi Jinping the creation of a BRICS-backed commercial currency. BRICS has emerged as a group capable of influencing global governance (Duggan, Hooijmaaijers, Rewizorski, & Arapova, 2022), internet governance (Hurel & Rocha, 2018) and international relations (Sergunin, Konyshev, & Fei, 2020).

However, the unity of BRICS countries may have regional implications for Brazil, given its historical leadership in similar initiatives in South America such as UNASUR and MERCOSUR. Brazil's involvement with BRICS countries could weaken relations with other South American nations and potentially diminish regional defensive regionalism (Vadell & Giaccaglia, 2020, 2021) characteristic of Latin America (Quiliconi & Espinoza, 2017; Vivares, 2021).

From the Chinese perspective and its participation in BRICS, Beeson and Zeng (2018) argue that China's dominance within BRICS could lead to conflicts, as it may seek to consolidate regional hegemony over other member nations (e.g., Russia and India). An example of such tensions is India's boycott of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) due to sovereignty and security concerns, particularly regarding projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Beeson & Zeng, 2018). Moreover, Chinese environmental policies driven by domestic political pressures may not align with expectations of global leadership within BRICS (Beeson & Zeng, 2018). Asymmetries are already apparent among BRICS countries in sustainable development initiatives, particularly in Green Technologies, where China and India lead compared to Brazil, Russia, and South Africa (Miranda et al., 2021).

Despite the potential impacts of BRICS on member countries and their regions, there is a clear motivation among BRICS nations to seek alternatives to the dominance of the US dollar, which has strengthened their relationships (Kondratov, 2021). In this context, Coquidé et al. (2023) suggest that if a BRICS currency becomes a reality, there are favorable prospects for its dominance in international trade.

Final considerations

At this juncture, it is opportune to revisit the objective that guided this study - to discuss the Sino-Brazilian mutual interests and contribute to the understanding of this broad subject. Our discussions and analyses suggest that it is important for Brazil and China



to develop initiatives with mutual and sovereign interests aimed at establishing environmentally sustainable trade (e.g., Bulla et al., 2022) with reduced asymmetry. Areas such as the bioeconomy and global governance are of great interest to Brazil and China. The collaborative efforts of these nations can enable new initiatives with prospects to balance forces with the USA.

Brazil and China are nations that exhibit considerable asymmetry in their economic and hard power characteristics. While Brazil seeks growth opportunities from China, China views Brazil as a resource base to meet its internal demands, especially regarding Chinese food security. However, we emphasize that the challenges are not solely on the Brazilian side. Despite China's increased global influence, its economy still faces instabilities. Currently (2024), China is confronting new challenges in seeking internal balance and revising its growth model (World Bank Group, 2024).

From a macro perspective, the economic and commercial strengthening of BRICS and its relationship with the Global South could serve as a counterpoint to American influence, reducing the role of the US dollar in the global economy and Federal Reserve System (FED) monetary policy. However, while BRICS may redefine global power relations, member countries of the group may face influences in managing their regional relations, particularly Brazil, which has traditionally based its international relations on defensive regionalism.

Finally, we consider that the Brazil-China relationship has potential for bidirectional expansion. Brazil can continue its approach with China in developing Brazilian infrastructure (e.g., electrical, telecommunications, and railways) and industry. Technological cooperation between Brazil and China can assist in expanding and modernizing Brazilian 5G telecommunication networks and facilitating innovations in the country. In this sense, BRICS can serve as a platform to accelerate this technological cooperation. In the strategic field, the two countries can strengthen South-South cooperation and increase the voice and representation of developing countries in international affairs.

On the Chinese side, besides securing commodity-based resources that fuel the Chinese economy and enable its growth, the multifaceted relationship with Brazil is characterized by cooperation in key sectors such as agriculture, energy, and industry. China's investments in Brazil's renewable energy sector expand its global energy footprint. Furthermore, strategic coordination in international structures and agreements on the digital economy, logistics, and environmental cooperation supports China's global influence and sustainable development goals.

Even though strict methodological criteria were followed in this study, certain limitations must be considered. The systematic literature review conducted yielded a considerable number of results, and the selection and interpretation of these results were performed inductively by the authors. This approach is subject to the authors' own limitations and/or analytical biases. Furthermore, it was not possible to address all the phenomena discussed in the studies identified in the systematic review that involve Sino-Brazilian mutual interests. Therefore, we believe there is room for further studies that aim to explore in depth one of the themes presented in this study or all of them collectively.



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SINO-BRAZILIAN COOPERATION IN ANALYSIS: BILATERALISM, MULTILATERALISM AND MINILATERALISM

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Abstract

The current international system is undergoing several structural changes boosted by the so-called Global South, in an attempt to change the norms and structuring organisations built up after World War II under US hegemony. Emerging states, who have a great deal of influence in the international system, often question the westernised nature of global governance and its main institutions, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In this context it seems pertinent to study the cases of Brazil and China, who look for changes in the traditional North-South relations that have long failed to reflect the power dynamics resulting from their emergence. To this end, we will pay special attention not only to their bilateral and multilateral initiatives, but also to the potential of minilateralism as a complementary approach in the process, despite often neglected by the literature. Based on this gap, we argue that the interplay between bilateralism, multilateralism and minilateralism is crucial in Sino-Brazilian endeavours to reform obsolete structures for the sake of their own interests and those of the Global South. This being said, the research



question that will guide our study is the following: Which role play bilateralism, multilateralism and minilateralism within Sino-Brazilian relations? Focusing on the specific bilateral and mini cooperation dynamics together with the multilateral forums in which China and Brazil are integrated - namely the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank, the BRICS, BASIC, the G20, among others - one can expect the interplay between bilateralism, multilateralism and minilateralism to assume an increasing and complementary role in Sino-Brazilian relations.

Keywords

Bilateralism, Brazil, China, Global South, Minilateralism, Multilateralism.

Resumo

O atual sistema internacional passa por diversas mudanças estruturais impulsionadas pelo chamado Sul Global, na tentativa de alterar as normas e as organizações estruturantes construídas após a Segunda Guerra Mundial sob a hegemonia dos EUA. Os Estados emergentes, que têm uma grande influência no sistema internacional, questionam frequentemente a natureza ocidentalizada da governação global e das suas principais instituições, como as Nações Unidas, o Fundo Monetário Internacional e o Banco Mundial. Neste contexto, parece pertinente estudar os casos do Brasil e da China, que procuram mudanças nas relações tradicionais Norte-Sul que há muito não conseguem reflectir a dinâmica de poder resultante da sua emergência. Para tal, prestaremos especial atenção não só às suas iniciativas bilaterais e multilaterais, mas também ao potencial do minilateralismo como abordagem complementar no processo, apesar de muitas vezes negligenciado pela literatura. Com base nesta lacuna, argumentamos que a interação entre bilateralismo, multilateralismo e minilateralismo é crucial nos esforços sino-brasileiros para reformar estruturas obsoletas em prol dos seus próprios interesses e dos do Sul Global. Dito isto, a pergunta de pesquisa que norteará nosso estudo é a seguinte: Qual o papel do bilateralismo, do multilateralismo e do minilateralismo nas relações sino-brasileiras? Centrando-nos nas dinâmicas específicas de cooperação bilateral e de minicooperação, juntamente com os fóruns multilaterais em que a China e o Brasil estão integrados - nomeadamente o Banco Asiático de Investimento em Infraestruturas, o Novo Banco de Desenvolvimento, os BRICS, o BASIC, o G20, entre outros - pode-se esperar a interação entre bilateralismo, multilateralismo e minilateralismo para assumir um papel crescente e complementar nas relações sino-brasileiras.

Palavras-chave

Bilateralismo, Brasil, China, Sul Global, Minilateralismo, Multilateralismo.

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SINO-BRAZILIAN COOPERATION IN ANALYSIS: BILATERALISM, MULTILATERALISM AND MINILATERALISM

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, Brazil and China have built and consolidated a comprehensive cooperation on a broad range of fields, including social development, environmental protection, low-carbon economy, digital economy, scientific and technological innovation, and poverty reduction, as stressed by Zhang and Chen (2021) as well as by de Castro Neves and Cariello (2022). Besides, the literature offers insightful analyses concerning the bilateral nature of Sino-Brazilian cooperation (Hase Ueta, Alencastro & Pinheiro-Machado, 2023; van Tongerlo 2023). At the same time, Sino-Brazil cooperation was referred to by Maurício Santoro (2022, p.28) as a strategic partnership based on the “political perspective” of the Global South to push the world order towards multilateralism (Lessa, 2010). Academic literature further suggests that Sino-Brazilian cooperation is highly conditioned by multilateralism and a stronger sense of Global South identity (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007; Oliveira, 2010; Guilhon-Albuquerque, 2014). In this regard, China and Brazil were among the pioneers who founded G20 which affirms their commitment to South-South cooperation (Alles, 2012). Not only economics are key in their relation (Lins, 2024; Zumah, 2024) but also a shared sense that world institutions have become obsolete, thus needing to be reshaped in order to better accommodate the interests of the developing countries (Bezerra & Lin, 2023; Dams, 2024)

Yet, literature dedicated to the contribution of minilateralism as a complementary approach vis-à-vis the traditional multilateral and bilateral dimensions of Sino-Brazilian relations, as well the interplay between the three, remains a gap which the present study



will help to narrow down. Along these lines, we have adopted the following research question: *Which role play bilateralism, multilateralism and minilateralism within Sino-Brazilian relations?* The analysis spans from 1993, when the Sino-Brazilian Strategic Partnership was established - a significant milestone in both actors' bilateral and even multilateral cooperation - until the most recent developments under current President Lula da Silva at the time of writing. This time frame enables us to better grasp the geostrategic and geopolitical dynamics associated with the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, whose impacts reinforce the debate on the effectiveness of the existing western-led world structures. In fact, the Lula da Silva administration represents one of the most significant contributions to this debate, unlike other administrations such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso's or even Jair Bolsonaro. The recent appointment of former President Dilma Rousseff as head of the new Development Bank is one of the signs of Brazil coming back again to its place in multilateralism with converging interests with China's own agenda for the Global South.

All this means that the United States' area of influence is gradually being replaced by China's own initiatives in multilateralism, which under Lula's administration have been largely supported. On August 15, 2024, Brazil and China marked the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, a milestone that highlights the evolving nature of their strategic partnership. The creation of mechanisms like the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission on Consultation and Cooperation (COSBAN) in 2004 underscores efforts to institutionalize bilateral cooperation, yet the outcomes of such initiatives warrant further examination. In 2023, bilateral trade reached a record \$157 billion, with Brazil achieving a \$51 billion trade surplus, reflecting China's role as a critical market for Brazilian exports. Additionally, Brazil has become a notable destination for Chinese investments, particularly in infrastructure, which aligns with domestic initiatives like the Growth Acceleration Program (China Daily, 2024).

The present study will start by outlining the most relevant milestones in Brazil-China bilateral relations. It then attempts to understand how multilateralism complements both actors' agendas when addressing Global South issues and international policy perspectives, mainly regarding global governance. The final section aims to investigate the role and manifestations of minilateralism as an in-between and complementary approach to both bilateralism and multilateralism. The conclusion summarises the main findings whilst pointing to future avenues of research.

2. Bilateralism in Sino-Brazilian Relations

This section aims to evaluate the evolution of Sino-Brazilian relations in order to understand the degree of relationship between the two States and whether this is determined by cyclical or structural factors.

Brazil and China have never been as close in terms of bilateral relations as they are today. The dynamic between China and Brazil stands out among Beijing's relations with other Latin American countries primarily because Brazil is the sole Latin American



member of BRICS¹ (Santoro, 2022). Since Lula da Silva's return to the Planalto Palace in 2022, Brasília and Beijing have shown signs of geopolitical alignment regarding major international issues, which represents a departure from the traditional equidistance of Brazilian foreign policy in the dispute between the great powers. This approach will not be strange to Brazil's commitment to cooperation within the BRICS, seen as an attempt at a greater role in the so-called Global South, resulting in a distance from the United States of America (US) and the European Union (EU).

The turning point dates back to 2009, the year in which China overtook the US as Brazil's largest trading partner, a situation that continues to this day. The global strategic partnership established between the two countries in 2012, reinforcing the strategic partnership celebrated in 1993 (Serra, 2016), is the corollary of a rapprochement initiated since they established diplomatic relations in 1974. Therefrom Brasília would recognise mainland China as the legitimate representative of the Chinese State to the detriment of the nationalist regime taking refuge in Taipei, on the island of Formosa.

According to Brazilian scholar Adriana Abdenur (2022), Brazil's prominent role in South-South cooperation and global environmental agenda had been undermined under Bolsonaro presidency, which significantly weakened the country's multilateral practice and ties with the Global South. Yet, the Guardian's reference to the victory of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in presidential elections as "Brazil is Back" is more than relevant (The Guardian, 2023; da Silva, 2023). Lula's new revisionist agenda is set to grant the Global South a larger voice in world decision-making, reduce hunger and poverty as well as curb climate change as priorities under Brazil's G20 presidency. In doing so, Lula's Brazil is resolute to revitalise close cooperation with China to cope with pressure coming from the Global North (Berg & Baena, 2023; Vieira, 2023). In this context, Brazil endorsed Beijing's efforts to end the dollar dominance of global commerce by calling on developing nations to replace the US dollar with their own currencies in international trade (Financial Times, 2023).

The most decisive step taken by Brazil took place during the visit that Lula da Silva made to Beijing, in 2023, when he signed an agreement with Xi Jinping aiming to replace the US dollar in international trade. Brasília meets the Chinese aim of weakening the North American role in the international system, thereby distancing itself from Washington, but also from its Western partners, especially the Europeans. Although it has not formally joined the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Brazil has welcomed significant Chinese investment in infrastructure and increased its cooperation in strategic areas such as aerospace, involving the respective national agencies.

Traditionally very jealous of its sovereignty over the Amazon rainforest, Brasília did not shy away from establishing the China-Brazil Earth Resources program with Beijing, which includes, among other capabilities, the launch of Earth observation satellites, including the Amazon rainforest. Lula and Xi "signed 15 agreements that foster cooperation between the two countries in various areas, such as trade and industry, communication, innovation, research and technology" (Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, 2023), deepening the Sino-Brazilian strategic partnership that dates back to the 90s. Brazil

¹ BRICS refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.



supplies China with raw materials that it lacks and, in return, receives investment in infrastructure where Beijing has potential.

A study by the BRICS Policy Centre (2019), which analyses the number of Sino-Brazilian agreements signed over twenty years (1999-2019), reveals that it was during Dilma Russef's mandate (2011-2016) that the largest number of agreements were signed (109), more than the double of those signed during Lula's governments (2002-2010), which were 53. The two presidents assigned by the Workers' Party were much more proactive in relation to China than their predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who between 1999 and 2002 made six agreements, or his successor, Michel Temer, responsible for 15 agreements in 2017 and 2018, while Jair Bolsonaro concluded two in 2019.

At the international level, the so-called enlarged West, with the US and the EU at its head, has expressed caution in its opening to the Chinese market, for reasons of alleged national security. At stake are mainly strategic sectors, such as communications and semiconductors, where there is fear that the Chinese authorities, who control investment, may access information considered strategic for Western countries. To this fear, which follows years of relocation of Western companies to Asian countries, more favourable to production, with a cheaper, although qualified, workforce, is added the global geopolitical context marked by the conflict in Ukraine, in relation to which Beijing has maintained public neutrality, although it promotes an "unlimited strategic partnership" with Moscow (Reuters 2022). At the same time, tension in the Taiwan Strait is intensifying, with Beijing reaffirming its intention to absorb the territory of Taipei, despite the 2024 presidential elections reaffirming the power of defenders of autonomy for the island of Formosa vis-à-vis Mainland China. In this geopolitical context, the rapprochement between Brasília and Beijing continues to be seen in Western chancelleries as a distancing of Brazil from liberal democracies, which could affect the approval of agreements such as the EU-Mercosur or mortgage Brazil's ambition for a greater role in the United Nations system, including accession to a permanent member position on the Security Council.

This feeling is shared by Thiago de Aragão (2023, p.8), who professionally deals with foreign investment funds, who expresses a fear: "Without choosing sides, Brazil would continue to enjoy everything that the two superpowers and their allies could offer. By choosing a side, Brazil must hope that tensions do not worsen, as then the price of alliances can be placed on the table".

If there is a hallmark that Itamaraty (reference for the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations) has cultivated since the democratisation of the regime, it is Brazil's strategic autonomy in navigating relations with the great powers. It began with non-alignment, during the Cold War period, which had as a corollary the creation of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in South Atlantic (ZOPACAS)², under the sponsorship of the United Nations, and continued with the deepening of South-Atlantic relations, especially during

² Established in 1986 by resolution 41/11 of the United Nations General Assembly, the ZOPACAS includes 24 members states: Angola, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo and Uruguay.



the mandates of Lula da Silva (Fonseca, 2011), the embryo of what is today called the Global South.

President Lula sought to place Brazil in the leadership of the countries of the South, bringing his country closer to the most influential African countries and then extending this cooperation to great powers considered allies in this purpose, such as India, China and the Russian Federation, within the scope of the BRICS. Former President Dilma Rousseff was elected, in 2023, president of the New BRICS Development Bank, based in Shanghai, which is intended to finance infrastructure projects in the five countries, but also in Bangladesh, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay, admitted as members of the bank in 2021. The South African summit also approved the expansion of the BRICS to new countries - Argentina³, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - a fact that, on the one hand, could expand China's influence in other markets and, on the other hand, could reduce Brazil's influence (Bingyun, 2024).

Although the relationship between China and Brazil has intensified in the last two decades due to the BRICS, the participation in their bilateral relations is intense. In 2022, Chinese companies invested in thirty-two new investment projects across strategic sectors such as energy, information technology, and agriculture, the highest number annually recorded in history, distributed among all regions of the country. Chinese investments in Brazil are not limited only to large projects, but also include bilateral agreements and joint initiatives that strengthen cooperation from bilateral relations, especially so that in 2021 Brazil reached the mark of the largest recipient of Chinese investments (CEBC, 2023).

In addition to direct investments, bilateral cooperation between Brazil and China is facilitated by a series of agreements and protocols established between the two countries. On January 19, 2024, an agreement was signed between the Brazilian and Chinese governments on long-stay and multiple-entry visas, further facilitating trade and business relations between the two countries. Other agreements cover areas such as defence cooperation, outer space science and technology, and strengthening ministerial relations, as table 1 shows.

³ The new president of Argentina, Javier Milei, announced on December 10, 2023 that Argentina was renouncing membership of the BRICS.



Table 1. Brazil-China Cooperation Agreements

Agreement Title	Area of Cooperation	Date Signed	Status
Earth-Resources Satellite (CBERS) Project - CBERS-6	Space and Technology	14/04/2023	In Progress
Memorandum of Understanding on Trade and Investment	Economic and Trade	12/11/2004	Superseded
Cultural and Educational Cooperation Agreement	Cultural and Educational	01/11/1985	In Force
Defense Cooperation Agreement	Defense and Military	12/04/2011	Special Status
Infrastructure Construction Cooperation Agreement	Infrastructure and Energy	05/06/2006	In Force
Energy and Mining Cooperation Protocol	Energy and Mining	19/02/2009	In Force
Judicial Assistance Treaty	Judicial and Administrative	19/05/2009	In Force
Multiple Entry Visa Agreement	Visas and Immigration	19/01/2024	In Promulgation

Source: The authors

Although the relations between the ministries of foreign affairs are primarily those that demarcate bilateral cooperation, initiatives associated with investments in states of the federation, municipalities or linked to the various ministries take place systematically and in parallel with macro-agreements also take place in the form of paradiplomacy (Setzer & Anderton, 2019), an essential component of minilateralism (see section 4) in our perspective.

In this sense, the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Commission for Consultation and Cooperation – COSBAN, created in 2004 to promote biannual regions between China and Brazil to deepen bilateral relations, is one of the drivers of the outstanding numbers of this bilaterality. Although delayed, the VI COSBAN Meeting states a Strategic Planning between 2022 and 2031 and an Executive Planning until 2026, so that the first document registers the World Trade Organization⁴ as the primary forum for multilateralism of trade relations between the parties, in the promotion of cooperation, including bilateral regulatory cooperation. The forum includes scientific exchange and renewable energies as an essential agenda, dividing the commitment between axes of economic, scientific, energy and mineral cooperation, and digitalisation, with the formulation of specific working groups. In addition, the Executive Plan reinforces the commitment to institutions within the framework of the UN and the 2030 Agenda, but also to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the G20, in addition to the BRICS, which reveals the non-opposition to the Western international financial system.

Also, within this agenda, a group of agreements touches on the defence system, including space cooperation, technologies, and communications. In this framework, the cooperation system highlights the peaceful application of space technology, through the Complementary Protocol on the Joint Development of CBERS-6 between the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Government of China as part of the Framework on Cooperation in Peaceful Applications of Science and Technology from Outer Space between the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Government

⁴ It had a Brazilian director general, Roberto Azevêdo (2013-2020).



of China. Also, within the bilateral cooperation framework, the 2010 Defence Cooperation Agreement includes joint military exchanges and exercises, disseminated for peaceful purposes.

This diverse group of initiatives and agreements, whether sheltered by large umbrellas of technical cooperation and long-term investments, moves forward with fewer barriers and with a repercussion that may not be observed in proportion (Oliveira, 2010). In addition, the stakeholders representing Chinese interests are also of different natures. Institutions such as the Brazil-China Business Council (CEBC) have played a crucial role in promoting dialogue and facilitating investment and business between the two nations, whose annual conference highlighted the importance of a new bilateral agenda focused on sustainability and neo-industrialization, as appointed.

3. Multilateralism as a way to deepen the Global South's agenda

After analysing Sino-Brazilian relations from a bilateral perspective, we will now try to understand how multilateralism complements both actors' agendas when addressing Global South issues and international policy perspectives, mainly regarding global governance.

In the last decades, China became a global actor, while Brazil maintained its journey as a regional power. Both countries have turned to a vibrant diplomacy to increase their international role and notoriety based on dynamic bilateral relations and the building of innovative multilateral ties. Inclusively, China created several international forums based on a new multilateral perspective that gathered China with different regions of the world (e.g. FOCAC, Forum China Middle East, China-CELAC, Macao Forum), or that inaugurated a new way to deal with issues like defence and security (The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation). Through these diplomatic forms, China could develop a global discourse for foreign policy and ensure the recognition of new ways of dealing with multilateralism (Costa, 2023). Besides engaging in global discourse, China used bilateral and multilateral relations to export some elements that successfully developed the economy and society (e.g., the special economic zones) (Costa & Li, 2022).

Brazil also explored multilateralism through diverse regional and global organisations, participating actively in creating Mercosur. Brazil's direct contribution to building new international organisations or multilateral forums is also relevant, mainly through its association with regional blocks or other emergent economies, like in the case of the BRICS or the G20. Some authors refer to 2003-2014 as a shifting moment for Brazilian foreign policy when the country engaged with an unprecedented international agenda (Chin & Diaz, 2016). Besides evolving in international politics, Brazil also diversified bilateral and multilateral relations by introducing new countries and geographies as their primary partners. During this period, Brazilian authorities tried to balance the principles of the Washington Consensus and a public policy to foster industrialization and innovation. Brazil also became more ambitious regarding security policies, trying to implement a strategy for regional security and a permanent presence in the global south. Somehow, the Brazilian new approach to foreign policy resulted in a commitment to



innovative international governance, paying more attention to the needs and claims of peripheral countries, namely the ones in the Global South.

China and Brazil experimented with the momentum to increase and deepen their relationship but also to engage mutually in a broader process of building alternatives to an international order that did not allow newcomers to lead or deeply participate in the decision processes. The non-conformist way of looking at international order and foreign policy overlaps with the growth of both economies and a common interest in matching each country's development processes in a way they could be complimentary. The next step was to reinforce multilateralism through new patterns and to engage in the creation of new multilateral organisations (Stephen & Parížek, 2019).

Authors such as Petrone (2021) agree that multilateralism has become convenient for emerging powers to propose new perspectives on global issues and their governance. BRICS is one of the most successful international organisations, reflecting a Global South approach and the demand for a different global order, better reflecting the needs for the International Order identified by these countries. The role of countries such as Brazil and China in the shift of the international balance is evident. However, this new context resulted in the establishment of new organisations, some of them reflecting multilateralism with a tendency to address solutions through multilateralism and bilateralism, paying more attention to their national interests. This situation results in a convergence when these international organisations have to address global issues and propose a nationalist approach regarding specific development questions (Stephen & Parížek, 2019).

The lack of success of global organisations such as the World Trade Organisation also contributed to the peripheral states regarding the decision to experiment with specific alignments through minilateralism diplomacy. In the particular case of Brazil and China, the flexible way they use multilateral approaches, in complementarity with other diplomatic methods such as bilateral relations to minilateral relations BRICS is a relevant example of a new way to deal with multilateralism, allowing the use of diverse formats inside the organisation in a multilateralism a "la carte", encompassing bilteralization and multilateralization within the member states, but fostering an alignment when participating in other multilateral organisations such as WTO (Vazquez, 2021). This open way of engaging member states is very attractive for dynamic regional powers that can claim deeper participation in global governance and the international order. One of the main issues at BRICS is the accommodation of diversity, following a coexistence strategy while contributing to a non-west perspective of global governance (van Noort, 2018).

As for the G20, it was unclear how the pandemic and the Ukrainian war would impact the organisation in which Brazil and China are also active members. However, the commitment to some drivers of global governance such as climate change, taxation or cooperation for development allowed the organisation to maintain its role, not without a perception of a precedent of western-driven nature that these events contributed to eroding (Larionova, 2023).

Combining the cases of BRICS and G20, it is noticeable that both countries used multilateralism to address global issues and to establish a leading position with the



countries of the Global South. Some authors even refer to the combination of strategic policies in the BRICS and the G20, promoting reform in economic governance (Larionova & Shelepov, 2022). Other authors also argue that the BRICS region was criticised several times due to its lack of institutionalisation. Nevertheless, the BRICS maintained the needed institutional coherence to survive the challenges of proposing an alternative to the dominant multilateralism (Abdenur, 2014).

Brazil and China share other geopolitical spaces, with variable geometry, such as the case of the G77. The origin of the Group of 77 (number of founding States) dates back to 1964 and has its origins in a joint position of those States, taken during a United Nations conference on trade and development. Another multilateral platform in which Brazil and China are included is BASIC. The latter is the acronym for Brazil, South Africa, India and China, industrialised countries that in 2009 defined a joint strategy within the scope of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, cooperation that they have maintained in this area, with the most recent taking place in 2023, at the New York climate summit (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2023).

4. Minilateralism as a complementary approach in Sino-Brazilian cooperation

This section aims to investigate the role and manifestations of minilateralism as an in-between and complementary approach to both bilateralism and multilateralism. More specifically, it claims that a multistakeholder arena has been evolving from various forms of diplomatic engagement, from bottom-up to top-down institutions.

Sino-Brazilian cooperation extends beyond multilateral platforms like BRICS or G20⁵ to encompass minilateralism. This is evident in the establishment of the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission and the creation of the "private arm" of the Sino-Brazilian relationship, the Brazil-China Business Council in 2004 (Lessa, 2010).

Minilateralism as a diplomatic tool has coexisted with other forms of global governance since the end of World War II, for example, when considering initiatives such as the European Coal and Steel Community (1951), the precursor of the European Community. Minilateralism represents an alternative approach to international cooperation, characterised by the formation of narrower and more targeted partnerships between a limited number of countries that share common interests and concerns on specific agendas. Unlike multilateralism, which involves a greater number of states in comprehensive agreements and institutions, minilateral agreements seek to bring together varied stakeholders in discussing limited issues, and on some occasions, in defined periods. These initiatives often arise in response to the perception that existing multilateral structures are ineffective or incapable of adequately dealing with urgent global challenges, a relevant characteristic presented about three decades ago in the literature (Braga, 1989; Naim, 2009; Becard, 2011).

⁵ The G20 brings together the most developed economies that have met since 1999, with the aim of regulating the financial system and the global economy.



Minilateralism offers advantages in terms of agility, flexibility, and focus, allowing participants to act more quickly and decisively on specific issues, often bypassing the complexity and time-consuming associated with multilateral processes (Wuthnow, 2019). The complementarity between multilateral agreements qualified by traditional diplomacy and minilateral agreements qualified by alternative multi stakeholder diplomatic axes characterises and encompasses a large part of the systems and subsystems in use. This phenomenon incorporates actions marked, for example, by paradiplomacy, whether interministerial, inter-municipal or multisectoral (Ribeiro, 2009), once treated as convergent paradiplomacy (Zeraoui, 2016).

Some axes of cooperation have emerged from systems guided by themes and qualified as minilateral, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade of 1947 (GATT), which began as expanded bilateral negotiations between the major trading powers (Tirkey, 2021). To some extent, the criticism of minilateral agreements involves the question of the efficiency and legitimacy of these agreements for the macro-processes in which they are involved, but also the presence of minilateralism to soften the circuit of influences carried by the instruments. In addition, some risk seems to be associated with what have been called "power imbalances" derived from the accentuation of minilateral relationships (Mladenov, 2023).

There is also a growth proportional to the complexity between the minilateral agreements and the expansion of the system of international interdependencies. The difficulties associated with the governance of multilateral organisations have reduced the belief in global cooperation on crucial issues. Part of the scepticism in the classical multilateral environment points out that minilateralism may be the new type of efficient multilateralism (Duygun, 2022). Although it is relevant to note that there has been progress in multilateral structures in recent decades, the progressive fragmentation of these structures, the reorientation of agendas, the more specific thematic attribution and the strengthening of civil society are components that reveal this incidence (Anuar & Hussain, 2021; McGee, 2011; Tirkey, 2021).

Through trilateral/bilateral agreements and/or minilateral partnerships, challenges such as climate change, technology, energy, or food security are addressed, highlighting the greatest possible effectiveness of minilateralism in bringing together relevant stakeholders, unlocking original barriers between diplomacies, and achieving shared goals in a more targeted and pragmatic manner (Eckersley, 2012; Falkner, 2015). In this context, minilateralism is associated with the concept of club governance, since the conduct of an important part of global governance is translated by third parties into forums of possible low visibility (Duygun, 2022).

Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the environment in which minilateralism and all associated decentralisation movements thrived highlighted the weaknesses of the main multilateral forums, so that relationships and partnerships of a different nature were created following the paralysis of many of these forums (Tirkey, 2021). In this context, minilateral agreements and subsystems swiftly emerge, benefiting not only China but also facilitating its planned expansion across various sectors. Minilateralism encompasses diplomatic initiatives involving multiple layers and stakeholders,



underpinned by a robust commitment to investment. In this dynamic context, minilateral agreements and subsystems rapidly come to the forefront, not only advancing China's interests but also facilitating its strategic expansion across diverse sectors. Minilateralism epitomises diplomatic endeavours that engage multiple layers of governance and stakeholders, bolstered by a steadfast commitment to investment. Notably, this approach has been emblematic of China's strategy in the Global South, where it positions itself as a partner adept at navigating the demands and intricacies unique to these regions (Kobayashi & Sanchez, 2017).

Conversely, microlateralism pertains to smaller-scale partnerships, as implied by its nomenclature, and is not within the scope of this study. A clear distinction arises: bilateral or trilateral actions qualify as minilateralism when they (1) diverge from conventional diplomatic approaches, (2) engage multiple stakeholders in their implementation, (3) operate outside the framework of complex multilateral environments, and (4) span various layers of representation within national or international spheres (such as local, federative, or other).

Whether concerning international agreements related to technological development or climate change, Chinese participation in most economies, especially in developing economies, has been significantly higher in recent years (Duygun, 2022). In the global diplomatic landscape, China finds an advantage both in the elaboration of traditional diplomatic, and thematic agreements or in the expansion of its commercial and cultural stakeholders.

The emergence of middle and emerging powers and rapid technological advances make it clear that minilateralism is a viable path for many countries (Anuar & Hussain 2021). China's presence and influence in Brazil have intensified over the years, reflected through a variety of investments and cooperation agreements in various sectors. In agribusiness, for example, China's share as an importer went from less than 3 percent to more than 35 percent between 2000 and 2020. The ties between the two countries extend beyond the economic realm, also encompassing areas such as technology, diplomacy, and defence (Medeiros, Feodrippe & Benvenuto, 2018; Medeiros & Benvenuto, 2020).

Following the shift in Brazil's foreign policy focus towards South-South cooperation in the early 2000s, the expansion of Brazil-China collaboration consistently incorporated a broad strategic element. This revitalization of the strategic partnership with China ushered in a new era of relations (Marcondes & Barbosa, 2018). During Lula's initial term, two significant institutional developments underscored this renewed defence cooperation: the establishment of the Joint Commission for Exchange and Cooperation (referred to as JCEC) and the ratification of the Framework Agreement on Defence Cooperation. Sino-Brazilian strategic cooperation also extends to the satellite sector, notably through the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS) project. As a space-related scientific and technological initiative that began under a cooperation agreement established in 1988, it currently involves a group of different service providers from Brazil (China Daily, 2024) and whose cooperation was reaffirmed in June 2024 under a Joint Declaration for the CBERS 5. In this regard, China's participation in the "Amazon Protection system" monitoring initiative is noteworthy as the latter enables the sharing of



Chinese satellite imagery of the Amazon forest to safeguard Brazil's maritime exclusive economic zone (Marcondes & Barbosa, 2018; de Stange, 2023). One should note that while Brazilian satellite institutions involved in cooperation are civilian, Chinese ones are directly linked to the People's Liberation Army.

To ensure that minilateral instruments effectively complement the work of multilateral instruments, for example on climate issues, minilateral agreements play a crucial role in facilitating cooperation in the research and implementation of renewable energy technologies. Working to uphold the interests of developing nations in the international climate change agenda, China and Brazil have pursued climate diplomacy, advocating for equitable compensation for the past emissions generated by developed countries during their developmental phases (Hallding *et al.*, 2011; Qi, 2011; Conrad, 2012; Groen, 2020).

These partnerships are structured by subnational and non-governmental actors, expanding the capacity to generate innovative solutions to contemporary challenges, whilst China has a programme on its energy security (Foguel, Paiva & Medeiros, 2014). Ultimately, the operation of minilateral agreements is guided by a perspective that includes a variety of actors, from developing countries to vulnerable economies, broadening political dialogue in confidence-building and for international cooperation and global governance.

In the context of the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission (COSBAN), significant achievements include the successful facilitation of bilateral trade growth. For instance, in June 2024, Brazil exported \$9.74 billion to China and imported \$5.84 billion, resulting in a positive trade balance of \$3.9 billion. Over the past year, Brazilian exports to China increased by \$435 million (4.67%), driven primarily by higher exports of Crude Petroleum, which rose by \$623 million (64.1%), and Corn, which saw a substantial increase of \$275 million. Concurrently, imports from China grew by \$1.29 billion (28.3%), largely due to increased imports of Refined Petroleum and Video and Card Games (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2024). As of 2024, the COSBAN has been representing the China-Brazilian bilateral relations, whilst paving the road for deepening South-South Relations (Maia, 2024).

The Brazil-China Business Council has played a pivotal role in this expansion by facilitating over \$15 billion in bilateral investments. For instance, the Council's initiatives have significantly enhanced Brazil's trade dynamics, evidenced by a substantial year-over-year growth in key export sectors. The increase in exports of products such as Crude Petroleum and Corn highlights the effectiveness of the Council in boosting Brazil's trade performance and economic engagement with China. Regarding its participation, although it is focused on Brazil's bilateral relations with China, the Council reports the important participation of bilateralism both regarding the states of the federation and sectors of interest, as well as in the strengthening of other relations such as in Latin America, which can be evidenced through events and news from the Council's own system (CEBC, 2024).

The relationship between Brazil and China continues to expand, driven by cooperation in several areas, although the participants of the Brazil-China Meeting still consider the investments to be lower than expected. The establishment of strategic partnerships and



the deepening of economic development and trade ties are key elements of this bilateral relationship and this invisible minilateralism. As a consumer of Brazilian agribusiness, China has also concentrated its investments in the sector given the significant increase in demand for food. In 2022, Chinese investments in Brazilian agribusiness reached almost US\$99 million, benefiting agricultural exploration projects in the Midwest of Brazil. In addition, the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation of Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao) has promoted multilateral cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, strengthening economic and trade ties, where a relevant part is the cooperation with Brazil. It is notable that Brazil's participation in the Global South and Portuguese-Language international systems is both boosted and a driver of minilateral relationships that are dissipated by cooperative sublayers and offer space for multi-stakeholder relationships with greater flexibility, increasing bilateral synergies.

While triangulation is a key aspect of Brazil's foreign policy strategy in promoting South-South Cooperation and development, within the context of bilateral agreements, the formation of minilateral arrangements often arises from shared commitments to broad regimes, such as climate change, technological development, and energy security. On the other side, while minilateralism offers notable benefits in terms of agility and focus, it also poses several challenges. The efficiency of minilateral agreements can sometimes lead to questions about their legitimacy and broader acceptance, as they often exclude less influential actors or are part of semi-formal agreements. Additionally, the proliferation of minilateral agreements contribute to the fragmentation of global governance structures, potentially undermining the effectiveness of multilateral institutions designed to address global challenges comprehensively, posing a demand for bridging the different cooperative layers.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on an existing gap in the literature that has failed to consider other alternative approaches to the traditional bilateral and multilateral elements in Sino-Brazilian cooperation, this article has attempted to answer the previously stated research question: *Which role play bilateralism, multilateralism and minilateralism within Sino-Brazilian relations?* In doing so, we have arrived at some important conclusions.

As a first major finding, we conclude that the Sino-Brazilian bilateral relationship is marked by interests that can be considered cyclical, in the case of economic cooperation, but also structural, in the case of opposition to the Western model led by the US. Furthermore, bilateralism has been the privileged approach to advance the Sino-Brazilian Strategic Partnership. The latter is often recognised as a model of South-South cooperation and reflects a shared sense that world institutions have become obsolete, thus needing to be reshaped in order to better accommodate the interests of the developing countries. The 'strategic' essence of Sino-Brazilian ties has been connected with a broad range of fields encompassing trade, political dialogue, technological cooperation (such as building satellites), science and climate change (the case of the Amazon), but also more macro goals such as reforming the international system. This links to our second finding, which is precisely the complementary boost that Sino-



Brazilian endeavours in multilateralism provide to their parallel bilateral approach. Multilateralism seems to be both actors' preferred foreign policy tool for mutual support in the BRICS, G20, BASIC, New Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, based on non-intervention, solidarity, and mutual respect. Moreover, multilateralism is the instrument that both favour to build alternatives both for the obsolete Bretton Woods' institutions and US-Eurocentric world order. In this regard, President Lula's view that countries have the right to go into debt in order to develop, without the pressure from the International Monetary Fund, together with his questioning of the dominance of the dollar as the world's dominant currency, and his attempt to encourage Chinese strategic projects in Brazil (including 5G), clearly contrast with Bolsonaro's Washington first policies. With Lula's return to Brazilian presidency, the country is therefore back to the multilateral agenda that it has shared with China in the defence of the Global South.

As a third last finding, we conclude that minilateralism provides an alternative approach in the longstanding Sino-Brazilian foreign policy that has been simultaneously driven by the traditional bilateral and multilateral elements. Nonetheless, minilateralism has proved advantageous in terms of agility, flexibility, and focus, enabling Brazil and China to reach faster decisions, often bypassing the complexity and time-consuming associated with multilateral processes. Besides, Sino-Brazilian engagement in minilateralism arises in response to the perception that Western-led multilateral structures are too broad, ineffective or incapable of adequately dealing with urgent global challenges. The session's scope was chosen to focus on the detection of minilateral efforts as specifically bridging evidence, without deepening into specific case studies or empirical measurements of impact. Given the relatively recent and evolving nature of Sino-Brazilian minilateralism due to the multiplying efforts from different stakeholders, this approach allows for a more flexible and comprehensive discussion of its potential, which can be tested in future studies.

Considering the new stage inaugurated by President Lula in the Sino-Brazilian Strategic Partnership and its impacts for the Global South, future avenues of research would certainly benefit from paying closer attention to the South Atlantic as a case of bilateral, multilateral and minilateral governance. In fact, the rekindling of the conflict in the Middle East and its extension to other actors, namely the Houthi of Yemen, affecting navigation in the Red Sea between the ocean Indian and Mediterranean Sea, via the Suez Canal, led to alternative maritime routes, through the South Atlantic, via the Cape (South Africa), in the transport of goods between Asia-Pacific countries and Europe or the east coast of the US. Hence future studies should complement the works of Palmeira (2023) and Ferreira-Pereira & Duarte (2023) on the importance of Brazil's role in strengthening ZOPACAS and other bilateral and multilateral agreements, particularly with Portuguese-speaking African countries, such as Angola, which has intervened in the Gulf of Guinea Commission, a region in whose security the EU has also been involved, given its strategic interest for international maritime security. As a global actor, China also seeks to exert its influence in the South Atlantic, with Brazil emerging as a potential ally in this purpose.



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STRENGTHENING SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS THROUGH BRICS: DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of the BRICS alliance, particularly focusing on how it serves as a platform for enhancing relations between China and Brazil, and explores the future development prospects within this framework. By analyzing bilateral trade agreements, cultural exchanges, and political collaborations initiated under the BRICS umbrella, the study identifies key areas where both nations have significantly benefited. It highlights the strategic importance of these relations in the context of global geopolitics and economic shifts. Furthermore, the paper discusses the impact of these enhanced ties on regional development, technology transfer, and sustainable growth initiatives. It argues that the strengthened partnership not only promotes mutual development but also facilitates a broader South-South cooperation, positioning BRICS as a crucial player in shaping a multipolar world order. The findings suggest that sustained focus on cooperation in areas like renewable energy, agricultural technology, and digital innovation can lead to substantial progress and stability in the region.

Keywords

BRICS, Sino-Brazilian Relations, Global Geopolitics, Sustainable Development, South-South Cooperation.

Resumo

Este artigo examina o papel da aliança BRICS, concentrando-se particularmente na forma como ela serve como plataforma para melhorar as relações entre a China e o Brasil, e explora as perspectivas futuras de desenvolvimento dentro deste quadro. Ao analisar acordos comerciais bilaterais, intercâmbios culturais e colaborações políticas iniciadas sob a égide dos BRICS, o estudo identifica áreas-chave onde ambas as nações beneficiaram significativamente. Destaca a importância estratégica destas relações no contexto da geopolítica global e das mudanças económicas. Além disso, o documento discute o impacto destes laços reforçados no desenvolvimento regional, na transferência de tecnologia e nas iniciativas de crescimento sustentável. Argumenta que a parceria reforçada não só promove o desenvolvimento mútuo, mas também facilita uma cooperação Sul-Sul mais ampla, posicionando os BRICS, como um interveniente crucial na formação de uma ordem mundial multipolar. As conclusões sugerem que o foco sustentado na cooperação em áreas como as



energias renováveis, a tecnologia agrícola e a inovação digital pode levar a um progresso substancial e à estabilidade na região.

Palavras-chave

BRICS, Relações Sino-Brasileiras, Geopolítica Global, Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Cooperação Sul-Sul.

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STRENGTHENING SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS THROUGH BRICS: DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

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1. Introduction

Sino-Brazilian relations have gained increasing prominence in recent years as both nations have solidified their partnership through economic, cultural, and strategic collaboration (Hooijmaaijers, 2021). As China emerges as the world's second-largest economy and Brazil stands as the largest economy in Latin America, the cooperative relationship between these two giants is vital for their respective growth and influence. Their cooperation extends beyond traditional trade relations to areas like technology transfer, cultural exchanges, and joint strategies on global issues. The BRICS alliance, which includes Russia, India, and South Africa alongside China and Brazil, has been instrumental in strengthening these ties (Lagutina, 2019; Stuenkel, 2020). Initially formed as an informal grouping of emerging economies, BRICS has developed into a strategic platform that allows member nations to coordinate efforts and address global challenges (Arapova, 2019). Within this framework, China and Brazil have found a space to align their interests and emphasize sustainable development, enhancing their bilateral ties while leveraging their influence on regional and global matters.

The objectives of this study are to analyze how the BRICS framework strengthens Sino-Brazilian relations and supports broader development goals for both nations. It seeks to examine how China and Brazil use BRICS to deepen economic, political, and cultural ties, investigate the effects of this partnership on global geopolitics and sustainable growth initiatives, and identify key areas for further cooperation, particularly in renewable energy, agricultural technology, and digital innovation. Furthermore, the study aims to underscore BRICS's role in fostering a more balanced and inclusive world order. Policymakers, scholars, and business leaders can gain valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of international politics and economics through this analysis.

This paper will begin by exploring the historical background of the BRICS alliance and its role in shaping Sino-Brazilian relations. It will then review the existing literature to establish a theoretical foundation for the analysis. The study will delve into key areas where BRICS has facilitated significant collaboration between China and Brazil, focusing on bilateral trade agreements, cultural exchanges, and political partnerships. It will then



examine the impact of these strengthened ties on regional development, technology transfer, and sustainable growth initiatives, emphasizing their significance for Latin America, Asia, and beyond. The paper will also explore the strategic importance of this partnership in the context of global geopolitics and South-South cooperation, illustrating how BRICS provides emerging economies with a voice in global governance.

Finally, the paper will explore future development prospects, identifying potential areas for further cooperation and offering recommendations for deepening partnerships while addressing future challenges. The conclusion will summarize key findings and reaffirm the strategic importance of BRICS for Sino-Brazilian relations and global cooperation.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, combining both a literature review and case study analysis to explore the strengthening of Sino-Brazilian relations through the BRICS framework. The literature review includes scholarly articles, policy papers, and reports from international organizations, focusing on the economic, cultural, and political dimensions of Sino-Brazilian cooperation. Additionally, case studies on bilateral trade agreements, cultural exchanges, and strategic partnerships in areas like renewable energy and technology transfer are examined to provide an in-depth understanding of how these initiatives are facilitated within the BRICS framework. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of the impacts and future prospects of Sino-Brazilian cooperation, while also identifying potential challenges and opportunities for further collaboration.

3. Background of BRICS and Sino-Brazilian Relations

The concept of BRICS emerged in the early 2000s when economist Jim O'Neill coined the term to represent Brazil, Russia, India, and China as the world's rapidly growing economies (Kiely, 2015). South Africa was later included in the grouping in 2010, transforming BRIC into BRICS (Asuelime & Jethro, 2013). The alliance started as an informal grouping focused on economic collaboration but quickly gained importance as a platform for emerging economies to coordinate policies on global economic and political issues. BRICS has since evolved into an influential entity with annual summits and multilateral initiatives, such as the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (Qobo & Soko, 2015; Batista Jr, 2021). The aim was to create an alternative to Western-dominated institutions, providing a forum for these nations to advocate for a more inclusive and multipolar global order (Chakraborty, 2018).

China and Brazil are pivotal members of the BRICS group. China is the world's most populous nation and the second-largest economy, characterized by rapid economic growth and industrialization over the past four decades. It has a significant influence on global trade and investment, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Koveos & Zhang, 2023). Politically, China's global influence is expanding through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (Lewin & Witt, 2022). Culturally, it seeks to promote its language



and values abroad through Confucius Institutes and other soft power initiatives (Zreik, 2024).

Brazil, on the other hand, is Latin America's largest economy and plays a leading role in regional political and economic affairs. Its diverse economy is driven by agriculture, mining, energy, and manufacturing (Bernal-Meza, 2022). As a major exporter of agricultural products, Brazil has an extensive trade network that complements China's needs for raw materials and food (Oliveira & Schneider, 2016). Politically, Brazil seeks to expand its global presence and foster regional integration. Culturally, Brazil promotes its vibrant and diverse heritage to the world, aligning with China's soft power interests in promoting mutual understanding (Samson & Sandroni, 2013).

The formation of BRICS has been instrumental in strengthening Sino-Brazilian ties (Batista Barbosa, 2021). Through this alliance, both nations have found common ground to promote their economic interests and engage in strategic dialogues. China and Brazil share complementary economic structures, which has facilitated their growing trade partnership. China became Brazil's largest trading partner in 2009, driven by Brazilian exports of agricultural products and minerals, and imports of Chinese machinery, electronics, and consumer goods (Jenkins, 2012).

Politically, the BRICS framework allows China and Brazil to align their diplomatic efforts on key global issues, such as reforming international financial institutions, advocating for climate change mitigation, and promoting sustainable development (Sampene et al., 2021). Their cooperation through BRICS has also facilitated partnerships in areas like technology transfer, infrastructure investment, and educational exchanges. For instance, the New Development Bank, headquartered in Shanghai, has funded infrastructure projects that benefit both nations and other developing countries (Wang, 2019).

Culturally, BRICS has promoted mutual understanding between China and Brazil through various cultural exchanges and educational programs (Chang, Chen & Xiong, 2018). Both nations have shown a willingness to celebrate their diversity while fostering people-to-people connections through initiatives like student exchanges, joint research, and arts collaborations.

4. Literature Review

The literature on BRICS's impact in international politics and economics is rich with analyses that explore its potential to redefine global governance. Scholars like Cooper and Öniş & Kutlay (2020) have extensively discussed the strategic significance of BRICS in challenging the dominance of Western powers within global institutions. They highlight the alliance's advocacy for reforms in the United Nations Security Council and its push for greater representation in international financial institutions, arguing that BRICS is transforming into a pivotal political force for a more balanced world order.

Economically, Hooijmaaijers (2021) provide insights into how economic synergies among BRICS countries are reshaping global trade and investment flows. His research points to a substantial increase in intra-BRICS trade, which has diversified economic dependencies away from traditional Western markets. Furthermore, the establishment of the New



Development Bank in 2015, as he notes, marks a significant move towards financial independence, offering alternative funding sources for infrastructure projects in developing countries.

In terms of South-South cooperation, Cooper (2017) analyzes how BRICS leverages its collective capacity to support sustainable development initiatives across the Global South. He emphasizes the role of the Contingent Reserve Arrangement in providing financial stability to BRICS nations, alongside promoting technological and cultural exchanges that enhance mutual development.

Kim & Tromp (2021) examine the increasing trade volume between the two countries, emphasizing how China's rise to Brazil's largest trading partner has transformed their economic relationship. They argue that China's high demand for Brazilian raw materials, particularly soybeans, iron ore, and oil, has significantly benefited Brazil's export-oriented economy. However, the authors also caution that this dependence on commodities makes Brazil vulnerable to fluctuations in Chinese demand.

Da Silva Medina & Pokorny (2022) delve into the diversification of bilateral trade, noting the gradual shift from primarily commodities to value-added products. They assert that while China's growing middle class provides new opportunities for Brazilian exporters in sectors like agribusiness and food processing, Brazil still faces the challenge of increasing its competitiveness in higher-value manufacturing sectors to fully benefit from this relationship.

Zhang & Chen (2021) explore the political aspects of Sino-Brazilian trade relations, particularly how both nations leverage the BRICS platform to advocate for fairer global trade rules. Their research indicates that BRICS collaboration has facilitated dialogue and understanding between the two nations, leading to smoother negotiations on bilateral agreements and reducing trade barriers. However, they also highlight that China's pursuit of strategic investments in Brazilian infrastructure and energy sectors can create tensions due to concerns about sovereignty and competition.

In addition, Jenne (2021) analyze the broader implications of Sino-Brazilian trade for regional integration and South-South cooperation. She emphasizes that China's investments in Brazilian infrastructure and manufacturing have helped stimulate economic growth and regional development in Latin America, promoting greater integration through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative.

Scholars like Lugo-Ocando (2020) discuss South-South cooperation as a counter-narrative to the historical dominance of North-South aid structures. He argues that the principles of mutual respect, solidarity, and shared development underpin these partnerships, differentiating them from traditional aid frameworks. South-South cooperation is seen as a way for developing countries to collectively negotiate for fairer terms in global trade, finance, and governance.

In the context of strategic partnerships, Keukeleire & Hooijmaaijers (2014) explore the role of regional organizations and alliances like BRICS in promoting development objectives. They argue that these partnerships enable emerging economies to combine their strengths and promote common agendas, such as climate change adaptation,



poverty reduction, and technological transfer. BRICS, in particular, serves as an influential platform where members align their diplomatic strategies to shape global policy reforms.

Wolfe (2010) offers an analysis of how strategic partnerships foster resilience among emerging economies. He examines the Contingent Reserve Arrangement and the New Development Bank, noting that these financial tools provide crucial support during economic downturns. Such mechanisms have become pillars of economic cooperation within BRICS, enabling member countries to pursue long-term infrastructural and technological projects that underpin growth.

Furthermore, De Moortel & Crispeels (2018) explores how strategic partnerships facilitate technology transfer and innovation. He emphasizes that knowledge-sharing in renewable energy, agriculture, and digital innovation accelerates development while reducing dependence on Western technologies.

5. Key Areas of Sino-Brazilian Cooperation within BRICS

5.1. Bilateral Trade Agreements

China and Brazil have developed an increasingly robust trade relationship, particularly since the early 21st century (Siddiqui, 2016). Their partnership is cemented through several bilateral trade agreements that focus on reducing trade barriers and promoting economic cooperation. The two countries are members of the BRICS alliance, which has become a significant platform for advancing their trade interests. In addition to their cooperation within BRICS, they have signed agreements that span various sectors. A notable example is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Investment and Trade Promotion signed in 2004, which paved the way for greater investment and economic collaboration (Eberling, 2017). The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, formalized in 2012, strengthened economic ties and established frameworks for dialogue on energy, agriculture, infrastructure, and financial services. As a result of these agreements, China has emerged as Brazil's largest trading partner, surpassing the United States in 2009 (Cardoso, 2013).

The BRICS framework has played a pivotal role in accelerating Sino-Brazilian trade growth and diversification. China imports a substantial volume of commodities from Brazil, primarily soybeans, iron ore, and crude oil (Casanova, Xia & Ferreira, 2016). These imports fulfill China's domestic demand for food security and raw materials to sustain its industrial growth. Brazil, in turn, imports a significant amount of Chinese machinery, electronics, and manufactured goods, which bolster its manufacturing capabilities (Eichengreen & Tong, 2006).

Beyond the traditional commodity sectors, both countries have made strides in diversifying their trade portfolios. China has shown growing interest in Brazilian agricultural products, such as beef and poultry, while Brazilian companies have tapped into China's consumer electronics and automotive markets (Blanchard, 2019). Additionally, their partnership within BRICS has enabled the New Development Bank to



fund infrastructure projects in Brazil, promoting broader economic growth and attracting Chinese investments in energy, mining, and logistics (Yarygina & Krylova, 2023).

Despite the remarkable growth in bilateral trade, several challenges and opportunities persist in further strengthening Sino-Brazilian economic relations. One significant challenge is Brazil's heavy dependence on commodity exports to China, which makes the country vulnerable to fluctuations in global demand and prices. Such reliance can adversely affect Brazil's economy during downturns or shifts in Chinese consumption patterns. Moreover, concerns exist about Brazil's trade deficit in manufactured goods with China, given that many Brazilian industries struggle to compete with lower-priced Chinese products (Wise, 2016).

Another challenge lies in regulatory barriers and differing standards between the two nations. Brazilian exporters often face hurdles complying with Chinese import regulations, while Chinese investors encounter bureaucratic delays in securing approvals for their projects in Brazil (Méndez & Turzi, 2020). Furthermore, geopolitical tensions and the diversification of supply chains could lead to protectionist policies that hinder free trade.

Despite these challenges, significant opportunities for expanding and diversifying bilateral trade relations exist. Both nations have the potential to collaborate further in areas like renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and technological innovation. Brazil's vast renewable energy resources and China's expertise in solar and wind technology provide a perfect foundation for strategic partnerships in clean energy. Likewise, opportunities in agribusiness can be further explored as China seeks sustainable sources of food and Brazil seeks to add value to its agricultural products (Oliveira & Schneider, 2016).

Moreover, joint initiatives to improve transport and logistics infrastructure can enhance trade efficiency between the two economies, and cooperation within BRICS can help address the financing gaps for such projects. Through consistent dialogue and mutual trust, China and Brazil can continue to unlock the untapped potential of their strategic economic partnership while ensuring sustainable growth for both economies (Scoones et. al., 2016).

5.2. Cultural Exchanges

China and Brazil have recognized the value of cultural exchanges in deepening their diplomatic relationship, and various initiatives have been implemented to foster mutual understanding. These efforts aim to promote a rich exchange of values, traditions, and artistic expression that goes beyond the economic sphere. One prominent initiative is the establishment of Confucius Institutes across Brazil, which provide a platform for Brazilian students to learn the Chinese language and gain insight into Chinese culture and history (Li & Xiaohong, 2016). This has helped raise awareness and appreciation of Chinese customs and philosophies, and the programs also encourage academic exchanges, enabling Brazilian students and researchers to study in China.



Brazil, in turn, has promoted its vibrant cultural heritage through events like the Brazilian Carnival and film festivals hosted in Beijing and Shanghai. Brazilian embassies and consulates often organize art exhibitions, music performances, and food festivals to showcase the country's multicultural identity. Additionally, tourism and travel exchanges have grown significantly, facilitated by visa waivers and streamlined travel policies between the two nations. Cultural understanding has also been enhanced through collaboration in sports, as seen in the popularity of Brazilian football in China and the exchange programs set up during events like the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics (Júnior & Rodrigues, 2023).

Furthermore, academic institutions and think tanks from both countries have been actively fostering collaboration through joint research projects, seminars, and conferences focused on topics ranging from history and anthropology to technology and economics (Lugo-Ocando, 2020). Such partnerships build an intellectual bridge that deepens mutual understanding.

These cultural exchanges have profoundly influenced diplomatic relations between China and Brazil by creating a foundation of mutual respect and trust. Through the Confucius Institutes and language exchange programs, Brazilians have gained a better understanding of China's social norms and historical context, dispelling myths and misconceptions that often arise due to geographic and linguistic barriers. This has contributed to a more positive perception of China in Brazil, easing diplomatic dialogues and enhancing cooperation across various sectors (Li & Xiaohong, 2016).

Similarly, China's growing appreciation for Brazilian culture has strengthened the countries' diplomatic ties. Events like Brazilian Carnival in China and Brazilian-themed festivals have sparked interest among Chinese citizens in Brazilian arts, music, and sports (Spooner, 2016). This cultural admiration has translated into improved people-to-people connections and a welcoming environment for Brazilian businesses seeking to expand into the Chinese market.

These exchanges have also helped both nations identify common values and goals. For instance, their shared passion for sports, particularly football, has paved the way for cooperation in youth development programs, while their academic collaborations have fostered policy dialogues on sustainable development and poverty reduction. Joint research initiatives have also led to innovative solutions that align with each country's aspirations (Jenne, 2021).

Moreover, cultural understanding has proven instrumental in reducing diplomatic tensions and preventing miscommunications, especially during negotiations on sensitive issues like trade barriers and foreign investment policies. By highlighting shared values and fostering goodwill, these exchanges have helped both nations focus on collaborative opportunities rather than areas of disagreement (Méndez & Turzi, 2020).

5.3. Political Collaboration

Within the BRICS framework, China and Brazil have found considerable alignment in their political agendas and policies, advocating for a multipolar world order that emphasizes



fairness and inclusivity. Both nations share a common understanding of the importance of reforming international institutions to better reflect the interests and aspirations of developing countries. They argue that the existing frameworks, largely dominated by Western powers, no longer represent the current geopolitical landscape (Flint & Xiaotong, 2019).

China and Brazil have consistently advocated for reforms in international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, calling for a more equitable distribution of voting rights. They emphasize the need to increase the representation of emerging economies to ensure that global economic governance aligns with contemporary realities. In this regard, they actively collaborate on economic strategies that counterbalance Western dominance, such as developing the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement to provide alternative sources of financing for developing nations (Biziwick, Cattaneo & Fryer, 2015).

On the political front, both countries call for greater inclusivity in the United Nations Security Council, where Brazil aspires to obtain permanent membership. China, with its significant diplomatic influence, supports Brazil's candidacy as part of its vision for a more representative and balanced Security Council (Garcia & Coelho, 2018). Furthermore, the BRICS nations collectively advocate for climate change mitigation, peace, and sustainable development, emphasizing the need for greater cooperation among emerging economies (Kıprızlı & Köstem, 2022).

Beyond their collaboration within BRICS, China and Brazil have pursued joint diplomatic efforts on various regional and global platforms. In Latin America, China has steadily expanded its diplomatic footprint, with Brazil serving as a gateway for these efforts. Both nations work together to advance South-South cooperation by fostering economic partnerships with other Latin American countries. This includes investments in infrastructure projects, renewable energy, and technology transfer that contribute to regional integration and sustainable development (Wang et al., 2020).

China has deepened its relationship with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) through regular ministerial meetings and policy dialogues, a move that aligns with Brazil's broader foreign policy interests in the region (De Souza & Cavalcante, 2017). As a result, Brazil and China have been instrumental in shaping regional economic policies that promote infrastructure connectivity and sustainable growth.

On global platforms like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, the two nations present a united front in advocating for developing economies. They are vocal proponents of trade liberalization that addresses imbalances, particularly those impacting agricultural exports. China has often supported Brazil in its efforts to challenge unfair trade practices, while Brazil aligns with China's pursuit of economic openness and technological innovation (Casanova, Xia & Ferreira, 2016).

In Africa, both nations share a common interest in sustainable development. Their joint diplomatic engagements aim to address critical challenges such as food security, poverty alleviation, and health. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) includes Brazil as a cooperative partner, offering opportunities for collaboration in energy, transportation,



and manufacturing that benefit multiple regions (Montoya, Delgado & Kaltenecker, 2019).

6. Impact on Regional Development and Strategic Partnerships

6.1. Technology Transfer

The collaborative efforts between China and Brazil in technology transfer and research and development (R&D) are crucial elements of their strategic partnership. Both nations recognize that technological innovation is a driving force behind economic growth and sustainable development. They have actively pursued joint projects that leverage their respective strengths to foster innovation in various sectors (Casanova, Xia & Ferreira, 2016).

A significant manifestation of this collaboration is the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS) program, a landmark initiative that began in 1988 and has launched multiple remote sensing satellites to monitor Earth's resources (Furtado & Filho, 2003). By sharing satellite imagery, the program provides both nations with valuable data on agriculture, forestry, water resources, and disaster management. This data-sharing initiative enhances their technological capacities and enables them to better manage environmental and developmental challenges.

Furthermore, both nations have established research partnerships between universities, research institutes, and private enterprises. The Sino-Brazilian Joint Laboratory for High-Speed Rail Technology is one such partnership that seeks to exchange expertise in high-speed rail development (Ueta, Alencastro & Pinheiro-Machado, 2023). This project aims to modernize Brazil's rail network, reduce logistics costs, and promote sustainable transportation solutions. In the energy sector, Chinese companies have been actively involved in helping Brazil harness its immense renewable energy potential, particularly in hydropower, wind, and solar energy (Hochstetler & Kostka, 2015). Collaborative research in biotechnology and digital technology has also been pursued to bolster agricultural productivity and industrial automation (Au & Da Silva, 2021).

These technology transfer initiatives present immense potential for improving the technological competitiveness of both China and Brazil. For Brazil, the transfer of Chinese expertise in infrastructure development, high-speed rail, and renewable energy can significantly enhance its technological capabilities (Au & Da Silva, 2021). This would modernize Brazil's transportation and energy infrastructure and improve logistics, productivity, and access to international markets.

In return, China benefits from Brazil's expertise in agricultural technology, which plays a critical role in ensuring food security. Brazil's advancements in developing genetically modified crops and improving agricultural practices provide valuable knowledge that can enhance China's food production (Casanova, Xia & Ferreira, 2016). By incorporating Brazilian agricultural technologies, China can ensure a stable and sustainable food supply to meet its growing domestic demands.



Moreover, joint research initiatives lay the foundation for technological breakthroughs that can improve global competitiveness. The synergy between China's advanced manufacturing and digital infrastructure and Brazil's innovative agricultural and energy solutions can create new growth opportunities in various high-tech sectors. As both countries continue to prioritize digital transformation, the collaboration between their tech industries can open new markets for high-value products and services, from AI and data analytics to smart agriculture and green energy (Chang, Chen & Xiong, 2018).

6.2. Sustainable Growth Initiatives

China and Brazil have recognized renewable energy as a cornerstone of sustainable growth, and their collaboration in this sector has yielded significant progress and future potential. Brazil's extensive natural resources offer abundant opportunities for renewable energy production, especially in hydropower, wind, and solar energy. China, a global leader in renewable energy technology, has provided technical expertise, investment, and equipment to help Brazil unlock its renewable energy potential (Rizzi, van Eck & Frey, 2014).

In hydropower, China has made notable investments in Brazilian projects, sharing its expertise in constructing and managing dams. State-owned companies like China Three Gorges Corporation have acquired stakes in Brazilian hydropower plants, enhancing Brazil's energy grid stability and efficiency. Wind energy is another area where their collaboration is evident. Chinese firms like Goldwind have partnered with Brazilian counterparts to establish wind farms in resource-rich regions, supplying advanced turbines and technology to increase Brazil's clean energy capacity (Rubio & Jáuregui, 2022).

Solar energy also holds promising prospects due to Brazil's favorable climate and expansive land area. The two countries have worked on knowledge transfer and capacity building in photovoltaic (PV) technology (De Souza & Cavalcante, 2017). China's expertise in mass-producing solar panels and Brazil's commitment to expanding its solar infrastructure could accelerate renewable energy adoption.

Agricultural technology forms another critical aspect of the sustainable growth initiatives between China and Brazil. Brazil is a global agricultural powerhouse, providing substantial volumes of soybeans, beef, poultry, and other products to China, which has rapidly expanded its imports to meet growing domestic demand (Xu et. al., 2016).

China has sought to learn from Brazil's advancements in agricultural technology, particularly in sustainable farming practices and biotechnology. This collaboration has led to projects focused on improving crop yields and disease resistance through genetic modification. Brazilian research institutions have shared techniques for reducing deforestation and soil degradation while maximizing productivity, vital in ensuring sustainable agricultural growth (Scoones et. al., 2016).

In return, Chinese companies have shared expertise in mechanization and irrigation technologies, helping Brazilian farmers increase their efficiency and reduce water consumption (Xu et al., 2016). By jointly investing in research and development, both



countries are working to diversify crop production, improve food security, and establish resilient supply chains less affected by climate variability and market disruptions.

Moreover, initiatives such as the China-Brazil Agricultural Technology Demonstration Park aim to provide practical, field-based solutions to farmers by demonstrating best practices and innovative technologies (Scoones et al., 2016). This cooperation not only improves agricultural sustainability but also contributes to rural development by providing technical training and creating employment opportunities.

6.3. Regional Development

The strengthening of Sino-Brazilian relations through BRICS has significant socio-economic implications for both Latin America and Asia. Brazil and China serve as gateways for regional development, using their extensive networks to promote growth, investment, and cooperation across continents (Wise, 2016).

In Latin America, Brazil is a dominant economic force, and its partnership with China opens new avenues for growth across the region. China's increasing investment in infrastructure, manufacturing, and resource extraction not only enhances Brazil's economic standing but also generates spillover benefits for neighboring countries. Investments in road, rail, and port infrastructure make Latin American markets more accessible to Asia, boosting trade and connectivity. Additionally, Chinese companies' involvement in developing industrial and logistical hubs in Brazil provides employment opportunities and knowledge transfer, stimulating local economies (Casanova, Xia & Ferreira, 2016).

Meanwhile, China's collaboration with Brazil in the energy sector provides more stable and diversified energy supplies, benefiting Brazil and surrounding nations. Access to renewable energy technologies, like solar and wind, allows Latin American countries to meet their rising energy demands while reducing carbon emissions (Méndez & Turzi, 2020).

In Asia, China's close ties with Brazil create an opportunity to strengthen relationships with Latin America's broader economic community. Asian companies benefit from Brazil's large consumer base and resource-rich markets through favorable trade deals negotiated under the BRICS umbrella (Christensen, 2015). Furthermore, the diplomatic alignment between China and Brazil establishes a foundation for cross-continental cooperation, providing Asian nations with a framework for securing raw materials and energy supplies.

The BRICS alliance plays a pivotal role in addressing regional inequalities by fostering inclusive development through its shared initiatives. The New Development Bank (NDB), established by BRICS nations, has provided financing for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in all member states, including Brazil (Suchodolski & Demeulemeester, 2018). In Latin America, NDB-funded projects prioritize access to clean water, sanitation, transportation, and energy infrastructure, reducing disparities between rural and urban regions.



Moreover, BRICS nations emphasize South-South cooperation, particularly in capacity building, technology transfer, and education. Their joint efforts support rural development programs that empower marginalized communities through technical training and microfinance opportunities. For instance, partnerships between Chinese and Brazilian universities facilitate academic exchanges that produce innovative solutions for poverty alleviation and agricultural productivity (Montoya, Delgado & Kaltenecker, 2019).

In Asia, China's participation in BRICS has strengthened regional initiatives by enhancing infrastructure development across the continent. The BRICS-led Contingent Reserve Arrangement provides financial safety nets to member countries facing liquidity crises, ensuring stability in volatile economic times (Katada, Roberts & Armijo, 2017). Such mechanisms empower developing nations to maintain social programs that uplift impoverished regions, ultimately narrowing regional disparities.

7. Global Geopolitics and South-South Cooperation

The world is shifting from a unipolar system dominated by the United States to a multipolar order characterized by multiple centers of power. This transformation is largely driven by the economic rise of emerging markets, particularly China and India. Latin America, with its rich resources and growing economies, has also become a key player in global geopolitics. Alliances like BRICS have underscored this shift by providing a platform for emerging economies to assert their influence. BRICS, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, collectively represents a substantial portion of the world's population and economic output (Öniş & Kutlay, 2020).

China, a leading advocate for this multipolar order, has expanded its global influence through infrastructure investments, trade agreements, and diplomatic engagements. Its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) extends into Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, reflecting China's strategic ambitions to reshape global commerce (Zreik, 2021). Simultaneously, Brazil seeks to solidify its leadership in South America, leveraging its economic strength, resource wealth, and strategic location.

Together, China and Brazil advocate for reforming international institutions to better represent the current balance of global power. They emphasize inclusivity and the equitable representation of developing economies, challenging the dominance of Western-led structures like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Batista Jr, 2021). BRICS, in this context, serves as a key platform for these efforts, with both nations pushing for reforms that give emerging economies a stronger voice in global governance.

BRICS has made significant strides in fostering South-South cooperation, offering an alternative to traditional Western-led models of development. This includes the New Development Bank (NDB), which funds sustainable development projects that bypass traditional lenders, and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, which provides financial safety nets for member states (Qobo & Soko, 2015). These mechanisms are instrumental in promoting inclusive growth and supporting long-term development strategies.



In addition to economic goals, BRICS has played a critical role in diplomatic affairs. The bloc regularly consults on foreign policy issues, presenting a unified stance on climate change, cybersecurity, and trade liberalization. Joint military exercises, though limited in scope, signal the willingness of BRICS nations to protect their shared interests (Bernal-Meza, 2022). Sino-Brazilian cooperation, particularly, has become a driving force for South-South alliances, serving as a model for how emerging economies can collaborate on shared development goals (Blanchard, 2019).

China's investments in Brazil have extended beyond bilateral relations into Latin America, where infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, and ports enhance regional connectivity. This infrastructure is vital for efficiently transporting commodities, thus facilitating trade between Brazil and China and other Latin American countries. As Brazil evolves into a logistical hub, neighboring nations gain better access to Asian markets (Casanova, Xia & Ferreira, 2016).

Moreover, the Sino-Brazilian partnership emphasizes technology transfer initiatives that strengthen the agricultural, energy, and manufacturing sectors. Brazil's expertise in agriculture, coupled with China's capabilities in manufacturing and digital infrastructure, creates a powerful synergy that fosters productivity across regions (Xu et al., 2016). Renewable energy collaboration is also a cornerstone of sustainable growth initiatives between the two nations, with China investing in Brazil's hydropower, wind, and solar projects, while Brazil shares its agricultural technologies to ensure food security and environmental sustainability (Rizzi, van Eck & Frey, 2014).

Beyond bilateral engagements, China and Brazil champion South-South cooperation within multilateral organizations like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Their joint efforts focus on addressing poverty alleviation, fair trade, and environmental sustainability. For instance, both nations have advocated for agricultural subsidies that protect the livelihoods of small-scale farmers in developing regions (Scoones et al., 2016).

8. Conclusion

This paper has explored the evolving relationship between China and Brazil within the BRICS framework and how it serves as a strategic platform for strengthening their bilateral relations. Through an examination of bilateral trade agreements, cultural exchanges, and political collaborations, it is evident that both nations have significantly benefited from their partnership. This collaboration has not only advanced mutual development but has also bolstered broader South-South cooperation, providing a template for emerging economies to align their interests.

Their shared investments in renewable energy, agricultural technology, and digital innovation underscore the potential for improving technological competitiveness and achieving sustainable growth. By leveraging each other's strengths, China and Brazil can address key challenges, such as diversifying energy sources and enhancing food security, while contributing to global initiatives on climate change and digital transformation.



Furthermore, this partnership highlights the strategic importance of BRICS in shaping the emerging multipolar world order. BRICS provides an alternative model of inclusive global governance, ensuring that the voices of developing nations are heard in international institutions. Sino-Brazilian cooperation exemplifies how emerging economies can challenge traditional power structures and foster equitable growth.

Looking ahead, it is essential for China and Brazil to continue deepening their partnership by promoting technology transfer, aligning policy priorities, and increasing collaboration in key sectors. Addressing challenges such as trade imbalances and environmental impacts, while fostering public-private partnerships, will be crucial to ensuring the long-term success of this relationship. By committing to these principles, Sino-Brazilian relations can serve as a global example of cooperative progress and set the stage for continued leadership within the BRICS alliance in promoting sustainable development and a multipolar world order.

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BRAZILIAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER “LULA 3”: THE REFORM OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AS AN EXTENSION OF DOMESTIC POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL (RE)ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

After two consecutive and mostly successful administrations in the 2000s, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva made a comeback and became Brazil’s President in 2023. Both the domestic and the international landscapes have considerably changed since he left power back then, and new challenges have arisen for his third term. However, one historical, long-term goal has been reframed again by the country as one of its most pressing matters: the reform of global governance. Hence, this paper seeks to understand the reasons behind the (re)prioritisation of the reform of global governance in Brazil’s foreign policy during the first year of “Lula 3”. Based on qualitative research, it deals with the foundations and recent developments of Brazilian foreign policy, particularly when it comes to Brazil’s relations with China and its considerations on the Global South, as well as the dynamics between Lula’s presidential diplomacy and the institutional role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also known as Itamaraty. Furthermore, it addresses debates involving Foreign Policy Analysis, Global Governance, and the interactions between domestic and international politics. This article concludes by identifying that Brazil has prioritised the reform of global governance as a way to align its international aspirations with its domestic needs.

Keywords

Brazilian Foreign Policy; Brazil’s Domestic Politics; Foreign Policy Analysis; Reform of Global Governance; China and the Global South.

Resumo

Após dois governos consecutivos e bem-sucedidos na década de 2000, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva retornou ao cargo de Presidente do Brasil em 2023. Os cenários tanto interno quanto externo mudaram consideravelmente desde que Lula deixou o poder da última vez, e novos desafios mostram-se prementes para o seu terceiro mandato. Contudo, um objetivo histórico e de longo prazo foi reenquadrado novamente pelo país como uma questão de alta relevância: a reforma da governança global. Dessa forma, este artigo visa a compreender as razões por trás da (re)priorização da reforma da governança global na política externa do Brasil durante o primeiro ano do “Lula 3”. Baseado numa investigação qualitativa, ele lida com as bases e



os recentes desenvolvimentos da política externa brasileira, particularmente no que concerne às relações do Brasil com a China e suas considerações acerca do Sul Global, bem como com as dinâmicas entre a diplomacia presidencial do Lula e o papel institucional do Ministério das Relações Exteriores, também conhecido como Itamaraty. Ademais, ele trata dos debates que envolvem Análise de Política Externa, Governança Global e as intersecções entre política interna e externa. Este artigo chega a sua conclusão ao identificar que o Brasil priorizou a reforma da governança global como uma maneira de alinhar suas aspirações internacionais com suas necessidades domésticas.

Palavras-chave

Política Externa Brasileira; Política Interna do Brasil; Análise de Política Externa; Reforma da Governança Global; China e Sul Global.

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Introduction

In January 2023, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva started his third term as President of Brazil. Having captained the country from 2003 to 2010, he left an important legacy in foreign affairs, not only due to his policies to expand the number of Brazilian diplomats and embassies around the world, but also because of the active and leading role the nation aimed to adopt in the international stage on a wide range of matters, from socioenvironmental to security. Indeed, his personal interest in the area and the resulting presidential diplomacy he conducted, alongside the existence of a favourable political environment and the availability of a capable body of foreign policymakers and decision-takers alongside him, in particular, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also known as Itamaraty, turned Brazil into a significant player on the global stage.

In March 2009, during Lula's visit to the United States, Barack Obama (2009) stated that he had been "a great admirer of Brazil and a great admirer of the progressive, forward-looking leadership that President Lula has shown throughout Latin America and throughout the world. We have a very strong friendship between the two countries". The subprime mortgage crisis was being widely felt, especially by developed nations, and Global South countries were on a rise in the international scene. A month later, at the G20 Summit in London, Obama greeted Lula, saying "that's my man right there [...] The most popular politician on Earth" (Newsweek, 2009). Meanwhile, in that same year, China became Brazil's main trade partner for the first time in history, and both countries sought to further boost their strategic partnership, established in 1993 — the very first promoted by the Asian nation in the globe. Notably, in a joint communique issued during Lula's visit in Beijing, the two sides agreed to "enhance coordination with other developing countries, to increase the participation and voices of developing countries in international affairs" (Global Times, 2009).

Fast forward 15 years, and relations between Brazil and the United States — and, to a certain extent, European nations — though stable, have more frictions, as domestic politics in a number of these countries has become more challenging, and the



international society faces relevant adversities. Additionally, the Brazilian position on certain matters is seen as less aligned with traditional partners from the West, and more with other Global South nations, in particular, China. Stuenkel (2023) even affirmed that "Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's honeymoon with the West ended remarkably quickly", after his win over Jair Bolsonaro had been met with relief. Notwithstanding, with the exception of the years under Bolsonaro, Brazilian foreign policy has actually remained rather solid in recent decades, based on a pragmatic set of principles and goals. Possibly, surprises coming from American and European parties involving Lula's current and complex take on foreign policy may derive much more from a lack of attention or thorough understanding about Brazil's goals and vision for international relations than from an effective course correction or drastic change in policymaking.

This is very much clear when looking at the country's historical objective of reforming global governance. In multiple ways, from seeking a permanent seat in the United Nations (UN) Security Council to rebalancing the power structures in multilateral institutions and defending the building of a multipolar world, Brazil has been implementing efforts in this regard since the previous century, though with varying levels of attention and effort (Steenhagen, 2023). The latest example is that the country has stipulated the reform of global governance as one of the three priority axes — figuring alongside the formation of a global alliance against hunger and poverty, and the combat against climate change — of its first G20 presidency under its new format, bringing the topic as a central one in the recent meetings of the grouping to project the nation as one of the leaders of the Global South (Soares, 2024).

In this context, the paper will focus on the following research question: Why has the reform of global governance been (re)prioritised in Brazil's foreign policy during the first year of "Lula 3"? The main hypothesis is that this new wave of strong support to advance on this broad goal is likely the result of two main factors: At the international level, the rise of China and the strengthening of the Sino-Brazilian partnership can favour Brazil's historical foreign policy interests, reinforcing the country's image as one of the go-to references for the Global South; and, at the State level, foreign policy is now considered to have the unusual capacity to influence sociopolitical outcomes and impact domestic politics, contributing to further enhance or undermine the image of Lula before the population and part of the electorate.

In order to deal with the topic at hand, it is pondered that a qualitative approach best fits the research pursued here. Therefore, it will be primarily based on published materials, such as academic articles and books, official government documents, and available interviews and speeches from public authorities. Moreover, although the research will be qualitative-based, some quantitative sources will also be used, such as public opinion surveys. The study carried out is relevant for multiple reasons, and it is worth highlighting two of them: The importance to better examine interactions between domestic and international politics, and the need to better understand Brazilian foreign policy.



First, as domestic politics has become more gruelling in politically divided societies such as Brazil, the realm of international relations gained a prominent place in the first year of Lula's third run as President, with foreign affairs serving as a potential tool to increase or at least maintain his popularity and win over a slice of centrist citizens. In this sense, the G20 and the themes prioritised in it could play a crucial role under the Brazilian presidency, as it is arguably one of the most important international forums nowadays, a place where countries with largely different world views can still have productive exchanges and reach agreements without all the weight of having to carry out more rigid positions in organs like the UN Security Council. Moreover, the G20 includes a wide number of countries, from the BRICS to the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU), Japan, and Mexico. All of the nations involved represent approximately 85% of the global economy and two thirds of the world population, as well as more than 75% of international trade.

Second, Brazil is an indispensable member of the international society and the Global South, which has increasingly demanded more participation and decision-making power in global affairs. The South American nation is also one of the 10 main economies of the world, with a population of over 200 million people. Despite its importance and the need to further comprehend its foreign policy, misunderstandings and gaps of knowledge about it remain, given the prevalence of debates coming from Western great powers.

With that said, this paper will be divided into four main sections, in addition to this introduction. First, it will provide a theoretical discussion on foreign policy analysis and global governance, highlighting the relevance of utilising a two-level analysis to deal with increasingly complex scenarios and advancing the framework of Role Theory. Second, it will investigate the impacts of domestic politics on Brazil's foreign policymaking and identify the resulting dynamics between Itamaraty and Lula during the first year of his current presidential term. Third, it will examine the renewed push for the reform of global governance in light of the "Brazil is back" slogan and the influential synergies between Brazil and China in the international stage. Fourth, it will provide concluding remarks.

Intersections between Foreign Policy and Global Governance: The Two-Level Analysis and Role Theory

Foreign Policy Analysis has been gaining an increasing attention as a sub-field of International Relations, as the number of high-quality publications on the discipline throughout the last few years has maintained a steady growth (Alden & Aran, 2017; Ostermann & Mello, 2022; Thies, 2018). It has its origins linked to the 1950s, when foreign policy began to be conceptualised as a "complex, multilayered process, consisting of the objectives that governments pursue in their relations with other governments and their choice of means to attain these objectives" (Kubáľková, 2001, p. 17).

Traditionally, the concept of foreign policy has also been approached either as an abstract expression of relations between political entities, seeking to understand how organised groups interrelate, or as a way to differentiate the political self from the other, identifying two distinct realms, the "inside" and the "outside", the State and the interstate system



(Leira, 2019). However, more recently, new trends have appeared, historicising it as a practice concept and associating it with institutions, ideas, politics, and policies, especially due to the pluralisation of actors in the foreign policymaking process and the existing interconnections between domestic and foreign affairs (Leira, 2019).

Just like diplomacy, or maybe even more, foreign policymaking is often entangled with domestic politics, with groups pursuing their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies, and the national government seeking to maximise their ability to satisfy domestic pressures while minimising the adverse consequences of foreign developments (Putnam, 1988). In this two-level game, the national political leader, the main actors or interest groups, and the key decision-makers, who strive to reconcile domestic and international imperatives simultaneously, are essential to the understanding of the dynamics at play (Putnam, 1988). Since decision-making factors and conceptions of agency continue to be underdeveloped in contemporary theories of international relations (Kaarbo, 2015), under which global governance studies tend to situate themselves, this paper fills a gap between Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations investigations, discussing how both domestic and systemic factors can shape foreign policies (Putnam, 1988; Milner, 1997).

Indeed, "foreign policy analysts, in a conscious departure from systemic theories of world politics, have always highlighted the considerable variation in national foreign policies and pointed at the relevance of domestic-level variables for explaining this behaviour", and current challenges in a wide number of areas, from security to climate change, and at all levels, have brought an unprecedented contestation of foreign policymaking (Ostermann & Mello, 2022, p. 3). In this sense, several dimensions of foreign policy analysis have been expanded and further explored, such as the role of leaders, their reputations and personal characteristics, the rise of populist parties and their impact on foreign policy, the influence of civil society, social media, and technological innovation, and the role of emotions for foreign policymaking (Ostermann & Mello, 2022).

While the international component is, naturally, omnipresent in foreign policy studies, domestic politics are considered simultaneously everywhere and nowhere in academic investigations (Kaarbo, 2015). Meanwhile, foreign policy analyses associated with global governance issues, underdeveloped as they are, have been appearing as a clear emerging trend (Mendez, 2017). In this regard, according to Mendez (2017), Foreign Policy Analysis is the best situated discipline and social scientific practice to research global governance to the requisite depth, including when it comes to issues involving the (re)shaping of the international architecture and the risks posed by elitism, especially from Western elites.

Keohane (2009, p. 363) has already recognised that the field of International Politics "is heavily American and to some extent European [...] As the economic and political centres of gravity shift away from Europe and the United States [...] this is bound to change. Political science will become a global discipline". Truly, "Western ideologies still dominate intellectual and academic frameworks. All of the modern ideologies are products of the West" (Zhang, Gu & Chen, 2015, p. 7). Furthermore, Acharya & Buzan (2007, p. 288) affirm that almost all IR theory "is produced by and for the West, and rests on an



assumption that Western history is world history [...] the almost exclusively Western sources of international relations theory conspicuously fail to correspond to the now global distribution of its subjects”.

Similarly, despite becoming more pluralist in recent years, Foreign Policy Analysis still has its strongest institutional footing in the United States, and most empirical research usually focuses on this country (Ostermann & Mello, 2022). There is an urgent need to diversify such studies, and this is an effort promoted by this paper, which brings Brazilian foreign policy to the forefront. After all, Global South countries have, since the 2000s, questioned the absolute dominance of Western powers on international law and foreign affairs as a whole, highlighting the need to further democratise the international system and to consider more complex scenarios of global governance than before. Again, as Mendez (2017) indicated, combining Foreign Policy Analysis and Global Governance approaches can give good results to understand the transformations occurring in national and international scenarios.

Meanwhile, the concept of global governance only gained prominence after the Cold War, when a new wave of globalisation took place, economic interdependence was clearly increasing, the international agenda was considerably expanded beyond security affairs, and a plurality of non-State actors began having a stronger voice around the globe. Global governance encompasses the handling of transnational or international challenges, such as development, security, climate change, and poverty, by a plurality of actors through collaborative ways. In addition, it can be defined as a cooperative problem-solving arrangement that includes – but not necessarily limits itself to – the United Nations system, serving to manage global problems and help actors, both State and non-State, to pursue global objectives through concerted efforts (Thakur & Weiss, 2004; Ortega, 2007). Therefore, it is closely connected to foreign policy goals and debates, and a major concern arising from these studies has been the push for the reform of global governance, promoted by developing nations.

Under this scene, one of the risks at the system level, as Stuenkel (2016) elucidates, involves the rise of parallel or complementary structures of global governance by the Global South, particularly China, and the consequent reduction of the universal claim of Western-led institutions. In this sense, while “policymakers in Beijing (and Delhi & Brasília) can be expected to continue to invest in Western-dominated structures and push for their reform [...] they quietly expand networks in many different areas, ready to engage those who feel today’s institutions fail to satisfy their needs” (Stuenkel, 2016, p. 120).

In the case of Brazil under “Lula 3”, a relevant factor to be taken into consideration is the role of the leader (Byman & Pollack, 2001; Peveri, 2022) in the shaping of the country’s foreign policy and global governance mechanisms or institutions, particularly in light of the presidential diplomacy conducted by him and his perception that “Brazil is back” to its prestigious place in the international stage after the Bolsonaro administration (Hirst, 2023; Fonseca, 2017; Santos, 2021). Another factor is the dynamics between foreign policy and domestic politics, as the latter has had an increasing relevance in the former, and vice-versa.



Indeed, although international debates might appear too far from people's realities, individuals can and should be considered as actors in the international society, and national citizens, either individually or collectively, have played substantial roles in the global stage in a wide number of areas. In truth, people end up getting involved with global issues, in particular, when they care about the subject at home too. Since, domestically, Lula and Bolsonaro are the main representatives of the electoral panorama in Brazil, and they profoundly diverge in terms of foreign policy and international engagement, foreign policy and global governance matters have entered the realm of domestic politics and elections in a clearer way than before.

To guide such examination, this paper utilises Role Theory, which, as the name suggests, is a theoretical framework devoted to the study of behaviour using the notion of role. According to it, States can be presented as playing a variety of roles, and diverse factors, such as domestic needs and demands, critical events or trends in the external environment, and the projections of other governments, shape foreign policy orientations, create role perceptions, and develop expectations for States to carry out certain role performances (Sekhri, 2009).

This framework is especially appealing to the study of Global South nations' foreign policies, because they attempt to play different roles both regionally and globally, often experiencing role conflict as a consequence of their multi-dimensional forms of dependency on Western great powers and of bilateral or multilateral relations between themselves (Sekhri, 2009). In the case of Brazil, Sekhri (2009, p. 8) argues that the country has emerged as a significant political and economic power in Latin America and a key player in global affairs, playing prominent roles in them, "including the role of 'Leader' in Latin America and rest of the Third World, and the role of 'Mediator' in the North-South and South-South frameworks".

Impacts of Domestic Politics on Brazilian Foreign Policymaking under "Lula 3"

Bringing Role Theory to the national level, Wehner & Thies (2021, p. 1425) argue that "leaders are the backbone of foreign policy decision-making who make choices about continuing existing roles, modifying such roles, or choosing new roles to play with significant others in the international system". Moreover, they note that "roles are the representations of state identity, interests, and behaviour in foreign policy, while leaders are the key agents to enact the roles that they have inherited, or to adjust and reinterpret them, and even to change them altogether", highlighting that the theoretical framework boasts as one of its key promises the potential to bridge multiple levels of analysis (Wehner & Thies, 2021, p. 1426).

Although it is a misconception to consider that Brazilian foreign policy has gone through drastic changes throughout the 21st century, there is no doubt leaders have played a significant role in influencing its direction and, especially, the intensity to pursue certain goals, and not others. Even if both of them were from the Worker's Party (PT), there is a clear difference in the relevance Presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff (2011-



2016) gave to foreign policy and international politics, with the former having a personal interest in the area, and the latter being widely known for her somewhat lukewarm approach to it. An even bigger contrast was seen under the Bolsonaro administration, with Brazil abandoning its traditionally strong international presence, in favour of isolationism, a situation which led the country to be seen as a global pariah (Brum, 2021).

As previously showed, domestic politics and, in particular, the national leader are important factors to be taken into consideration when it comes to foreign policy. As Milani (2017) explains, its formulation and implementation are deeply connected with governmental choices, and, consequently, with interest groups, bargaining, disputes, and negotiations with coalitions. Traditionally in the case of Brazil, two actors are seen as key in foreign policymaking: the President, due to the fact that Brazilian presidentialism system concentrates a considerable portion of agency in this position; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, given its long-standing professionalism, stability, and prestige (Milani, 2017).

Throughout most of the 20th century, Itamaraty saw itself, and was seen by the other actors, as the sole agent responsible to formulate and to implement the country's foreign policy, a situation which was frequently supported by the Presidency of the Republic (Lima, 1994). In Brazil, Foreign Policy Analysis studies on bureaucratic behaviour have shown, indeed, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been one of the earliest governmental bodies to operate in bureaucratic insulation since its establishment, in order to reduce interferences from external actors (Ives, 2024).

Nevertheless, in the early 2000s, debates about the need to remove foreign policy's exceptionalism and conceive it as a public policy like any other began to surface (Lima, 2000), resulting in Itamaraty's increasing openness and dialogue with other bureaucracies and with society as a whole in more recent decades (Ives, 2024). As a public policy, it is also more prone to changes depending on the political front, both by state and non-state actors. Additionally, this gradual process of "opening-up", which gives more transparency to its policymaking and decision-taking, still has further room to develop, but it has arguably already transformed foreign policy from a distant and less palpable matter to something that is more concrete and relatable to the overall population, especially with the strengthening of the media and communication sector and the democratisation of the access to information.

The assumption that the public knows relatively little about foreign affairs and, as a consequence, structures its beliefs only by taking cues from partisan elites has been increasingly challenged by recent developments, which show patterns where political elites are united, but the public is divided (Kertzer & Zeitzoff, 2017). Indeed, as Kertzer & Zeitzoff (2017, p. 544) show, "members of the public may often lack information, but they do not lack principles, and information need not cascade from the top down [...] individuals have general predispositions toward foreign policy they can rely on when forming attitudes toward specific policy issues".

In Brazil, Diniz & Ribeiro (2008) have pointed out that, as international matters have gained a growing importance domestically and, in some cases, impacted public opinion polls, members of the Congress have also tended to get involved in such debates. This



also helps to reject the commonly advanced idea that foreign affairs are too distant from the ordinary lives of citizens, resulting in their lack of interest in it, a low level of accountability by leaders, and irrelevant electoral impacts. In fact, according to Lopes & Faria (2014), foreign policy has become an electoral topic in Brazil since the country's transition to democracy in the 1980s, but it was under the second term of President Lula that it had unprecedented visibility in the public electoral propaganda on TV and radio. For the authors, recent trends seem to suggest that there is, at least, an expectation that foreign policy, if it does not have the capacity to directly provide votes, can undermine the image and the prestige of political parties, candidates, and leaders (Lopes & Faria, 2014).

When it comes to the previous two Lula administrations, undoubtedly, one of his main legacies lie, justifiably, in the fields of foreign policy and diplomacy, bringing Brazil to the spotlight in the global stage. Certainly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by seasoned Ambassador Celso Amorim — now Chief Advisor to the Presidency in "Lula 3" — had a decisive role, but one cannot understate the positive impact of Lula's presidential diplomacy in both the country's prestige abroad and his own electoral gains internally. It is worth remembering that Lula left the Brazilian presidency after two terms as a global phenomenon, as shown in the introduction of this paper, and, domestically, according to surveys from the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (Ibope), with a personal approval rate of 87%, while his government had 80% — numbers never before seen in the country's history (Bonin, 2010).

Notwithstanding, the panorama has changed. In a recent survey conducted by Ipec, former Ibope, in early March 2024, the trust in Lula sits at 45%, and only 33% evaluated the government on a positive note, with another 33% evaluating it as average (Nicoceli & Croquer, 2024). Among other reasons, this can be explained by the stringent sociopolitical polarisation which has been a constant in Brazilian society since the Worker's Party (PT) fell from grace for part of the society in the mid-2010s and bolsonarism gained track in the latter half of the decade. With the country marked by clear political and electoral divisions, without a lot of margins for manoeuvre, the foreign policy terrain has surprisingly appeared as one which can bring political rewards domestically. Due to his international prestige, there is potential for Lula to capitalise on his global presence with the more centrist or even traditionally conservative electorate, which is more inclined to approve of Brazil being praised and fulfilling its "predisposition" to be a regional and global leader.

Amid such division between supporters of Lula and Bolsonaro, it is possible to identify the existence of a form of adversarial politics, characterised by a distinctive manner of representing, battling, and mobilising against political opponents in a populist environment.¹ In this regard, it is worth noting that the scholarship related to Foreign

¹ Although populism remains an essentially contested concept, as Cadier (2024) indicates, it can amount to an "othering" discourse, particularly through a discursive construction of an enemy or opposition, which can include not only elites, supranational institutions or the establishment, but also previous governments and political opponents. Under these lenses, foreign policy provides an appropriate terrain for populist articulatory practices, be it through the amalgamation of domestic actors and opponents with foreign "others" and interests, be it with the projection of the populist logic onto the international stage, using foreign policy as a battleground to combat domestic political adversaries.



Policy Analysis has already documented that “the type of strategy chosen by governments in dealing with political opposition is in turn a key mediating factor in how and to what extent domestic politics affects foreign policy” (Cadier, 2024, p. 2).

Indeed, populist leaders, or leaders dealing with a populist environment, tend to politicise foreign policy once in office, and confronting political opponents is precisely at the core of their legitimation, mobilisation, and popularity-maximising strategies, something which consequently produces effects on foreign policy (Cadier, 2024). In the end, as Cadier (2024) argues, it seems that these actors are inclined to use foreign policy as the continuation of domestic politics by other means, defining their foreign policy preferences and choices in opposition to those of their political predecessors or adversaries and investing in foreign policy as an instrument and a ground to battle political opponents. This, in turn, ends up contaminating the political game and the strategies associated with the successors of such populist actors.

Bringing back Role Theory to the table, it is possible to see that, during his presidency, Bolsonaro reinterpreted, adjusted, and modified Brazil’s roles in the international stage, overhauling the country’s behaviour in terms of foreign policy and defining them as the opposite of what came before. When Lula won the last presidential elections, he sought to recover Brazil’s previously existing roles and the historical traditions of its foreign policy, something which is clear with the slogan “Brazil is back”, widely used during his first year back in power both for domestic and international purposes. Lula has always been a powerful political force in the national landscape, and now the context favours a more personalistic, alongside an institutional (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or party-based (PT), approach to politics and foreign policy.

Therefore, the presidential diplomacy renews its relevance under “Lula 3”, clearly differentiating itself from the administration of Bolsonaro, who did not travel abroad as much and distanced himself from the international community. A presidential diplomacy takes place when the President has a personal, active, and effective participation in the conception and execution of foreign policy based on three foundations: the conduction of the decision-making process of foreign policy; the diplomacy of initiatives, in which the leader proposes and reap the rewards of foreign policy initiatives; and the diplomacy of visits and travels (Pasquarelli, 2010). At the same time, such an ambitious foreign policy, with leadership goals in the region and the world, should encompass not only Brazilian national interests, but also common, wider aspirations from the Global South and other big players in the international scenario, and the reform of global governance is a key aim in this regard.

“Brazil Is Back”: A New Era for the Sino-Brazilian Partnership, A New Era for the Reform of Global Governance and the Global South

Brazil has historically seen itself as a global player and tried to occupy a relevant place in international politics, with this being a dominant trace in its foreign policy and a constant during Lula’s first two terms as President (Fonseca, 2017). During this period, the BRICs came into existence, China became Brazil’s main trade partner, the 2008 crisis



profoundly affected Western great powers, and developing nations implemented their strategies to benefit from the appropriate conditions to better influence global governance and increase their voices and participation in the international system (Fonseca, 2017). Not coincidentally, Brazil has revisited historical goals associated with the reform of international institutions, such as the pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (Steenhagen, 2023).

As Almeida (2004, p. 162-163) notes, "it is in its external relations and international politics that the government of President Lula resembles the most the discourse of PT. [...] certainly the party discourse in international politics themes [...] commands the governmental action, more than in any other institutional area".² In this sense, Brazil's role as a leader has not been constrained only to its region, and Lula has believed that such a role could be achieved through diplomatic activism, including his presidential diplomacy, and the formation of strategic alliances (Almeida, 2004). Perceiving the changes in the international landscape, with an unprecedented strategic partnership already signed in 1993 — updated to the level of global strategic partnership in 2012 — and a mutual interest in strengthening ties based on common interests and goals, Brazil and China started a trajectory of reinforcing their bilateral and multilateral relations in a way that has established Lula as "China's old friend".

This marks a stark contrast to the previous and atypical government. Under Bolsonaro, Brazil broke up with previous foreign policy traditions and promoted antiglobalism, conservatism, anticommunism, and religious nationalism (Casarões & Saraiva, 2021). Simultaneously, the role of Itamaraty was decreased, based on an active pursuit to reduce its importance, dismantle its bureaucracy, and weaken its diplomatic capacity, under the perception that the institution was one of the bodies responsible for the country's globalist insertion (Pinheiro & Santos, 2022). Despite a strong alignment with the United States under the Trump administration, after Biden's election, Brazil distanced itself from the nation, all while its relations with both Europe and China also deteriorated in the sociopolitical field (Saraiva & Reis, 2023).

With the advent of "Lula 3", there is a strong restructuring of Brazilian foreign policy, and the country seeks to be involved again in the great themes of international politics, whether they are directly connected with its direct goals or not (Saraiva & Reis, 2023). According to Saraiva & Reis (2023), this quick foreign policy restructuring and Brazil's reinsertion in the international stage, putting an end to Bolsonaro's approach to the area, was made possible due to the role of the leader, as Lula still has a considerable political weight internally and internationally, as well as to the expertise from his policymakers and other actors who influence foreign policy. Some positions on international conflicts were modified, progressive, instead of conservative, orientations were promoted in topics such as human rights, global governance, elimination of poverty and hunger, and sustainability, Latin American integration and international engagement made a

² Translation made by the author. In Portuguese: "é nas relações exteriores e na sua política internacional que o governo do Presidente Lula mais se parece com o discurso do PT. [...] certamente que o discurso partidário em temas de política internacional [...] comanda a ação governamental, mais do que em qualquer outra área institucional."



comeback, interactions with the United States and Europe were stabilised and cherished, and relations with China were normalised and further strengthened.

On the Asian country's side, as Pu (2019, p. 3) explains, the 2000s and the 2010s saw its rise in the international stage, and "the nature and content of the international order in coming decades will partially depend on what roles the emerging powers, especially China, decide to play". Certainly, policymakers' ideas about China's role in the international system have a considerable influence on its foreign policy and on its decision-making process, as China engages in a search for a new identity as a global player, one that encompasses both continuity and adaptation (Noesselt, 2014). However, as Pu (2019) notes, China's grand strategy ends up including contradictory elements and competing visions for its emerging roles in the world, and this can be identified both in the domestic and international stages.

Inside China, perceptions on the existing international order have been molded by historical and uneasy experiences, resulting in three basic positions (Tang, 2018). The first, which is linked to Mao Zedong's ideas of a revolutionary State and figures as a marginalised one in China today, considers the existing order is mostly unjust and needs fundamental restructuring, and the country should therefore lead the way in shaping global governance (Tang, 2018). The second and the third, which are the core of the debate under the present leadership, are interconnected by the premise that the current order is mostly acceptable, only needing to be fine-tuned; however, while the former considers China should take the lead to press for reforms, the latter believes the Asian nation should not even seek leadership in this sense and should work with other countries, both Western and non-Western, to achieve that goal (Tang, 2018). To some extent, this last position is somewhat similar to the one permeating Brazilian foreign policy, in particular, under Lula.

Associated with the two abovementioned main positions is the idea of a "governance with Chinese characteristics", which can be divided into responsible State governance, and governance through global partnership (Chen, 2016). The first is intrinsically attached to an effective management of domestic affairs — which directly and indirectly impacts global governance — and to the avoidance of exporting negative externalities through domestic and foreign policies (Chen, 2016). Meanwhile, the second presupposes that China, in opposition to hierarchical schemes of hegemonic governance and order and their inherent injustices, should serve as a partner in four aspects of non-aligned global partnership governance: joint global governance, incremental global governance, joint regional governance, and global governance reform (Chen, 2016). This second aspect is particularly important to understand the alignment of vision and behaviour between Brazil and China in global affairs, as the former, under Lula and PT, largely agrees with it and would like to see more inclusiveness, representation, and legitimacy in international institutions historically dominated by Western powers.

As a result, it is not uncommon for analysts in the United States and Europe to be puzzled about the foreign policy of "Lula 3". During his first year back in the presidency for a third term, Lula strongly promoted the slogan that "Brazil is back", which had both domestic and international purposes and targets and sought to clearly show a fresh start for the



country, after what is considered to be a disastrous Bolsonaro administration, and to instigate hope for a better future (Maschietto, 2024). In terms of foreign policy, the slogan indicated that the South American nation would go back to its traditions, end the ideological alignment with the global far-right, and redirect its attention to an active positioning in the international stage based, amongst other things, on the pursuit for leadership as a representative of the Global South (Maschietto, 2024).

In late 2022, during his first speech to the population as president-elect, among other matters, Lula stated that "we will fight again for a new global governance, with the inclusion of more countries in the UN Security Council and the end of the veto right, which undermines the balance between nations" (G1, 2022). Subsequently, in 2023, Amorim affirmed that "Brazil wants to reform global governance [...] We would like to have a world governance which does not look like the present Security Council" (Balingit & Tobin, 2023), meaning a renewed global governance, one which does not resemble the political panorama of the post-Second World War period.

In this context, Brazil's presidency of the G20 has appeared as a great opportunity for the country to test its strategy of "active nonalignment", balancing engagement between powers without picking a side and focusing on an agenda that is firmly grounded in the priorities of the Global South (Timerman, 2024). It may seem like a longshot in a more divided world, but, as Timerman (2024) states, "if anybody can leverage the importance of the global south on the international stage, it's the one-name international superstar Lula" — something which also confirms the maintenance of his personal status as a recognised leader, especially for the Global South, and how useful this can be in the domestic landscape.

Therefore, Brazil under "Lula 3" might have disappointed expectations from the United States and Europe in terms of close alignment in face of certain current global challenges, such as the Russo-Ukrainian war. However, its current foreign policy is not a major departure from its previous positionings; for instance, when Russia invaded Crimea, Brazil also did not promote strong pushbacks against the country, and Putin even visited the South American nation for the BRICS Summit later in the year, regardless of protests from Western powers. In spite of its efforts to balance relations with American and European partners, on the one hand, and developing nations, on the other, it is clear that the country's broad interests and goals have inevitably lied more aligned with the latter. And, although American and European disappointment towards certain aspects of Brazilian foreign policy exists, it can be said that this is partly due to their own omissions and neglections, both old and new.

Overall, as Stuenkel (2023) notes, the Global South has shown a certain level of reluctance to align with the West on specific topics, such as the support to Ukraine in light of the war with Russia. In the case of Brazil, four key factors explain such reluctance (Stuenkel, 2023). First, Brazil, whether led by leftist, centrist, or rightist governments, has maintained positive relations with China and Russia, both in the BRICS and outside of it, and this connects with its efforts to preserve a nonaligned position internationally. Second, Brazil perceives Western rhetoric in a number of subjects as grating and hypocritical, especially in light of numerous violations of international law coming from



great powers when it suits them. Furthermore, it believes that the supposedly rules-based liberal order has often shown to be neither liberal nor rules-based, with Western great powers failing to take the Global South and its demands seriously. This is one of the reasons the country has attempted to reform global governance for many decades, including through the establishment of parallel institutional structures.

Third, Brazil has strongly believed that the best way to preserve its strategy of autonomy and nonalignment is through the active promotion of a multipolar global order. This, in turn, just like the second factor, closely aligns with the foundations of China's foreign policy. Fourth, Brazil has been traditionally convinced that it has a role to play in the international stage, and Lula, in particular, has shown an eagerness to provide meaningful contributions under the vision that the country is a diplomatic powerhouse. The "Brazil is back" slogan clearly seeks to revive what is seen as the glorious days of the 2000s and the early 2010s. With Brazil at the helm of the G20 now, it brings a huge opportunity for Lula and the PT to show their capabilities when it comes to foreign affairs, both to the domestic and to the global public.

Notwithstanding, it is possible to argue that Brazil feels even more comfortable to nourish the thrust towards global governance reforms, especially in a rhetorical way, due to the strengthening of the Sino-Brazilian partnership throughout the last decade and China's own initiatives that already impact global governance. In this regard, Lula has a central role in the efforts to advance Brazil's push for the reform of global governance. As Hirst (2023) points out, the presidential diplomacy in Lula's third term has become as or more central than during the 2000s, and there has been considerable connections between his national leadership and his international and regional projection, with the project of international insertion pertaining to the President, but its execution depending on the operational capacity of the Itamaraty.

At the same time, Lula's margin for political manoeuvres is now reduced if compared to his previous administrations, given that the reality, both domestically and internationally, has changed. Consequently, while Brazil's current foreign policy might resemble, in many ways, that of the 2000s, it has gone through adaptations and renovations, and one should not expect from it the same intense and proactive behaviour as before due to existing constraints in the micro and macro levels (Carvalho, 2023). After all, Lula faces not only a more challenging domestic landscape, struggling to win certain political and legislative battles, but also a more demanding international scenario, all while lacking sufficient resources to promote an expanded agenda of global governance reform and South-South cooperation, and, as a result, having to be more strategic in the implementation of his foreign policy (Carvalho, 2023).

Specifically, regarding China, the Asian nation has increasingly shown an interest to expand policy coordination in global governance issues, especially when it comes to the UN, the G20, and the BRICS, and the interest deriving from the Brazilian government to give high priority to the dialogue with China was immediate (Hirst, 2023). The case of the Brazilian presidency in the G20 is emblematic: All three priorities launched in the first year of "Lula 3" — combat against hunger and poverty, sustainable development, and reform of global governance — are, of course, closely connected with domestic needs



and international aspirations or opportunities, but they are also intrinsically associated with common interests involving China and, more broadly, the Global South. Indeed, relations with China seem to be increasingly strategic for Brazil on these two fronts.

Domestically, Brazil has been trying to seek opportunities and investments from the Chinese side that are closely aligned with its development goals, especially those related to (re)industrialisation, sustainability, and technological innovation (Sousa, Abrão & Porto, 2023). Internationally, the South American nation sees its Asian counterpart as a fundamental partner to help advance its regional and global interests, as well as contribute to the strengthening of individual or collective positionings and agendas (Sousa, Abrão & Porto, 2023). The effort to take the bilateral relationship to the next level and the vision that China can bolster Brazil's diplomatic image abroad can be inferred, for instance, from Lula's statement that "we want to have with China a relationship which goes beyond economy and trade"³ (República Federativa do Brasil, 2023a), as well as from the list and content of the agreements signed during Lula's official visit to China a few months after he took office (República Federativa do Brasil, 2023b). In sum, Brazil under "Lula 3" sees in China an instrumental partner for it to achieve both its domestic and its international objectives, which are directly and indirectly associated with global governance reform.

Conclusion

This paper has sought out to check the reasons behind the (re)prioritisation of the reform of global governance in Brazil's foreign policy during the first year of "Lula 3". After the analysis, it is possible to confirm the main hypothesis put forward. Indeed, the new wave of support coming from President Lula and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to advance this broad goal is most likely linked to two main factors: at the State level, foreign policy has improved its capacity to influence sociopolitical outcomes and impact domestic politics, contributing to alter, either positively or negatively, the image of Lula before the population and part of the electorate; and, at the international level, the rise of China and the strengthening of the Sino-Brazilian partnership have favoured Brazil's foreign policy historical interests, giving the opportunity for the country to reinforce its image and positioning as one of the go-to references for the Global South.

In the end, it is possible to identify that Brazil has prioritised the reform of global governance in the G20 and beyond as a form of alignment between its international aspirations and domestic needs. Domestically, this is a topic that facilitates the strengthening of Lula as a competent leader who favours the country's development and national interests. Internationally, it pushes forward the projection of a Brazil that pursues its key historical objectives, that leads the way toward the democratisation of the international system, and that serves as a reference for the Global South and as a bridge-builder between developing nations and great powers, in particular, between China and the BRICS, on one side, and the United States and Europe, on the other.

³ Translation made by the author. In Portuguese: "Queremos ter com a China uma relação que vá além da economia e do comércio."



Overall, though, with the exception of the Bolsonaro administration, Brazilian foreign policy, in terms of principles and goals, has remained pragmatic and stable, and potential changes seem to be more connected with mechanisms — from a purely institutional to a combination of presidential and institutional diplomacy — and the level of emphasis on certain subjects and audience — as is the case of the reform of global governance, now targeted for domestic and global purposes — than with an effective and thorough change of course in its substance.

Brazil occupies the presidency of the G20 from December 1st, 2023, to November 30th, 2024, and it is expected that over 130 meetings will be held in 15 Brazilian cities throughout this period, with the most important one, the G20 Heads of State and Government Summit, taking place between November 18th and 19th in Rio de Janeiro (Cardoso, 2024). During this time, China's President Xi Jinping plans to make an official State visit in a year that celebrates the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations, and the expectation is that this visit will bring significant results for the bilateral relationship, including a potential agreement for Brazil to join the New Silk Road, officially called Belt and Road Initiative (Moreira, 2024).

Indeed, in August 2024, Lula made a positive signalling about this subject. During a speech at the National Industry Confederation (CNI), he stated that "the Chinese want to discuss with us the Silk Road. We will discuss the Silk Road. We will not close our eyes, no. We will say 'What do you have for us? What do I get?' Because this is the debate."⁴ (Estadão, 2024). If Brazil finally gets on board, it would be a considerable boost to the Chinese-led project, and it could be interpreted as a firm recognition that China is effectively capable to influence global governance and to offer concrete benefits for Brazil's development — and, consequently, to help Brazilian goals in the domestic and international stage to be achieved.

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⁴ Translation made by the author. In Portuguese: "Os chineses querem discutir conosco a Rota da Seda. Nós vamos discutir a Rota da Seda. Nós não vamos fechar os olhos, não. Nós vamos dizer: 'O que é que tem para nós? O que eu ganho? Porque essa é a discussão.'"



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BALANCING CONTINUITY AND ADJUSTMENTS IN BRAZIL'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CHINA: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH BETWEEN BOLSONARO AND LULA'S THIRD TERM

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Abstract

Bolsonaro's foreign policy, characterized by a staunchly conservative identity aligned with far-right populist ideologies, emphasized anti-globalism, nationalism, and adversarial narratives. His administration fostered close ties with the Trump Administration, influencing Brazil's shift away from emerging countries and international blocs. This pivot tested Brazil's previously strong relationship with China, leading to stagnation in diplomatic and political relations, contrasting sharply with the proactive approaches of Bolsonaro's predecessors. With Lula da Silva's return to the presidency in 2023, Brazilian foreign policy underwent significant revision during his first hundred days. Lula aimed to restore key elements of his earlier foreign policy, emphasizing South-South cooperation, revitalizing the BRICS, and redefining Brazil's international agenda amid the ongoing Ukraine conflict. This reorientation notably impacted Brazil-China relations. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of Jair Bolsonaro's foreign policy towards China from 2018 to 2022 and examines the first year of Lula da Silva's administration in 2023. It explores the diplomatic and economic dimensions of their respective approaches towards China, highlighting both changes and continuities. The main argument posits that during Bolsonaro's tenure, Brazil's relations with China underwent political and diplomatic adjustments in line with the administration's conservative foreign policy narrative. Despite this, China retained a crucial role in Brazil's economic agenda. Following Lula's return to power in 2023, diplomatic initiatives towards China were rejuvenated, reflecting a political rapprochement with Beijing. This shift materialized through high-level official engagements and continued robust economic ties, illustrating a restored bilateral and multilateral relationship.

Keywords

Brazil foreign policy, autonomy, China, middle power, economic relations.



Resumo

A política externa de Bolsonaro, caracterizada por uma identidade firmemente conservadora alinhada com ideologias populistas de extrema direita, enfatizou o antiglobalismo, o nacionalismo e narrativas adversas. A sua administração promoveu laços estreitos com a administração Trump, influenciando o afastamento do Brasil dos países emergentes e dos blocos internacionais. Este pivô testou o relacionamento anteriormente forte do Brasil com a China, levando à estagnação nas relações diplomáticas e políticas, contrastando fortemente com as abordagens proativas dos antecessores de Bolsonaro. Com o retorno de Lula da Silva à presidência em 2023, a política externa brasileira passou por uma revisão significativa durante seus primeiros cem dias. Lula pretendia restaurar elementos-chave da sua política externa anterior, enfatizando a cooperação Sul-Sul, revitalizando os BRICS e redefinindo a agenda internacional do Brasil no meio do conflito em curso na Ucrânia. Esta reorientação impactou notavelmente as relações Brasil-China. Este artigo fornece uma análise aprofundada da política externa de Jair Bolsonaro em relação à China de 2018 a 2022 e examina o primeiro ano da administração de Lula da Silva em 2023. Explora as dimensões diplomáticas e económicas das suas respectivas abordagens em relação à China, destacando tanto as mudanças como as continuidades. O principal argumento postula que durante o mandato de Bolsonaro, as relações do Brasil com a China passaram por ajustes políticos e diplomáticos em linha com a narrativa conservadora da política externa do governo. Apesar disso, a China manteve um papel crucial na agenda económica do Brasil. Após o regresso de Lula ao poder em 2023, as iniciativas diplomáticas em relação à China foram rejuvenescidas, reflectindo uma aproximação política com Pequim. Esta mudança materializou-se através de compromissos oficiais de alto nível e da continuação de laços económicos robustos, ilustrando uma relação bilateral e multilateral restaurada.

Palavras-chave

Política externa brasileira, autonomia, China, potência média, relações económicas.

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BALANCING CONTINUITY AND ADJUSTMENTS IN BRAZIL'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CHINA: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH BETWEEN BOLSONARO AND LULA'S THIRD TERM

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1. Introduction

Brazilian foreign policy has historically been characterized by an active and pragmatic diplomacy, based on principles such as non-intervention, self-determination and the search for international cooperation. Several works have identified Brazil as a country with a universal vocation, and with the ambition to become a key actor in international politics. (Caballero & Crescentino, 2020). Building on a highly qualified and professionalized diplomatic tradition, Itamaraty became an example of professional and institutional foreign policy for other Latin American countries and beyond.

Regarding the geographical scope, Brazilian relations with the so-called Global South countries have been a priority. South-South relations and regional alliances became fundamental means to diversify partnerships and reduce asymmetries with developed countries, adopting a reformist and more assertive diplomatic stance (Neto & Malamud, 2015). Diversification became an essential pillar in Brazil's foreign policy, and China, with special emphasis on South-South relations. In this context, China has emerged as a crucial player in Brazil's economic diversification strategy.

During the first decade of the 21st century, China and Brazil witnessed a significant strengthening of their economic and political ties. This period marked the establishment of a robust trade partnership, with bilateral trade soaring from just over 3 billion USD in 2001 to surpass 44 billion USD in 2010 and then reaching 100 billion USD by 2019 (Myers & Gallagher, 2024).

Concurrently, the two nations deepened their political collaboration, notably through initiatives like the BRICS grouping - comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa - and the establishment of corresponding multilateral financial institutions like the New Development Bank. For an extended period, Brazil has consistently ranked as the primary destination for Chinese direct investment in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), even in the face of initial challenges related to investing in sectors such as green



energy, transportation infrastructure, and agriculture within the country (Studart and Myers, 2019).

Bolsonaro's foreign policy, characterized by a strong conservative identity, aligned with far-right populist ideologies, focusing on anti-globalism, nationalism, and anti-foe narratives (De Sá Guimarães & De Oliveira e Silva, 2021), maintained closed links with the Trump Administration and its political objectives in South America, driven Brazil's focus away from emerging countries and blocs. Brazil's close relations with China were, then, tested. Diplomatic and political relations stagnated, with few gestures from the Brazilian government towards Beijing, in sharp contrast with Bolsonaro's antecessors (De Sousa, Abrão & de Souza Porto, 2023; De Sá Guimarães & De Oliveira e Silva, 2021; Gomes Saraiva and Costa Silva, 2019).

With the return of Lula da Silva to the Planato in 2023, during his first hundred days there was a review of Brazilian foreign policy (de Oliveira, 2023) that had to do with returning to some milestones of Lula's first foreign policy and restoring the agenda. South-South cooperation, rebuild and rethink the role of the BRICS and remake an international agenda within the framework of the war in Ukraine (Gallego, 2023). This reorientation had an impact on Brazil-China relations, which will be analyzed in the following sections.

In this paper, we aim to provide an insightful analysis of Jair Bolsonaro's foreign policy towards China during his term from 2018 to 2022, as well as examining the initial year of Lula da Silva's administration in 2023. We will analyze the diplomatic and economic dimensions, highlighting changes and continuity in their approaches towards China. As a main argument we suggest that Brazilian relations with China underwent political and diplomatic adjustments during Bolsonaro's administration, in line with the government's narrative and conservative foreign policy identity. But, in the economic realm, China maintained a core place in Brazilian global agenda. After Lula's return to power in 2023, diplomatic initiatives towards China were restored, - both at the bilateral and multilateral arena - reflecting the political rapprochement to Beijing, which materialized in high level official actions, paralleling the ongoing density of economic ties.

The theoretical approach centers on the concept of autonomy, and its interpretations through different Brazilian administrations, particularly on the political and economic dimensions. We also focus on the notions of the continuity, changes and adjustments in foreign policy, to understand the dynamics during both presidential periods under study in the bilateral relation with China. In doing so, we will examine bilateral investment and commercial figures for the economic dimension, and systematize foreign policy actions such as official visits, statements and bilateral documents during the period under study.

This paper is structured as follows: after the introduction, in section two we present the theoretical debates to frame Brazil's foreign policy during Bolsonaro's and Lula's governments, with a focus on the concept of autonomy. In section three and four we discuss the specific features of Brazil's relations with China during each Administration, delving into the economic and political dimensions, to identify traces of continuity, adjustment or change between the two periods. Overall, the study aims to offer insights



into the complexities of Brazil-China relations and their significance within the broader context of international diplomacy.

2. Theoretical perspectives on Brazilian foreign policy and autonomy

In recent decades, Brazil's foreign policy has attracted significant attention from academics, especially since the country solidified its position as a middle power on the global stage. Soares de Lima & Hirst (2006, p. 21) underline this trend by suggesting that "since the early years of the twentieth century, Brazil's major foreign policy aspiration has been to achieve international recognition", based on its self-definition of a big country which should assume a global role. In this same vein, Sotero (2010) highlights Lula's role in shifting towards a more assertive and innovative approach in global affairs, driven by the country's increased international activism and self-confidence. This aspiration for international recognition, adds Malamud (2011), has driven Brazil to engage actively in multilateral forums and regional initiatives to enhance its global standing, aligning with the country's self-perception as a significant player.

A cornerstone of Brazilian foreign policy since, at least, the second half of the twentieth century has been the pursuit and consolidation of autonomy (Rodriguez, 2012). This concept played a central role for several South American governments and has been a guiding concept for analysts from the region as both a goal and an instrument for explanatory purposes. In the Brazilian case, autonomy, according to Caballero & Crescentino (2020, p. 2) can be considered as a "compass of Brazil's foreign policy".

Autonomy has several interpretations as a foreign policy concept, particularly developed in Argentina and Brazil's academic circles. As Briceño Ruiz & Simonoff (2017) underline, the autonomy approach is an outstanding contribution to Foreign Policy theoretical debates from a South American perspective, although its impact for IR theory has been mostly regional. Notwithstanding the diverse definitions the concept adopted throughout the decades, autonomy is intimately related to the broader objective of foreign policy which is the promotion of national development. (Caballero & Crescentino, 2020) Under the light of becoming a vehicle to overcome dependency and to avoid becoming an "obedient" country (Malamud, 2011), autonomy also had a performative narrative role in academic circles, with an impact on governmental discourse.

Regarding Brazil's foreign policy, autonomy can be classified by different periods reflecting both the country's self-perception and the surrounding international and regional environments. From the end of the Cold War, and along with a resurgence of the autonomic debate (Briceño Ruiz & Simonoff, 2017), Brazil's search for autonomy was built on participation in international institutions and regimes "in order to leverage the country's foreign policy leeway" (Neto & Malamud, 2015: 14), reflecting principles such as pacifism, multilateralism, and non-intervention. This new orientation became known as "autonomy through participation" and meant that "foreign policy retained its 'desire for autonomy' but, at the same time, sought to remove the legacy of authoritarianism and to respond to the international power of global liberalism" (Soares de Lima & Hirst, 2006, p. 24).



In 2003, Lula came to power and a new impetus was given to Brazil's foreign policy, particularly in the regional scenario but also in the desire to build the nation as an unequivocal middle power with a dynamic participation in multilateral institutions and emerging blocs. In contrast to previous administrations, Lula's foreign policy centered on Latin America as a privileged scenario for integration. Vigevani & Cepaluni (2007) highlight that autonomy remained a central goal for this government's foreign policy, with a renewed emphasis on diversification. The authors define this concept as the "adherence to international norms and principles by means of South - South alliances, including regional alliances, and through agreements with non-traditional partners (China, Asia-Pacific, Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East, etc), trying to reduce asymmetries in external relations with powerful countries." (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007, p. 1313) The idea underlying this new orientation is that Brazil's power asymmetry vis-a-vis developed countries could only be balanced and, eventually, reduced by strengthening the political and economic relations with non-traditional partners from the Global South and adopting a more assertive diplomatic stance towards international institutions in order to introduce reforms that could also favored the developing world.

Although autonomy through diversification has been widely adopted among academics to analyze Lula's period (Neto & Malamud, 2015; Crescentino & Caballero, 2021), Pereyra Doval (2013) distances herself from this definition and introduces the concept of "autonomy by coalition". This notion refers to "the constant search for partners to form coalitions and thus coordinate policies in common forums" (Pereyra Doval, 2013, p. 120). Although the concept reflects Brazil's projection in the period, in this work we use the previous definition as it better portrays the evolving dynamics of Brazil's relationship with China, particularly in the economic domain.

China became a central partner within the diversification strategy, with a particular focus on the economic dimension. But the economic prosperity that resulted from the commodity prices boom between 2003-2013, which largely benefited Brazil exports, nor autonomy neither trade diversification was improved, given the absence of a trade and investment policy. "Far from granting greater autonomy at the international level or a desirable diversification of the export matrix, this repressing of exports generated a pendulum, causing China to replace the U.S.A. as Brazil's preferred trading partner" (Caballero & Crescentino, 2020, p. 10). Somehow, the result was a diversification of dependency, since relations with China continued to reproduce a model dependent on the demand of the third country instead of being the outcome of national long-term policy or strategy.

In the aftermath of Rousseff's interrupted second term, China had become a major economic partner, but political relations were dependent on Beijing's political interests and the relevance Brazil could represent in a wider international strategy aimed at positioning China in a global stage through multilateral fora, such as BRICS. In other words, diversification as a means to achieve greater autonomy was only partly successful, mostly in trade terms.

Temer's short period was marked by a strengthening of an economic and reductionist foreign policy approach, focused on using diplomacy as a commercial lever, giving priority



to the nexus with the United States. The strategy of its foreign ministers (José Serra and Aloysio Nunes) consisted of defending internationally the legitimacy of the administration, while dismantling the foreign policy design woven throughout the PT government, claiming a supposed de-ideologization of foreign relations. (Crescentino & Caballero, 2021; Gomes Saraiva, 2020).

According to Gomes Saraiva (2022) Bolsonaro's foreign policy represented a reorientation in the country's external relations path, breaking with diplomatic traditions. Unlike institutionalists who supported normative frameworks and autonomists who aimed to amend them, Bolsonaro's approach was aggressive and reactive, challenging multilateralism and existing international standards, and viewing the international order as a threat to Brazilian autonomy. This period's foreign policy, with a strong emphasis on economic-commercial interests, escalated a process that began during Dilma's second term and was consolidated during Temer's interim period. The construction of a critical narrative about the ideological footprint of Lula's foreign policy is not new in the Bolsonaro period, although there has been a radicalization of that discourse. As a consequence, during Bolsonaro's term, autonomy became a secondary goal, subordinated to the ideological agenda that granted the US and the West a privileged status in Brazil's foreign policy. (Caballero and Crescentino, 2020)

As we will analyze in the following section, relations with China showed increasing tensions, stemming from the executive's anti-communist rhetoric and alignment with Trump's foreign policy that deepened rivalry with China since 2017, mainly through the trade war. But, as months passed by, economic pragmatism reemerged and relations with Beijing improved, given the relevance the country had for Brazil's foreign trade and economic stability. Notwithstanding this, the rapprochement to Beijing did not follow the autonomous goal it had during previous presidencies. Instead, there was a material-mercantilist imprint, which resulted in an improvement of economic indicators of the bilateral relations, coexisting with constant political and diplomatic tensions.

Lula's return to power in 2023 implied a new turn to foreign policy orientation. Autonomy regained centrality, as a guiding principle, tool and goal, but with a different interpretation. As Soares de Lima (2023) underlines, Lula's foreign policy 3.0, faces several changes both at the domestic and the international levels. In the external front, the war in Ukraine; China's economic slowdown and its consequent global impact; and the escalating US-China rivalry, are the main features in a rapidly evolving systemic context. According to Rodrigues (2023), under this new administration, autonomy can be characterized as pragmatic. This notion, 'pragmatic autonomy', combines the country's leadership aspirations on issues such as climate change and combating hunger with the desire to maintain a balance between opposing powers in the international system, mainly China and the United States (Rodrigues, 2023).

As Caballero and Crescentino (2020) suggest, autonomy as a concept, given the multiple interpretations it had through the decades, has become an indicator of breaks rather than a measure for continuity. We will utilize this concept as a theoretical framework to examine Brazil's interactions with China during the two administrations under evaluation. Additionally, we will uncover discrepancies between the economic and diplomatic aspects,



as they have followed diverging trajectories in each presidency. It is useful to understand that autonomy has a political pillar, based on a self-identification as a developing country, seeking to amplify the margin of maneuver in international affairs and to lessen dependence on external powers; and an economic one, which has been central to seek developing goals in South American country, and to maintain domestic economic stability, even through different political ideologies.

Finally, given the notable contrasts in foreign policy between Bolsonaro and Lula's third term, we resort to the notions of change, adjustment and continuity to grasp the complexities of Brazil's interactions with China in both political and economic spheres. In this line, Busso (2019) approaches foreign policy as a dynamic and complex phenomenon in constant evolution. Change in foreign policy implies a deliberate break with established practices, whether due to changes in political direction, ideological considerations or new geopolitical realities (Busso and Barreto, 2020). In their approach, adjustment is presented as a more nuanced and adaptive process, reflecting responses to external changes without a complete reconfiguration of foreign policy frameworks. Busso highlights the importance of identifying elements of continuity, which indicate the persistence of certain principles, alliances or strategic priorities over time, even in contexts of political transition. In this line, Hermann (1990, p. 5) suggests that adjustments refer to "occur in the level of effort (greater or lesser) and/or in the scope of recipients (such as refinement in the class of targets). What is done, how it is done, and the purposes for which it is done remain unchanged." This adjustment can manifest itself in the review of alliances, the adoption of new diplomatic strategies or the recalibration of priorities based on emerging circumstances (Russell and Tokatlian, 2009). Regarding continuity, it stands out that, despite changes in government, foreign policy should maintain certain guiding principles and fundamental strategic lines over time. This continuity is essential to preserve coherence and predictability in the country's international relations.

As we discuss in the following sections, Bolsonaro's foreign policy represented a shift from previous administrations. The alignment to Trump's policies; a retreat from Latin American multilateral initiatives; and constant diplomatic tensions with Beijing, driven by the anti-communist rhetoric; were some of the main features of the new government. However, based on the data analysis, it is evident that adjustments were made to bilateral relations with China instead of significant changes, as previously defined.

3. Brazil-China relations under Bolsonaro (2018-2022)

Since the late 1990s, Brazil had pursued an international strategy focused on diversifying relationships (hedging) and investing in multilateral institutions to navigate the challenges posed by superpowers and collective action issues. In recent years, the relationship between Brazil and China "has become increasingly relevant in the context of Brazilian foreign policy" (Feitosa et al, 2022, p. 2). The growing economic importance of China worldwide has led to an intensification of commercial ties and cooperation between both countries. Pragmatic institutionalists, by advocating close cooperation,



seek to capitalize on the economic opportunities offered by the relationship with China (Shqueitzer, 2021).

In that sense, Jair Bolsonaro's government was an adjustment in Brazil's foreign policy, giving rise to a decision-making structure divided into two large sectors: one of an ideological nature, with an inclination towards Washington, and another pragmatic, which prioritized the defense of national interests and did not frown upon deepening the relationship with Beijing. In this sense, Bolsonaro's government introduced "new ideas, a new road map of the world, and new partnerships, putting at stake the standards that have guided Brazil's international presence for an extended period" (Gomes Saraiva, 2022, p. 1).

This dichotomy can be associated, in turn, with the geopolitical competition between the United States and China. An illustrative example is the case of the Chinese-based multinational company Huawei and 5G technology services in the Latin American country, generating indecision in the Brazilian government due to the position (Shqueitzer, 2022). The Bolsonaro administration seemed to opt for an automatic alignment strategy with the United States. Such alignment strategies are commonplace, especially among medium-sized countries like Brazil, aiming to minimize costs or gain incentives by aligning with superpowers. However, the issue in the Brazilian context lies in the lack of concrete evidence supporting national gains resulting from this alignment (Hirst & Valls Pereira, 2020).

In relation to the anti-China rhetoric, it is observed that Jair Bolsonaro has expressed critical comments toward the Asian nation, especially during the electoral campaign period (Burton, 2018). However, once in office, a modulation in his tone has been noted, acknowledging the significance of the relationship with China for the Brazilian economy. This change in perspective could suggest a pragmatic adaptation by the Bolsonaro government based on the country's economic interests despite what his main vocal supporters may have said on social media (Lopez Conte, 2021). The complexity of the relationship between both countries is thus manifested in the intersection of political, economic, and environmental factors.

Trade and technological tensions between Brazil and China have arisen in the context of the development of the 5G network in the South American country. The participation of the Chinese company Huawei led to conflicts, prompting the Bolsonaro administration to consider restrictions. However, a complete ban on Huawei's participation was not implemented. This episode highlights the delicate balance that the Brazilian government seeks to maintain between its trade and technological relationships with China and its political alignments (Esteves, 2020). At the beginning of 2019, according to Stuenkel (2022, p. 5) "relations faced its most difficult moment in history". Despite these strains, in January 2019 Chinese authorities invited members of then-presidential party PSL for a visit to China and between May 23rd and 26th in 2019, Bolsonaro's Vice-President, Hamilton Mourão had an encounter with Xi which served to rebuild the bilateral relationship after Bolsonaro's campaign statements. His main task was to improve the tarnished image of Brazil by convincing the Chinese government that pragmatic forces within the Brazilian administration were in control of the situation, able to restrain



attitudes which could damage bilateral relations. His visit also led to a reactivation of COSBAN (Sawicka, 2020).

Bolsonaro engaged in two bilateral encounters with Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2019. The first took place from October 24th to 26th in Beijing, followed by another meeting from November 14th to 16th in Brasilia during the BRICS Summit (Paulino, 2020). During that Summit, Economy Minister Paulo Guedes also travelled to Brasilia to meet his Chinese counterpart (Dryomova & Stolyarova, 2019). Bolsonaro's stance towards China has been marked by a volatile evolution, oscillating between seeing China as an arch-enemy, a strategic partner, and an ideological rival within a short span of time. Initially, he portrayed China as a significant ideological adversary, emphasizing his visits to Taiwan and positioning Brazil alongside the United States and Israel (Guimarães & De Oliveira E Silva, 2021). This approach, however, incurred swift responses from Beijing, highlighting the importance of careful diplomacy in choosing allies. Bolsonaro depicted China as a predatory force aiming to dominate key sectors of Brazil's economy, fueling tensions further. Despite China's status as Brazil's top trading partner, Bolsonaro's administration explored ways to diminish dependence on China, raising concerns among crucial constituencies, notably farmers.

The dynamics shifted during the Amazon fires crisis in 2019 when, amid mounting international criticism, particularly from figures like French President Macron, who questioned Brazil's sovereignty over the region, Bolsonaro found an unexpected ally in China. Beijing supported Brazil, aligning momentarily on issues of sovereignty and rebuffing international criticism (Marra et al, 2021). The three-day visit of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to Beijing marked a significant shift in his approach towards China. In a complete turnaround from his previous criticisms, Bolsonaro adopted a tone of cooperation and openness, acknowledging the mutual dependency between Brazil and China. His words emphasized the importance of this bilateral relationship, describing Brazil as a vast ocean of opportunities willing to share with China. 25 agreements in the areas of politics, science, technology, education, economy, trade, energy, and agriculture were signed. The agreements include sanitary protocols for the export of processed meat and cottonseed flour from Brazil to China, as well as cooperation for the development of new and renewable energy (Vidal Liy & Gallaraga Gortázar, 2019).

This newfound alignment, though pragmatic, didn't substantially alter Bolsonaro's underlying views on China. His subsequent apology to Xi Jinping was overshadowed by domestic accusations of Chinese involvement in the COVID-19 pandemic, perpetuating a narrative of Chinese threat. Bolsonaro's diplomatic tightrope walk underscores the complexities of balancing economic interests with ideological differences, epitomizing Schmitt's notion of the "political enemy" as existentially different, yet necessary for engagement. During the 2019 BRICS summit, which was chaired by Brazil, Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes announced that the government of Bolsonaro was in talks with China to establish a free trade area between the two nations. This move aimed to strengthen the bilateral economic relationship and diversify Brazil's trade partnerships. Guedes emphasized the importance of greater integration with China, even if it entailed a shift in the trade balance, stating that the country could balance itself in the future through increased exports (Hooijmaaijers, 2021). During the covid-19 pandemic, the



bilateral relation went through hard times again. The initially harmonious stance towards Chinese provider Huawei in Brazil's 5G network auction, announced by the government in April 2020, underwent a stark transformation amid the Coronavirus pandemic. The rift began with President Bolsonaro's son, Eduardo Bolsonaro, attributing global blame for the crisis to China, followed by the resignation of the recent Minister of Education, who insulted the country in a racially charged and childish speech. This deterioration in relations was further evidenced during a late April cabinet meeting, where Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo criticized China as undemocratic and dismissive of human rights, advocating for Brazil to spearhead a new global order alongside like-minded nation. However, disrespectful comments towards China were reportedly struck from the record, with Economy Minister Paulo Guedes highlighting the economic necessity of maintaining ties despite ideological differences (Ibañez, 2020).

China issued a warning to Brazil, stating that there could be "negative consequences" following the characterization by Brazilian lawmaker Eduardo Bolsonaro of Chinese activities regarding 5G technology as "infamous espionage." This stark message, conveyed through the Chinese embassy in Brasilia, represents a notable shift in tone toward the South American nation, a declared ally of outgoing U.S. President Donald Trump and his anti-Beijing rhetoric. Eduardo Bolsonaro, who was also serving as chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Chamber of Deputies during his father's presidency, subsequently deleted the contentious tweet following discussions with the Minister of Communications and advisors from the National Telecommunications Agency (Meier, 2023). The central focus of these talks was the 5G auction in 2021. The embassy's statement, urging Brazilian figures to refrain from aligning with U.S. rhetoric and disinformation against China, underscores the potential repercussions of straying from the path of Sino-Brazilian friendship, highlighting the historical responsibility to maintain the stability of the China-Brazil alliance. After this, in May 24th of 2022, there was a meeting during the COSBAN Summit, where Mourão met with Chinese Vice President Wang Quishan (Roberto, 2022).

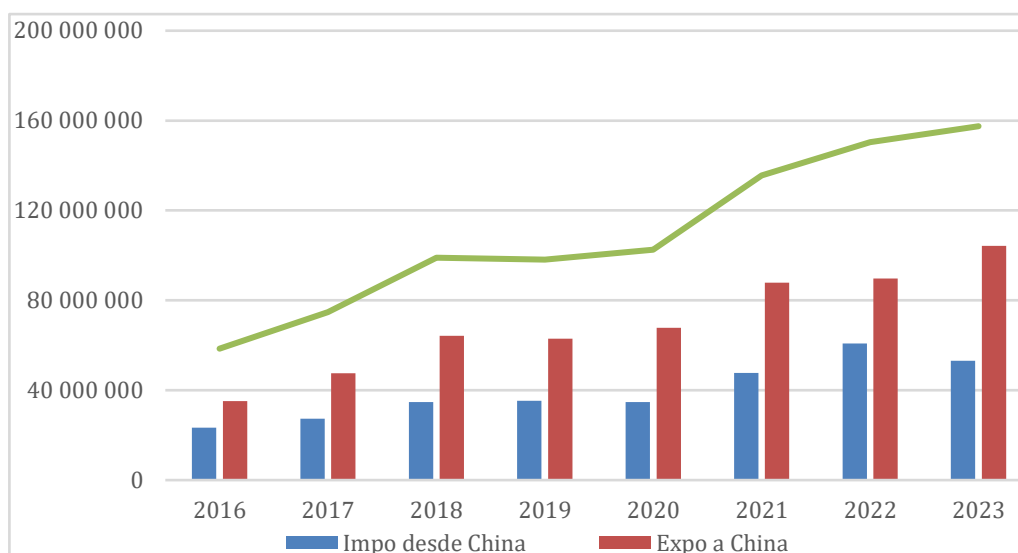
Bolsonaro's administration, marked by a dichotomy between ideological alignment with the United States and pragmatic engagement with China, underscores the geopolitical competition between superpowers, reminiscent of the arguments presented by pragmatic institutionalists like Shqueitzer (2021). The volatility in Bolsonaro's stance towards China, oscillating between adversarial rhetoric and moments of cooperation, reflects the delicate balance between economic interests and political alignments, as highlighted by Hirst & Valls Pereira (2020). Despite initial tensions and criticisms, Bolsonaro's government ultimately pursued a pragmatic approach, acknowledging the significance of the Brazil-China relationship for economic stability and technological advancement. However, challenges persisted, particularly regarding the integration of Huawei into Brazil's 5G network, revealing the complex interplay between trade, technology, and political considerations (Esteves, 2020). Amidst challenges and disagreements, efforts to deepen economic cooperation, such as discussions on establishing a free trade area and navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, underscored the importance of maintaining stability and continuity in the China-Brazil alliance, as emphasized by the warnings issued by the Chinese embassy in Brasilia (Meier, 2023).



3.1 Strengthening economic ties with China: Growth in trade and investments despite political tensions

The economic dimension, particularly in trade terms, showed not only continuity, but also a growing dynamism, in contrast with the prevailing tensions in the diplomatic front. Trade has been a core pillar in Brazil's relations with China since the beginning of the 2000s. In 2009, China became the main destination for Brazil's exports, surpassing the United States for the first time, and becoming the country's largest global trading partner.

Figure 1: Total Trade Brazil - China, 2016-2023, in thousands of US dollars.

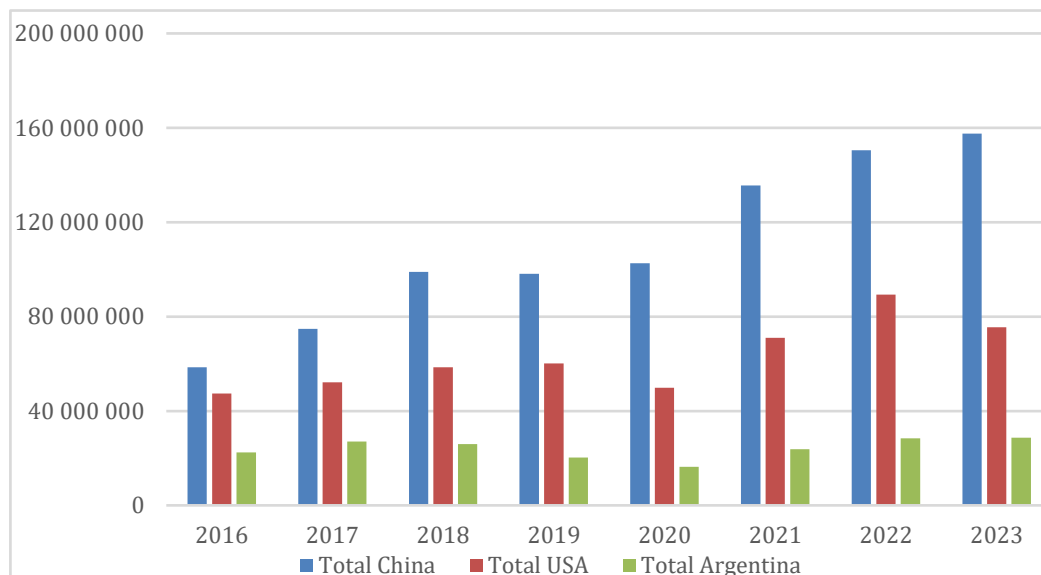


Source: Authors, based on data retrieved from the International Trade Center (2024).

As a result of this unprecedented trend, China's growing role as core trade partner for Brazil had impacts on the overall participation of other partners and on the country's global commercial basket composition. In both dimensions, partners and compositions, there was a gradual decline in diversification. As shown in figure 2, Brazil's total trade with China in 2023, more than doubled that with the United States, and was 5.4 times larger than total trade with Argentina. Furthermore, total trade with China grew faster than with the other two partners, particularly between 2018-2023. As figures show, Brazilian trade with China concentrated 20.3% of the country's global trade in 2017 and 27.1% in 2023. (ITC, 2024) So, in contrast to Bolsonaro's rhetoric, especially during his campaign and first months as president, China not only sustained a privileged position as Brazil's primary trading partner but also significantly increased its participation throughout the period.



Figure 2: Brazil's Main trade partners. 2016-2023, in thousands of US dollars.



Source: Authors, based on data retrieved from the International Trade Center (2024).

Brazilian exports represented the main bulk of Brazil-China total trade, and their increase surpassed that of the country's imports from this partner. In fact, in the period under study, Brazil's exports to China were almost three times greater than those to the United States and eight times greater than exports to Argentina, the second and third largest destinations respectively. In terms of participation, Brazil's exports to China, reached 30.7% of total exports in 2023, with the highest share in 2020 -during Bolsonaro's period-, accounting for 32.4%. (ITC, 2024). Analyzing these numbers, there is no doubt Brazil's trade relations with China reflected continuity during the whole period under study. This continuity is further demonstrated by the ongoing asymmetry in trade composition, which has only strengthened in recent years, emphasizing an interindustrial trade pattern. Since 2017, the majority of Brazil's main export products to China have consistently comprised an average of 86% of total items, indicating a highly concentrated portfolio. (International Trade Center, 2024) Until 2019, the four main products in Brazil's export basket were soya beans (42%), petroleum oil (22%), iron ores (18%), and chemical wood pulp (5%). In 2020, after Beijing granted permission in September 2019 to 25 additional Brazilian beef, pork and poultry plants to ship to the country (Bloomberg, 2019), meat became the fourth exported item, a position that was reinforced in the following years, accounting for 9% of total exports in average between 2020 and 2023.

Chinese investments have also become increasingly relevant for Brazil since 2009. As Sawicka (2020) recalls, that year the China Development Bank provided Petrobras with a loan of 10 billion USD, and in 2010, the State Grid Corporation of China, the largest power company in the world, acquired seven Brazilian companies in the electric energy sector. Moreover, in 2016, State Grid purchased a controlling stake in Brazil's largest power distributor, CPFL. Between 2005 and 2022, this South American country was the world's fourth largest recipient of Chinese investment in the world. However, in recent



years, China has taken a more cautious and selective approach towards outbound investment for several reasons. The focus on domestic priorities and a more uncertain global geopolitical landscape have prompted Beijing to adapt its strategies and concentrate on key partners, such as Brazil. (Cariello, 2023)

During the Bolsonaro administration, the number of investment projects announced and confirmed showed a fluctuating trend. In 2019, projects announced were 31 and confirmed 24. But in 2020, as a clear result of the Covid-19 outbreak, confirmed investment projects plummeted to a total of 8. The years 2021 and 2022 portrayed a significant recovery, with 28 and 32 confirmed projects respectively. (Cariello, 2023) Then, despite Bolsonaro's hostile initial rhetoric towards China, "several cooperation agreements and sectorial MoUs were signed, resulting in the expansion of Chinese business operations in Brazil" (García et al, 2023, p. 8). In terms of flows, figures show that after a peak in 2017 (17.4 billion USD) -that was mainly due to State Grid's acquisition of a majority stake in CPFL for a total of 12.5 billion USD (García et al, 2023)- investments dropped to an average of 3.5 billion USD between 2018 and 2022. The main sectors receiving Chinese investments include energy, mining, automotive and finance. Between 2007-2022, measured by value, the electricity sector absorbed 45.5% of total investments by Chinese companies in Brazil, followed by oil extraction (30.4%), extraction of metallic minerals (6.2%), manufacturing industry (6.2%), infrastructure projects (4.4%) and agriculture (3.4%) (Cariello, 2023).

Overall, economic relations between Brazil and China remained stable during the Bolsonaro period in comparison with previous administrations, and although total figures are not still available, it is supposed to continue during Lula's current term. Both trade and investment flows reacted more to external conditions -such as the pandemic outbreak, China's domestic conditions, and international conflicts- than to Brazil's political changing orientation. In the aftermath, continuity rather than change or adjustment, was the result of a pragmatic lecture during Bolsonaro's years, that privileged material needs over ideology and political values in its relations with Beijing.

4. Brazil-China relations under Lula's third term

In the first hundred days of the new foreign policy under Lula's presidency, an attempt was made to reverse the negative impact of Bolsonaro's previous management on Brazil's foreign relations. Lula and his team diagnosed a deterioration in the country's image due to the dismantling of internal policies and an isolationist vision in the international arena. The objective of Brazilian Foreign Policy under the new government was to bring Brazil back to the world stage (de Sousa et al, 2023). The first hundred days of Lula's new foreign policy emphasized the reconstruction of Brazil's international image, the reorientation of bilateral relations with China and the search for opportunities for internal development, global projection and cooperation on crucial issues at the national level. worldwide (De Sousa et al, 2023).

During his first presidency from 2003 to 2010, Lula sought to strengthen ties with China, recognizing the country's growing economic power. He visited China four times during



his tenure, and in 2009, China surpassed the US to become Brazil's largest trading partner, a position it has held since then. This event can be seen in the context of the commodities boom of the early 2000s, which created a favorable environment not only for Brazil but also for other Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela, to deepen economic ties with China, then seen as a key market for their exports and a potential source of investment and technology transfer (Almeida, 2010).

Since President Lula took office again in early 2023, bilateral relations have significantly improved, with Lula seeking to rekindle the relationship with China and showing eagerness to develop bilateral trade and investment ties. In late March 2023, China and Brazil signed an agreement to settle all trade exchanges in their respective currencies rather than in US dollars. In April 2023, Lula continued the bilateral dialogue by meeting Xi in Beijing (Giaccaglia, 2024). This agreement, along with President Lula's comments during his visit to China, shows Brazil's willingness to disrupt the dominance of the US dollar as the primary trading currency, aligning with Beijing's aspirations to internationalize the renminbi (Da Rosa, 2024).

During President Lula's trip to China in 2023, over 20 agreements were signed, and high-level meetings took place, underscoring Brazil's renewed commitment to a robust and multifaceted relationship with the Asian powerhouse. During these meetings included the appointment of former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff as the new head of the BRICS Bank, underscores Brazil's renewed commitment to a robust and multifaceted relationship with the Asian powerhouse given that “Lula's decision seeks to give geopolitical relevance to this scheme” (Giaccaglia & Dussort, 2023, p. 9). Set against the backdrop of escalating tensions between China and the United States, Lula's visit reflects Brazil's pursuit of a pragmatic, mutually beneficial approach, consistent with its tradition of neutrality and negotiation in international affairs. Accompanied by a diverse delegation including ministers and governors, Lula's journey represents a significant step towards diversifying Brazil's foreign relations and exploring new avenues of cooperation in strategic sectors.

According to the Joint Declaration between the People's Republic of China and the Federative Republic of Brazil on the Deepening of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, released during the visit, the two countries intend to deepen cooperation in various fields and jointly address a wide range of issues, such as poverty reduction, social development, technological innovation, environmental protection, climate change, low-carbon economy, and digital economy (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2023). The bilateral agreements cover many of these fields and more, aiming to boost bilateral trade and investment across a wide range of industries, including trade facilitation, research and innovation cooperation, information and communication technology cooperation, industrial investment promotion, strengthening cooperation in the digital economy, cooperation between finance ministries, and social and rural development cooperation aimed at eradicating hunger and poverty. Moreover, the renewal of cooperation in the aerospace industry was highlighted, with the signing of documents to renew cooperation in the aerospace sector and restart the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite program (Huld, 2024).



"Under the new agreements, both sides agree to accelerate the development of CBERS-6, the sixth satellite built through their partnership, and to implement related projects within the China-Brazil Space Cooperation Program" (Huld, 2024), reflecting a joint effort to promote research and development of new technologies and undertake projects including technology transfer elements (Alcalá et al, 2023). Furthermore, agreements were made to facilitate trade in agricultural products, with efforts to digitalize customs procedures and promote cooperation in disease management that could affect bilateral trade and supply chain stability. Additionally, agreements were reached to resume Brazilian beef exports to China, although no timeline was provided for lifting the suspension (Da Rosa Muñoz, 2024). In June 2024, during another COSBAN Summit, Brazilian Vice President Geraldo Alckim met with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng in Beijing (Secretaria de Comunicação Social, 2024).

The dynamic evolution of Brazil-China relations under Lula's third term epitomizes the interplay of theoretical concepts elucidated within the framework of Brazilian foreign policy. Lula's pragmatic approach, characterized by a pursuit of autonomy and strategic partnerships, resonates with the notion of "pragmatic autonomy" as articulated by Rodrigues (2023). The reinvigoration of bilateral ties, spanning economic, technological, and environmental cooperation, underscores Brazil's pursuit of comprehensive strategic partnership, echoing Tokatlian's (1996) emphasis on foreign policy as an expression of national identity and strategic interests.

Final Remarks

In a developing country like Brazil, despite its GDP level and status as a global middle power, the material conditions linked to development needs set the pace for foreign policy decisions. During his campaign, Bolsonaro built an anti-communist, anti-Chinese rhetoric aligned with the Trump administration, which initially led to a cooling of relations with Beijing. Since the moment the new government comprehended that the economic ties with China were truly irreplaceable and that Brazil's well-being and economic stability depended on them, the President toned down his criticism and showed gestures of diplomatic rapprochement, particularly through official visits and the signing of economic agreements.

Unlike previous governments, the quest for autonomy was not in Bolsonaro's agenda towards China, but pragmatism, which is also a traditional feature of Brazilian foreign policy, gradually became a compass for managing the relationship. In the aftermath, economic pragmatism prevailed over ideological differences, and relations with China remained stable through most of Bolsonaro's administration and strengthened economic ties. Economic interests, and the unavoidable evidence that the relation with Beijing is a cornerstone of Brazil's economic progress, were the essence of continuity besides the outstanding political differences with previous governments.

Lula's return to power in 2023 signaled a shift back towards a more autonomous foreign policy orientation, also characterized by pragmatism. Under Lula's leadership, autonomy regained centrality as a guiding principle, aiming to balance Brazil's relationships with



central powers, namely China and the United States, while pursuing leadership aspirations in global issues like climate change and hunger eradication. This pragmatic autonomy acknowledges the complexities of the international system and seeks to maintain a balance between national interests and global realities.

Lula's government has clearly emphasized the central role China plays for Brazil, both bilaterally and multilaterally. However, times have changed. Geopolitical rivalry has intensified, the Global South has lost leverage, and multilateralism is under threat in a less flexible international environment. Lula now faces the dual challenge of restoring Brazil's international standing while addressing increasing domestic social and economic demands. Global conditions are not as favorable as they were during his previous administrations. Although the relationship with China remains pivotal, it must be leveraged in response to the shifting international dynamics and conditions.

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UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S STANCE IN SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS: THE CHINA MODE

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Abstract

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Sino-Brazilian relations were affected by the election in January 2019 of Jair Bolsonaro as President of Brazil. Various voices were raised on the topic of Sino-Brazilian relations, with some people believing that the attitude towards China that Bolsonaro held damaged Sino-Brazilian relations to a noticeable degree. However, several studies also suggested that the election of Jair Bolsonaro did not have any negative impact on Sino-Brazilian relations, in the form of actual results. In the post-epidemic era, with the new Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva taking office, Brazil and China's strategic



partnership seems to have been strengthened. Lula not only expressed his friendly attitude towards China after taking office, but also paid a state visit to China from April 12 to 15, 2023. China and Brazil subsequently signed the Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Federative Republic of Brazil on Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. China and Brazil not only continue to cooperate in trade, but have also expanded cooperation in aerospace, electronic technology and other fields. Using Guanxi theory as its theoretical framework, this paper studies China's attitude and policies towards Brazil during Covid-19 and after the epidemic, from a Chinese perspective. It analyses the different attitudes and policy orientations of Brazilian leaders towards China, as well as China's responses to ensure the maintenance of Sino-Brazilian relations, discussing the various actions taken.

Keywords

Sino-Brazilian relation, Guanxi Theory, Bolsonaro, Lula.

Resumo

Durante a pandemia de Covid-19, as relações sino-brasileiras foram afetadas pela eleição, em janeiro de 2019, de Jair Bolsonaro como Presidente do Brasil. Várias vezes se levantaram sobre o tema das relações sino-brasileiras, com algumas pessoas acreditando que a atitude de Bolsonaro em relação à China prejudicou as relações sino-brasileiras em um grau notável. No entanto, vários estudos também sugeriram que a eleição de Jair Bolsonaro não teve qualquer impacto negativo nas relações sino-brasileiras, na forma de resultados reais. Na era pós-epidemia, com a posse do novo presidente brasileiro, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a parceria estratégica do Brasil e da China parece ter sido fortalecida. Lula não apenas expressou sua atitude amigável para com a China após assumir o cargo, mas também fez uma visita de Estado à China de 12 a 15 de abril de 2023. A China e o Brasil assinaram posteriormente a Declaração Conjunta entre a República Popular da China e a República Federativa do Brasil em Aprofundamento da Parceria Estratégica Abrangente. A China e o Brasil não só continuam a cooperar no comércio, mas também expandiram a cooperação nos setores aeroespacial, tecnologia eletrônica e outros campos. Utilizando a teoria de Guanxi como referencial teórico, este artigo estuda a atitude e as políticas da China em relação ao Brasil durante a Covid-19 e após a epidemia, a partir de uma perspectiva chinesa. Analisa também as diferentes atitudes e orientações políticas dos líderes brasileiros em relação à China, bem como as respostas da China para garantir a manutenção das relações sino-brasileiras, discutindo as diversas ações tomadas.

Palavras-chave

Relações sino-brasileiras, Teoria de Guanxi, Bolsonaro, Lula.

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UNDERSTANDING CHINA'S STANCE IN SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS: THE CHINA MODE

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Introduction

The year 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Brazil, and after half a century of exchanges, the Sino-Brazilian relationship continues to develop. But this relationship has not always been problem-free, and this is related to the different governing strategies and attitudes of Brazilian leaders towards China. Looking back at former Brazilian President Bolsonaro's electoral campaign and the Covid-19 epidemic period, we can find that Sino-Brazilian relations fluctuated then. Particularly when national leaders make negative remarks, tensions will arise in official discourse between two countries. Under the dual influence of the epidemic and official discourse, cooperation between China and Brazil in various fields at the official level was hindered to a noticeable extent.

After being re-elected as President of Brazil in 2023, Lula continued his former friendly attitude towards China. He visited China in 2023 and signed a series of agreements in various fields with China. He emphasized China and strategic partnership (China, 2023b). China has been Brazil's largest trading partner and export destination for fourteen consecutive years. Brazil is China's largest trading partner and largest direct investment destination in Latin America (Bian, Zhuodan; Chen, Weihua; Xie, Zhao & Zhou, Yongshui, 2023). In 2023, the bilateral trade volume between China and Brazil was US\$181.53 billion, a year-on-year increase of 6.1%, of which China's import volume will be US\$122.42 billion, a year-on-year increase of 11.9%. It mainly consists of iron ore and its concentrate, soybeans, crude oil, paper pulp, and soybean oil, etc. (China, 2024c). It can be seen that China is the largest buyer of Brazilian products, especially agricultural products (Brasil, 2024). Based on the trade situation between China and Brazil, Lula has a positive attitude towards future cooperation and the development of bilateral relations between Brazil and China. Relations between China and Brazil appear to be getting closer.

Bolsonaro and Lula have exhibited different attitudes towards China. The Chinese government also responded accordingly to the different attitudes of the Brazilian government. Considering the results, the relationship between China and Brazil has not fundamentally changed. There is no doubt that the changing attitude of the Bolsonaro



government imposed certain obstacles on cooperation between the two countries in important areas (such as technology), and further made the Sino-Brazilian relation tense for a time. However, after the Lula government took office, faced with this more positive and friendlier attitude, the Chinese government quickly restored its friendly attitude towards Brazil.

This paper explores the impact of the changes in the attitudes of the two Brazilian leaders since Bolsonaro came to power in 2018 and the actual relations between China and Brazil, and how China responds to the behavioural patterns of the leaders of other countries, and their different attitudes and strategies towards China. This manuscript uses Guanxi Theory for this analysis. This research paper suggests that the interaction between the governments of China and Brazil reflects China's specific behaviour model—relationship model in international relations. This relationship model is a dynamic communication process and changes as the process changes. However, the relationship established through this model is long-term oriented, i.e. the two parties establish a trusting relationship and even a cooperative relationship with each other during their long-term interaction. In the case of China and Brazil, the two countries have a strong basis for trade relations. Although some tensions may arise due to the government's attitude, the foundation of the relationship previously established between the two countries has not been fundamentally shaken.

This paper uses commercial trade data, official visit data, and public speeches to illustrate Bolsonaro's propositions for diplomacy, investment and cooperation with regard to China during his administration (2019-2022), and since Lula took office in 2023. Firstly, this paper analyses official texts made by each government, in the form of speeches and interviews, to determine their different attitudes towards developing diplomatic relations with China. This manuscript also analyses the Chinese government's responses, and its attitude towards the Brazilian government. Secondly, this paper analyses the destinations for, and timing of, diplomatic visits under each administration and their intended goals, and then examines trends in international trade numbers and partnerships under each president. It is worth noting that China and Brazil's trade was undoubtedly affected by Covid-19 during Bolsonaro's administration. This manuscript will also take this into consideration. In addition to the above sources, I also use newspaper sources, other government publications, and academic research as auxiliary data to support the views presented in this paper.

Guanxi Theory: Understand Chinese mode

In order to understand China's attitude and foreign affairs, it is necessary to discuss the Chinese international relations theories which have been developed in modern China. Chinese scholars have developed international theories based on the Chinese cultural background, which inspired various thoughts and debates. For example, Yan Xuetong who was inspired by ancient Chinese political philosophy, developed the discussion of modern Chinese international relations (Yan, 2013). Even there was no specific concept of an "international society" or "international politics" in ancient China, it does not mean there was no international political thought. Ancient Chinese thoughts based on the idea



of “Tianxia (天下)”, which means the largest world in people's recognition, at that time was China in pre-Qin dynasty. This “Tianxia” concept is still used in modern world, to represent the whole earth. Thus, ancient Chinese thoughts could be treated as Chinese international political thought (Yan, 2013). Because of this, Yan compared the concept of “hegemony” in ancient Chinese thoughts with Western international theories, which share the similarity of “the great power” (Mearsheimer, 2001; Keohane & Nye, 1973; Yan, 2013). He also pointed out that the political power in ancient Chinese thoughts involves two aspects, namely the ability to govern and the “virtue and self-cultivation” of important officials (Yan, 2013). Then he developed the concept of Moral Realism (Yan, 2014; Yan, 2023) and the idea of the leadership of the great power (Yan, 2019). Yan’s thought thus incorporated of human authority into international relations (Paltiels, 2011). Paltiels claims that Yan’s discussion can be regarded as the contribution of Chinese scholars to international relations study (Paltiels, 2011). Yan’s ideas concentrate on the discussion of the connections between power, leadership and norms, and debates on conflicts. However, there is a lack of discussion on finding a solution to the problem of cooperation (Paltiels, 2011).

Another Chinese scholar, Ye Zicheng, has introduced the geopolitical discussion of China’s relations with various countries (Ye, 2010). He claims that “different countries have different requirements for comprehensive national power” (Ye, 2010, p33). He explains national strength as a combination of ability to survive, capacity for development and international influence (Ye, 2010). Thus, a national state may have different requirements for its national strength in different periods. From a geopolitical view, China has different strategic choices to its neighbouring countries, both large countries (i.e. Russia, Japan, India) and small countries (i.e. Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam). Ye emphasizes the importance of developing the economy, together with the anxiety and suspicion brought by China’s fast development (Ye, 2010). In general, Ye has provided a diversity to discussions on Chinese international relations rather than developing any specific theory.

When it comes to Sino-Brazilian relations, I chose Guanxi theory, which is suitable because of its relational perspective. The Guanxi theory proposed by Qin Yaqing is now considered as being able to explain China's contemporary international relations (Nordin, Smith, Bunskoek, Huang, Hwang, Jackson & Nakamura, 2019; Kavalski, 2022; Eisenman, 2023). Guanxi Theory is based on the Chinese social and cultural background, and exhibits Chinese characteristics. Unlike Western society, which takes the independent individual as the basic unit, the thinking mode of Chinese society is “family, country and the world.” (Qin, 2018) Whether it is family, country or the world, they are all collections of individuals. In other words, the identity of an individual is closely related to groups. The identity of an individual changes according to the different groups to which she or he belongs. Due to this Chinese cultural value, one critique of Guanxi theory is whether it could be sufficiently universal in the field of international relations. In fact, Guanxi theory provides a relational aspect, which is also reflected in the “relational turn” in Western international relations studies (Kavalski, 2017). Guanxi theory explains that the establishment of a network of relationships is dynamic, and that actors influence each other in the process of establishing relationships. Individuals also form new groups and establish new relationships because of interactions between the different groups to which



they belong. Qin describes international relations as a set of intertwined binary relationships, each of which represents a unique connection in the unique social connection group of both parties (Eisenman, 2023). Guanxi theory is claimed to provide a better explanation of the "complex, eclectic, and non-objective blend" in interactions between cultural universals and culturally specific patterns (Chen, 2011).

Qin argues that from the perspective of relational logic, the influence and power of actors come from their larger circle of relationships, and other closer and more important actors. These circles have higher social prestige, and manipulation of circles is an important source of their influence (Qin, 2016). This means that in Guanxi Theory, actors become more powerful by sharing resources with other actors through established relationships rather than by simply using their own resources. Relational logic is not altruism (Xue, 2023), but a strategic move. It is carried out with the expectation of receiving more loyalty and reciprocity from the recipient. This practice is not just to achieve the short-term interests of others, but to regard others as part of their long-term self-interest (Kavalski, 2017; Xue, 2023). States gain power and resources by establishing relationships. Although there is a lack of discussion of hierarchy in Guanxi Theory, especially the forced obedience of weak countries to strong countries, for the sake of maintaining relationships and long-term interests, great powers should obey stricter international norms while giving marginalized weaker countries room to manoeuvre (Shih, & Huwang, 2014). In other words, only when weak countries can truly obtain resources from big countries and transform them into their own interests can they establish a long-term reciprocal mechanism. The acquisition generated through relationships is two-way, and both the strong and weak parties in the relationship can interact and exchange through the establishment of a relationship network. Therefore, the focus is not on any specific individual, but on the specific nature of the interactive relationship between individuals.

Guanxi Theory emphasizes social norms and trust building in relationships (Qin, 2018). Mutual respect and mutual respect are necessary conditions for China to achieve its relationship management goals and are also the focus of China's normative power. (Qin, 2018; Kavalski, 2017; Xue, 2023; Kavalski, 2013). Xue (2023) points out the difference between the concept of "respect" under Chinese norms and Western ideas in modern international politics. He believes that the Treaty of Westphalia emphasizes the principle of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The United Nations Charter explicitly advocates and encourages respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, regardless of race, gender, language or religion. This respect is based on the premise of "respect for what I say, not what I do." The logic of relations emphasizes that Beijing's normative power makes other countries participate in the practice of mutual respect - that is, "they do as China does" (Xue, 2023). Following this understanding, China emphasizes the practicality of respect rather than following certain clearly defined values and rules. For long-term considerations, China often adopts a continuous attitude in establishing and maintaining diplomatic relations. Even if conflicts arise in the short term, China will tend to take actions to safeguard its long-term interests. Such actions may manifest themselves in different ways depending on diplomatic style, but the common point is the emphasis on the long-term development of relations and interests. However, most of the debate regarding Guanxi theory still



concentrates on the relations that have been built already. There's a lack of discussion on the interactions to develop new relations. From this aspect, the development of new relations relies on a "middleman", that is a third party that has already built relations and trust with those two sides.

In recent years, China's foreign policy discourse has always tried to emphasize harmony, reciprocity and respect for differences. In Guanxi Theory, the interaction process of actors is also a process of mutual tolerance (Qin, 2018). Individuals with different natures can coexist in the process of interaction, rather than by one party eliminating the other. Similarly, competition, conflict or struggle may also exist. But actors can achieve the so-called state of coexistence through bargaining or mutual transformation in the process of interaction. This enables actors to better practice mutual respect and reciprocity (Berenskoetter, 2007), that is, the "seeking common ground while reserving differences" emphasized by Chinese society. Under the constraints of this norm, actors try to transform the resources of others into part of their own interests by coexisting with other actors with different characteristics, and at the same time, their own resources will also be transformed into part of the interests of others. Based on this logic, when understanding China's diplomatic model, it is inseparable from the discussion of actual resources and interests. In the Sino-Brazilian relation, this especially refers to trade exchanges. The following section explores the characteristics of China's behaviour model in the face of the different attitudes exhibited by the two Brazilian leaders towards China.

The Bolsonaro government and Covid-19: Changing bilateral relations

Former Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro had some very distinct political characteristics. During his administration, the diplomatic discourse between China and Brazil fluctuated between positive and tense. As a right-wing politician, Bolsonaro, as could be expected, aligned himself with the right-wing US President Donald Trump, who was in power from 2017 to 2021, interrupting good relations with China (Damacena, 2021). In 2018, during Bolsonaro's campaign, he was nicknamed Tropical Trump, and as a presidential candidate he made clear his desire to realign foreign policy, forge closer ties with the United States, and distance Brazil from its growing ties with China and other emerging powers (Lapper, 2019). In February 2018, Bolsonaro visited Taiwan. He became the first Brazilian presidential candidate to visit Taiwan since Brazil recognized Beijing as the sole Chinese government in 1979 (Agência Lusa, 2018). The visit to the island was part of a tour of East Asia that includes Japan and South Korea but did not include China (Santoro, 2018), Brazil's largest trading partner. In Taipei, Bolsonaro called Taiwan "one country" and said it was the best of the United States and Japan combined (Santoro, 2022). The move prompted condemnation from China. The Chinese Embassy in Brazil issued a letter condemning Bolsonaro's trip to Taiwan as "an insult to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity" (Andreoni, 2018). This raised concerns about whether the presidential candidate would affect Sino-Brazilian relations (Spring, 2018).

Among other comments, Bolsonaro portrayed China as a predatory economic power during his campaign (Lapper 2019; China Daily, 2018). On the China issue, the Brazilian leader has often expressed concerns about Chinese purchasing land in Brazil, citing national security concerns to avoid Chinese state-owned enterprises participating in the



privatization process of government energy companies (Gabriel, Mandelbaum, Campos & Carvalho, 2019). He claimed during his campaign that Beijing is not only “buying things from Brazil, but also buying Brazil (Andreoni, 2018).” China's official English-language newspaper “China Daily” admitted in an editorial that Beijing authorities and Chinese companies operating in Brazil were questioning the extent to which Brazil's new leader would affect relations between the two countries (China Daily, 2018). In 2018, Chinese investment in Brazil fell by more than 60% (Cariello, 2018). This may have been due to Chinese investors' concerns that Bolsonaro could make changes in Brazil's existing China policy after taking office (Zheng, 2020). In response to Bolsonaro's attitude, the China daily newspaper wrote that “Dumping China [...] may serve some specific political purpose”, but “the economic cost can be backbreaking for the Brazilian economy” (China Daily, 2018). This view was similar to that of some academics and analysts. Maurício Santoro, professor of International Relations at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, said that from a pragmatic perspective, Bolsonaro would continue to maintain friendly relations with China once he entered the government (Andreoni, 2018), and that Brazil's agricultural sector had benefited from China's feud with Trump, especially in the wake of the U.S.-China trade war. China sharply reduced its purchases of U.S. soybeans, making up the difference with Brazilian grain. Brazil's soybean exports to China increased by 22% in 2018 and currently accounts for approximately 80% of Brazil's total soybean exports (Voice of America, 2018). From China's perspective, maintaining trade relations with Brazil is important. The economies of China and Brazil are considered “truly complementary” and have “few competitors” (China Daily, 2018). At this stage, though it was difficult to say that Bolsonaro's political ideology had changed Sino-Brazilian relations, all sectors of society were generally concerned about the friendly relations between China and Brazil. Obviously, part of the exchange of interests in the Sino-Brazilian relation came from trade. From the perspective of maintaining long-term trade relations with Brazil, China tried to express its hope that friendly relations could continue by emphasizing the close economic and trade cooperation between the two countries.

Bolsonaro has always regarded China as one of Brazil's most important ideological rivals, yet portraying China as an enemy has political and economic consequences (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). China is Brazil's largest trading partner and consumes most of Brazil's agricultural and mining exports. These goods account for 80% of Brazil's total exports to China (Zhang & Jin, 2020). To many Bolsonaro supporters, China is far more important than the United States. Brazilian farmers' decisive support for Bolsonaro's electoral victory could be undermined by a tougher stance on China. As Bolsonaro continued to view China as an adversary, even discussing with U.S. authorities during a visit to Washington how to reduce Brazil's dependence on China, important supporters began to complain about the government's anti-China bias (Folha de São Paulo, 2019).

Bolsonaro's criticism of Chinese investment did not last long. After Bolsonaro was elected, his government made friendly gestures towards Chinese investment. On March 8, 2019, Bolsonaro announced that he would visit China later that year (Verdélío, 2019). On May 24, 2019, the Brazilian Vice President Mourao paid an official visit to China. Mourao emphasized that the new Brazilian government led by President Bolsonaro continued to attach great importance to relations with China (China, 2019b). The leaders of the two countries expressed their willingness to further expand trade cooperation while opposing



unilateralism and trade protectionism. Mourao's visit was seen as an attempt to create a friendlier atmosphere between the two countries, following Bolsonaro's visit to Taiwan. However, at Bolsonaro's personal request, Mourao eventually had to give up his favourable position towards Beijing (Junqueira, 2019; Guimarães & Silva, 2021). This is obviously inconsistent with the attitude expressed by Bolsonaro in his official statement. As mentioned earlier, considering the real situation, Bolsonaro chose to send a friendly signal to China, but it does not mean that he had really changed his attitude towards China.

China did not adopt the same view towards Brazil as Bolsonaro did to China. This is specifically reflected in China's support for Brazil on the issue of Amazon fires (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). As fires in the Amazon begin to spiral out of control, Bolsonaro's government had to contend with growing international criticism from many quarters. The French President Emmanuel Macron said: "We cannot allow you (Bolsonaro) to destroy everything." This was considered an indirect challenge to Brazil's sovereignty in the region (Associated Press, 2019). Asked about the Amazon fires, Minister-Counsellor Qu Yuhui of the Chinese Embassy in Brasilia said Brazil has one of the most effective environmental laws in the world (Oliveira, 2019). Although the diplomat stressed that his views were personal and did not represent Beijing's official position, Brazil sees China's stance on the Amazon as a bridge to rebuild relations (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). As a result, Bolsonaro publicly announced approval of China's support for Brazil's sovereignty over the Amazon for the first time (Landim, 2019). Bolsonaro's attitude towards China has also begun to change. Since then, Bolsonaro has publicly expressed interest in visiting China to improve tense bilateral relations. On July 25, Bolsonaro met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to discuss relations between the two countries and his visit to China in October (China, 2019a). Bolsonaro said Brazil is very interested in deepening trade negotiations with China (Estadão Conteúdo, 2019). On October 25, during his visit to China, Bolsonaro stated that although he was dissatisfied with the unbalanced trade relationship between Sino-Brazilian during the election, he recognized the importance of Sino-Brazilian relations to Brazilian society (Zheng, 2020).

Interestingly, judging from the speeches made by the leaders of the two countries during this meeting, the two sides exhibited completely different attitudes. Bolsonaro's comments on China seemed to be more focused on economic and trade opportunities (Fernandes, 2019). He claimed that the only purpose of visiting China was to do business (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). He also commented that coming to China was "coming to a capitalist country (Senra, 2019)." In contrast, Chinese leader Xi Jinping's official speech emphasized the friendly development of bilateral relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, citing the principles of mutual respect, equal treatment, mutual benefit and win-win results and the outlook for future bilateral relations (China, 2019c). Chinese leaders often adopt the same pattern in such speeches, expressing a friendly attitude towards bilateral or multilateral relations by elaborating on the historical origins of establishing relations with other countries and looking forward to long-term cooperation in the future. A new term that began to appear in Brazilian-Chinese dialogue was "strategic partner". Despite the ideological differences between the two countries, Brazil was recommended to adopt a pragmatic approach toward China (Guimarães & Silva, 2021). As far as Bolsonaro's first year in power (2019) was



concerned, regardless of his attitude towards China, Bolsonaro generally conducted pragmatic diplomacy with China along the lines of strategic partnership (Santoro, 2022). The participation of Chinese state-owned enterprises in the November 2019 oil auction was politically significant—without Brazilian government approval, only Petrobras would have participated in the operation due to operating rules (Rosa, 2019). But at the same time, although Bolsonaro signed multiple infrastructure development and agricultural trade agreements with Chinese companies, he did not reach any major agreements with China in economic and technological cooperation as some optimistic observers had predicted (Zheng, 2020).

Up to the end of 2019, Sino-Brazilian relations seemed to be improving, but after the Covid-19 epidemic broke out, the Bolsonaro government's attitude towards China changed again. 2020 is considered the tensest year for the political relationship between China and Brazil, and even triggered a diplomatic crisis (Sawicka, 2020). Members of Bolsonaro's government began openly attacking China on social media. Eduardo Bolsonaro, a federal police officer who is the son of President Bolsonaro, likened the Covid-19 outbreak to the Chernobyl disaster, and accused the communist regime of hiding the truth in the wake of the pandemic and claimed that "freedom is the solution" (Bolsonaro, 2020). Chinese Ambassador Yang Wanming and the Chinese Embassy in Brazil responded quickly on social media, accusing Eduardo Bolsonaro's remarks of being an "evil insult against China and the Chinese people" (Yang, 2020). Subsequently, the Chinese Embassy in Brazil issued a severely worded statement expressing strong condemnation of Eduardo Bolsonaro (Laio, 2020). The statement emphasized that Eduardo's remarks are likely to have a negative impact on bilateral relations. These official statements from China attracted the attention of the Brazilian Congress. Rodrigo Maia, President of the Brazilian House of Commons, apologized to the Chinese Ambassador for Eduardo Bolsonaro's remarks on behalf of the House of Commons on social media (Maia, 2020). Hamilton Mourão and Ernesto Araújo also emphasized in interviews that the deputy's personal opinion does not represent the government's position (Sawicka, 2020). A similar situation occurred again shortly after the US national security adviser visited Brazil in November. Eduardo Bolsonaro accused Huawei's 5G technology on Twitter of bringing espionage and cybersecurity problems to Brazil. Although the post was deleted, the Chinese Embassy responded in harsher terms, stating that Eduardo's stance could lead to "negative consequences and bear historical responsibility for disrupting the normality of the partnership between China and Brazil" (Embaixada da China, 2020). Instead of taking action to calm the situation, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs preferred to criticize China for its offensive and disrespectful behaviour when it publicized its outrage on social media (de Sousa, Souza, da Fonseca, Carneiro, Abrão & dos Santos, 2020). Similarly, on the issue of the COVID-19 virus, President Bolsonaro himself has made no secret of his suspicion and made accusations against China. He has repeatedly stated that the coronavirus was deliberately created in a Chinese laboratory (Murakawa, 2021). He even explicitly hinted that the epidemic was a Chinese conspiracy in a public speech: "The military knows what chemical warfare, bacterial warfare and radioactive warfare are. Aren't we facing a new war? Which country has the highest GDP? I won't tell You. (Bolsonaro, 2021)"



It can be seen that Chinese diplomats in Brazil reacted to this situation with more confidence than in the past (Santoro, 2022). They chose to respond to critical remarks and demonstrate China's attitudes and views directly through the news or social media. This approach is considered the new "Wolf Warrior" Chinese diplomacy of the Xi Jinping years (Martin, 2021). It should be pointed out that this approach is not aimed at the bilateral relations between China and Brazil, but is a change in the overall style of China's diplomacy. Compared with the low-key diplomatic orientation adopted by China in the 1990s and early 2000s, China's diplomacy during the epidemic period was more robust (Martin, 2021). This exchange between Chinese diplomats and Brazilian politicians is also considered as being unprecedented. While China's assertive style of diplomacy spreads around the world, it also appears to be intensifying in Brazil (Santoro, 2022). This may be due to the fact that this is possible in the case of Brazil. Brazil's dependence on the Chinese market gives China more room to manoeuvre. For example, there is no fear that a national government will declare its diplomatic personnel *persona non grata* and deport them (Santoro, 2022). However, some scholars believe that in the face of deliberately biased remarks, the Chinese authorities are limited to issuing notes denying conspiracy theories and repudiating Sinophobia in Brazil. The lack of a tougher stance could be a signal to members of Bolsonaro's government that demonstrating Sinophobia has no real consequences (Quinan, Araujo & De Albuquerque, 2021). On the one hand, China does not want to break off friendly relations with Brazil, as that would have a huge negative impact on the mutual interests of the two countries. On the other hand, due to the change in the attitude of Brazilian leaders, which showed a trend of breaking away from the previous norms of interaction between China and Brazil, the Sino-Brazilian relation has also fluctuated. China has chosen to adopt a relatively tough attitude to try to maintain the relationship between the two countries under the original norms.

Bolsonaro's negative comments about China have not stopped. The narrative surrounding the COVID-19 viral disease has gradually shifted from the concept of "Chinese virus" to "Chinese vaccine." (Ramos, Leite & Mendonça, 2024). Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello announced his intention to purchase 46 million doses of Coronavac, a vaccine against COVID-19 from the Chinese laboratory Sinovac Biotech, tested in Brazil by the Butantan Institute. Less than 24 hours after the news, Bolsonaro fired his health minister and said the Brazilian government "will not buy" Coronavac (Farias & Gullino 2020). Bolsonaro's rationale is that "any vaccine must be scientifically proven by the Ministry of Health and certified by Anvisa before being made available to the public" (UOL, 2020). At the same time, another COVID vaccine was also in Phase 3 testing, but it not yet proved its efficacy, and not been authorized for use by Anvisa. That vaccine received a special approval of 1.9 billion reais from the Brazilian government for the purchase, production, and distribution of 100 million units of the vaccine (de Sousa et al., 2020). The president made no secret of his fear of China when considering vaccine: "We're not buying from China. I don't think it gives people a sense of security because of its origins. That's what we think" (Bolsonaro & Paraguassu, 2020). Bolsonaro's behaviour during the epidemic is considered to be a continuous use of social fears to transform false narratives into official national discourse and public policies. (Kalil I., Silveira, Pinheiro, Kalil A., Pereira, Azarias & Amparo, 2021)



Bolsonaro's comments led some key players to begin linking delays in deliveries of active pharmaceutical ingredients from China to the disastrous conduct of Brazilian diplomacy under Bolsonaro (Ramos, Leite & Mendonça, 2024). The president of the Butantan Institute, Dimas Covas said that the Bolsonaro government's attacks on China led to delays and reductions in the delivery of raw materials needed for vaccine manufacturing, and that multiple delays in sending immunizers could be understood as diplomatic retaliation (Oliveira, 2021). Chinese Ambassador to Brazil Yang Wanming denied such diplomatic retaliation and delayed delivery of the CoronaVac vaccine, saying that the delay was due to high demand for the vaccine (UOL, 2021). However, after Trump stepped down, Bolsonaro immediately changed his tone and showed favour to China. Bolsonaro said during the vaccine negotiations between China and Brazil that Brazil needed China and China needed Brazil, "I hope China can help Brazil regardless of past doubts" (Marques & Lázaro, 2021). He reiterated the trade relationship between China and Brazil and emphasized China's need to purchase agricultural products from Brazil. Domestically, political groups in Brazil have put pressure on the government to adjust bilateral relations. For example, telecom companies that do business with Huawei have pressured the Bolsonaro government not to implement major changes (de Sousa, Gajus, Porto, Freitas, Abrão, Rodrigues, Silva & Santos, 2022). The defeat of Donald Trump and the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States prevented Bolsonaro from establishing a good relationship with Biden, making alliance plans with Washington unfeasible (Berringer, Soprijo, Almeida, Mitake & Antoniazzi, 2021). Factors at home and abroad in Brazil caused the Bolsonaro government's change of attitude.

In general, during Bolsonaro's administration, he always regarded China as Brazil's political and ideological opponent. But when confronted by a real situation, especially trade and COVID-19, Bolsonaro has shown that his attitude towards China is not always consistent with his diplomacy. China's diplomatic stance has also become tougher. The Sino-Brazilian relationship was tense during Bolsonaro's administration and has continued to fluctuate. The Sino-Brazilian relation went through a period where it was not considered a priority (Lopes, Carvalho, Thales & Santos, 2022). The bilateral relationship was ultimately dominated by pragmatism and still maintained a certain degree of cooperation that was not completely destroyed. From China's perspective, the persistence of the Sino-Brazilian relation has been emphasized several times in diplomatic speeches, which shows that China attaches great importance to the long-term goal of establishing and maintaining a network of relations. In Sino-Brazilian relations, China and Brazil each obtained what they needed. It is true that the Bolsonaro government may have had different views on the benefits and power that Brazil could obtain in this relationship. But the Bolsonaro government does not seem to have been able to gain greater benefits from the changing relationship. China's attempt to maintain the original relationship status and resource exchange has also prevented the bilateral relationship from undergoing major changes due to the Bolsonaro government's governing philosophy.



The Lula government: friendly and close cooperation in the new era

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva maintained good cooperative relations with China during his first two terms in power (2003-2010). This previously established good relationship laid a secure foundation for Sino-Brazilian relations after he took office again. For the Lula government, China is strategic for Brazil from both a political and economic perspective (Berringer & Belasques, 2020). For China, this means that Brazil and China have established and followed a set of behavioural norms in their interactions, and both sides are willing to continue to be bound by such norms and conduct a new round of continuous exchanges of interests. After the start of the new term, the Lula government believed that Brazil's foreign relations were negatively affected by the Bolsonaro government (Brasil, 2022). One of the important foreign policies of the Lula government has been to try to rebuild the tense relations with China (de Sousa, Abrão, & de Souza Porto, 2023). Lula said in a speech that Brazil hopes to establish a relationship with China that goes beyond economics and trade (Brasil, 2023b). This means that Brazil and China have again become strategically related in Brazil's global diplomacy. In 2022, Lula announced that China would be one of his first visit destinations after taking office (Chade, 2022), and China sent Vice President Wang Qishan to attend the inauguration ceremony of President Lula (China, 2022). This shows that China attaches great importance to bilateral relations and has not changed due to the ups and downs during the term of former President Bolsonaro. This was also considered to be a symbol of renewed political reconciliation between Brazil and China (de Sousa et al., 2023). After taking office, Lula quickly moved to repair relations with China. In March 2023, Brazil and China reached an agreement that they will no longer use the U.S. dollar as the intermediate currency in the future but will instead use their own currencies for trade settlements (Martello, 2023). Since China is Brazil's largest trading partner, this has a great impact on reducing trade costs between the two sides. In September, the first fully closed-loop transaction using the currencies of the two countries for trade settlement was realized (Sá, 2023). That is to say that, compared with their previous trade relationship, China and Brazil have expanded their cooperation to the financial field and bypassed the US dollar for transactions. In their interactions, the two sides have begun to expand the areas of norm-building and the influence of their relationship.

Although Lula's visit to China was postponed due to illness, it did not affect an eventual meeting between the leaders of the two countries. Lula visited China from April 12 to 15, 2023. The leaders of the two countries signed a series of cooperation agreements and issued a joint statement on deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership (China, 2023). Compared with the joint statement issued during Bolsonaro's visit to China, bilateral relations now showed a clear relaxation. The statement expressed the view that both parties believe that President Lula's visit was a complete success and is of great significance in the history of bilateral relations (China, 2023). Considering the specific content of the talks, Lula's visit involved more cooperation areas and more detailed plans. Whether in terms of discourse or specific measures, the relationship between China and Brazil became more positive during Lula's visit. At the same time, compared with former President Bolsonaro's visit to China, the agreement signed by Lula with China emphasized the field of industrial science and technology, especially communications, satellites and aerospace cooperation plans (China, 2024c). This is consistent with the Lula



government's mission to "reindustrialize Brazil and promote more competitive international integration" (Brasil, 2022).

This also triggered Brazil's consideration of improving the quality of bilateral relations when re-establishing close relations with China. As mentioned earlier, Brazil's exports to China mainly focus on bulk commodities, and it is necessary to seek diversification in commodities (Brasil, 2023a). However, considering the low competitiveness and complexity of the Brazilian economy, the main difficulty in increasing the export of high value-added products is structural (Rocha, de Oliveira, Porto, Neiva & Pina, 2022). Lula also attempted to improve the situation during his visit to China. The two sides signed an agreement on health requirements for animal protein trade, which is beneficial to Brazil's agricultural exports (Brasil, 2023a). However, it must be admitted that under the current sales situation of Brazil's national industry, it is difficult to realize the interests and diversification of Brazil's agricultural export base (de Sousa et al., 2023). In addition to the commercial aspect, the Lula government focuses on cooperation between China and Brazil for finding Chinese investment to achieve the country's goals of reindustrialization, job creation and technological advancement (Brasil, 2023b). In other words, Brazil hopes to seek more resources owned by China in the interaction and to be able to transform them into its own interests. This kind of interest acquisition is long-term oriented. In this model, the Sino-Brazilian relation becomes closer through continuous reciprocity.

Compared with the Bolsonaro government, the Lula government is more pragmatic and has a friendlier attitude towards China. In 2023, Brazil's exports to China will increase by 16.6%, reaching US\$104.31 billion. This increase significantly exceeded the 1.7% increase in Brazil's total exports (Exame, 2024). This reflects the strong and diverse business partnership between Brazil and China that continues to strengthen. In addition to this, although Brazil has chosen not to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it has expressed interest in studying the synergies between Brazil's development policies, investment plans and South American regional integration initiatives and the BRI. (23-6). For China, this does not affect the progress of Brazil-China relations. When meeting with Lula, Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that the two sides should strengthen the strategic alignment between the joint construction of the "Belt and Road" and Brazil's "re-industrialization" and "accelerated growth plan" (China, 2024a). 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Brazil. Wang Yi said in his speech that China and Brazil would work together to create the next "golden 50 years" of bilateral relations (China, 2024d). In addition, Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim, Chief Special Advisor to the President of Brazil, visited China at the end of May (China, 2024b). This shows that the Sino-Brazilian relation have become closer. Both China and Brazil have shown a positive attitude towards cooperation and the intention to maintain the long-term development of relations.

In general, the Lula government has repositioned the Sino-Brazilian relation after taking office. Brazil's attitude towards China has undergone significant changes. Faced with the friendly attitude shown by the Brazilian government, the Chinese government has responded equally positively. Changes in Brazil's foreign policy have also expanded cooperation between China and Brazil from agriculture to technology. It can be said that the Lula government's re-establishment of bilateral relations has achieved results. From



China's perspective, the bilateral relations between China and Brazil have a long-term foundation and will not be easily shaken. And out of long-term considerations for future development, even under the influence of the previous Brazilian president, China tends to maintain the previously established interaction model and maintain its interests. Lula's friendly attitude has repaired the previous tension in the Sino-Brazilian relation, making bilateral relations closer and allowing more exchanges and cooperation in various fields. Sino-Brazilian relations have entered a period of close cooperation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Since the beginning of 2019, Sino-Brazilian relations have experienced tensions, and fluctuations, but now they have rebuilt a close and friendly relationship. It's clear that the changing attitudes of Brazilian leaders affect the Sino-Brazilian relation. Based on the Guanxi perspective, the previously built relations and trust between China and Brazil helped to reanimate current relations. The Bolsonaro government's view of China as an ideological rival has affected Brazil's attitude towards China. Therefore, the Bolsonaro government tried to reduce its interactions with China, and China was no longer Brazil's leading priority. This was so much so that during Bolsonaro's term, although China and Brazil had a number of agreements and cooperation exchanges, they were not as numerous or important as those of the later Lula government. As long as China's national sovereignty is not compromised, China's attitude towards Brazil remains friendly and cooperative, and this is also based on the previous bilateral relations between China and Brazil. When the Bolsonaro government repeatedly made negative remarks against China due to COVID-19, China showed a tougher attitude than in the past. Even so, when China responded to the Bolsonaro government, it emphasized the healthy and friendly development of Sino-Brazilian relations in the past, and at the same time tried to warn the Brazilian government to consider the overall situation and maintain a good environment for the development of bilateral relations.

The historical origins of bilateral relations are a recurring expression in China's official narrative. For China, bilateral relations and even multilateral relations are based on long-term orientation. As the explanation of Guanxi theory, this long-term oriented relationship builds trust through the interaction between the two parties, and even a specific model or norm, which provides a certain foundation and guarantee for future relationships. Under this model, even if bilateral relations fluctuate due to different diplomatic strategies of leaders, there is still some room for relaxation. When both parties change due to diplomatic strategies and political goals, the trust and models established through previous long-term relationships will also have an impact on new cooperation and negotiations. In the Sino-Brazilian relationship, Lula has reached cooperation and consensus with China during his previous two terms, establishing a foundation of trust, so much so that after Lula started his new term, he aimed to repair the Sino-Brazilian relations. On this basis, China quickly responded with positive feedback and expressed its willingness to deepen Sino-Brazilian relations.

Apart from official statements, neither China nor Brazil has taken direct actions to damage relations between the two countries. Whether it was the Bolsonaro government's criticism of China or China's counterattack against similar criticism, most of the steps



stop at the diplomatic discourse-level on official websites. Perhaps out of pragmatism, despite various criticisms of China by the Bolsonaro government, China has not taken any action to sever relations between the two countries. China and Brazil have close economic and trade ties. Obviously, the political strategies of the Bolsonaro government and the Lula government towards China were different. The Bolsonaro government tended to distance itself from China and approach closer to the United States. But such a strategy meant destroying the interaction model and interest exchange that China and Brazil had established over a long period. The Lula government chooses to continue to maintain the reciprocal model with China and tries to seek further development on this basis to establish a closer bilateral relationship. Whether it is the Bolsonaro government or the Lula government, when dealing with the Sino-Brazilian relations, they need to consider the actual impact of weakening or strengthening this relationship. Out of long-term considerations for bilateral relations, China is relatively cautious about diplomatic discourse or political measures that may affect bilateral relations. Regardless of whether China's diplomatic style is tough or not, at this stage, China does not want to damage Sino-Brazilian relations. Therefore, although the Sino-Brazilian relations were once strained due to the attitude of the Bolsonaro government, under the friendly attitude of the Lula government, China can restore its close ties with Brazil based on the trust and interaction model that has been established.

In general, China pays more attention to long-term interests and maintaining long-term relationships when establishing and developing diplomatic relations. A mutually beneficial situation can only be achieved when both sides can achieve resource sharing through interaction and transform it into their own interests. Only when both sides recognize that relationships and interactions can bring benefits to themselves and actively abide by the behavioural norms and profit models established through interaction can this relationship be sustained and deepened. When one side questions the relationship, as in the actions taken by the Bolsonaro government, it often causes fluctuations or even stagnation in the relationship. In the face of the other side's doubts, China may adopt different ways of diplomatic discourse, either tough or gentle. But no matter what diplomatic style, China prefers to maintain the existing mutually beneficial model. This also enabled the Lula government to smoothly ease the legacy of tense Sino-Brazilian relations from the Bolsonaro government and promote the expansion of China-Brazil interaction to more and new areas.

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THREE DECADES OF BRAZIL-CHINA RELATIONS: MAPPING SCHOLARLY DISCOURSE AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, China and Brazil have developed a robust and multifaceted relationship characterized by cooperation across various sectors. This relationship extends into numerous areas, including poverty reduction, social development, scientific and technological innovation, environmental protection, climate change mitigation, the low-carbon economy, and the digital economy. Despite the substantial bilateral relations between Brazil



and China, we are particularly interested in understanding the discussions within the scientific literature over the past 30 years and identifying new avenues for future research. To achieve this objective, we conducted an extensive Systematic Literature Review and applied bibliometric laws and lexical analyses to a total of 208 studies. The bibliometric analyses revealed that the peak of publications involving Brazil and China occurred in 2016. The scientific journal that published the greatest number of articles was the International Organisations Research Journal of the Russian Federation, and the most prolific author was Professor Mihaela Papa from Tufts University in the U.S. We identified four central research lines that could be developed in future studies: (i) Emerging Geopolitical Dynamics and the Role of BRICS; (ii) Economic and Trade Relationships within BRICS; (iii) South-South Cooperation and Alternative Development Models; (iv) Interdisciplinary Perspectives on BRICS.

Keywords

Bibliometric laws, Bilateral cooperation, BRICS, Lexical Analysis, South-South cooperation, Trade Relationship.

Resumo

Ao longo dos últimos 30 anos, a China e o Brasil desenvolveram uma relação sólida e multifacetada, caracterizada pela cooperação em vários setores. Essa relação se estende a diversas áreas, incluindo redução da pobreza, desenvolvimento social, inovação científica e tecnológica, proteção ambiental, mitigação das mudanças climáticas, economia de baixo carbono e economia digital. Apesar das consideráveis relações recíprocas entre o Brasil e a China, estamos particularmente interessados em entender as discussões na literatura científica dos últimos 30 anos e identificar novas oportunidades para pesquisas futuras. Para atingir esse objetivo, realizamos uma extensa Revisão Sistemática da Literatura (RSL) e aplicamos leis bibliométricas e análises lexicais a um total de 208 estudos. As análises bibliométricas revelaram que o pico de publicações envolvendo o Brasil e a China ocorreu em 2016. A revista científica com a maior quantidade de publicações foi a International Organisations Research Journal da Federação Russa, e o autor mais prolífico foi a professora Mihaela Papa, da Universidade Tufts, nos EUA. Identificamos quatro linhas de pesquisa centrais que podem ser desenvolvidas em estudos futuros: (i) Dinâmica Geopolítica Emergente e o Papel do BRICS; (ii) Relações Econômicas e Comerciais dentro do BRICS; (iii) Cooperação Sul-Sul e Modelos Alternativos de Desenvolvimento; (iv) Perspectivas Interdisciplinares sobre o BRICS.

Palavras-chave

Leis bibliométricas, Cooperação bilateral, BRICS, Análise lexical, Cooperação Sul-Sul, Relação comercial.

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THREE DECADES OF BRAZIL-CHINA RELATIONS: MAPPING SCHOLARLY DISCOURSE AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

RODRIGO FRANKLIN FROGERI

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Introduction

China and Brazil established diplomatic relations on September 8, 1974 (MFA-Brazil, 2024). However, it was not until 1993 that the two countries began to significantly strengthen their ties, marked by the visit of Chinese Vice-premier Zhou Rongji to Brazil in May 1993 and the establishment of strategic partnership (MFA-Brazil, 2024). This visit initiated a series of high-level engagements that underscored the growing importance of their bilateral relationship (Cardoso, 2013; Oliveira, 2004). President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's initial visit to China in 2004, aimed at strengthening trade and economic cooperation (MFA-Brazil, 2024). The momentum was sustained with Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to Brazil in 2012, which underscored the necessity for enhanced cooperation in sectors such as energy and infrastructure (Barker, 2013). In 2014, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff visited China, with a particular focus on trade and investment (Busilli & Jaime, 2021).

During his initial presidency from 2003 to 2010, President Lula da Silva aimed to strengthen relations with China, acknowledging the nation's burgeoning economic influence (De Melo & Do Amaral Filho, 2015). President Lula da Silva visited China four times during his tenure, and in 2009, China overtook the U.S. to become Brazil's largest trading partner (Rhys, 2012). This shift underscored the increasing economic interdependence between the two countries. In 2012, the signing of the China-Brazil Free Trade Agreement aimed to reduce tariffs and increase trade between the two nations. The agreement went into effect in 2013, further solidifying their economic partnership (Whalley & Medianu, 2013). Consequently, China has emerged as Brazil's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade volumes expanding from \$1.3 billion in 1993 to over \$130 billion in 2023 (MDIC, 2024). Brazil has also become one of China's largest trading partners in Latin America (Cunha, da Silva Bichara & Lélis, 2013; Hsiang, 2008).

Educational and technological cooperation between China and Brazil has also seen substantial growth (Andrade & García, 2021). The establishment of bilateral cooperation China-Brazil in areas as climate change (CGTN, 2018), energy (CNPEM, 2023), and



Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (Sousa & Sousa, 2023) exemplifies this collaboration. Research and development in areas such as renewable energy and biotechnology, fostering innovation and technological advancement (Gandenberger & Strauch, 2018). Additionally, China's investment in Brazil's infrastructure development has been significant, particularly in the areas of transportation (Oliveira & Myers, 2021) and energy (Busilli & Jaime, 2021). Agricultural cooperation has also been a cornerstone of their relationship (Rhys, 2012). China has become one of Brazil's largest agricultural export markets, and the two countries have collaborated on agricultural research and development, strengthening their agricultural ties (Cunha, da Silva Bichara & Lélis, 2013; Hsiang, 2008).

Cultural exchanges have been instrumental in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between China and Brazil (Leandro, 2023; Vérasi & Vérás, 2013). The Brazilian Cultural Program aims to enhance cultural ties and foster a deeper appreciation of each nation's heritage and traditions (CTG, 2021).

Both nations are members of the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), which convenes annual summits to enhance cooperation in trade, investment, and social development (Kirton & Larionova, 2022; Porto de Oliveira & Romano, 2022). This multilateral cooperation has provided a platform for China and Brazil to collaborate on global issues and enhance their bilateral relations (Leta, Machado & Canchumani, 2019).

However, the period from 2019 to 2023 saw a cooling of relations under the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro (Jesus, 2022). During this period, China-Brazil relations experienced a cooling as Bolsonaro and his international governance advisors aligned more closely with the U.S. (Hirst & Valls Pereira, 2022). This shift highlighted the complexities and challenges inherent in maintaining a stable and mutually beneficial relationship (Jesus, 2022).

In summary, the thirty years of China-Brazil relations have been marked by significant diplomatic events, trade agreements, cultural exchanges, and bilateral cooperation. The two countries have made substantial progress in strengthening their ties, particularly in areas like trade, infrastructure development, and agricultural cooperation.

Despite the substantial bilateral relations between Brazil and China, we are particularly interested in understanding the discussions within the scientific literature over the past 30 years and identifying new avenues for future research. To achieve this objective, we conducted an extensive Systematic Literature Review and applied bibliometric laws and lexical analyses to a total of 208 studies.

Methodology

Methodologically, the study is characterized by a qualitative approach and follows an inductive logic. We used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses¹ (PRISMA, 2020) as a method to guide the research (Page et. al., 2021). The

¹ Retrieved in June 2024, from <https://www.prisma-statement.org/>.



PRISMA 2020 statement is an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021). Transparent systematic reviews are an essential component of "good research", as they provide reliability and enable the replicability of a study (Sarkis-Onofre, Catalá-López, Aromataris & Lockwood, 2021).

The principal contributions to a field of knowledge or a specific topic are likely to be found in the leading scientific journals (Webster & Watson, 2002). Therefore, we searched the two main scientific journal indexing databases (SCOPUS and Web of Science) for terms suggesting a relationship or cooperation between Brazil and China. In addition to applying search strings, we read the abstracts of the studies to verify if there was any kind of relation between the topics discussed in the publication and the Brazil-China relationship or cooperation. Table 1 below shows the search string used in the databases and the respective results.

Table 1. Review of academic databases				
Platform	String	Results	Excluded*	Total
SCOPUS	(TITLE-ABS-KEY (China) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (Brazil) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (cooperation) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (relation))	161	34	127
Web of Science	Brazil (Topic) and China (Topic) and relation (Topic) and cooperation (All Fields)	73	8	65
Overall		234	42	192
*The excluded data refers to duplicate records and marginal subjects found on both search platforms.				
Source: Authors, adapted from SCOPUS and Web of Science.				

We identified a total of 234 studies in the two databases. Of these, 39 were excluded due to duplicate records, and 3 were excluded because their subjects were marginal and not aligned with the Brazil-China relationship or cooperation. No temporal cutoff or filters by document type and field of knowledge were applied. Thus, we obtained a total of 192 studies considered for analysis.

In addition to the previous searches, we applied the study "China and Brazil: Economic Impacts of a Growing Relationship" (Jenkins, 2012) on the ConnectedPapers platform² (Frogeri, Diniz, Portugal Júnior & Piurcosky, 2023). ConnectedPapers allows only one study to serve as the basis for the platform's analyses. The criteria adopted for selecting Jenkins' (2012) article were as follows: (i) the study has been published for over ten years, increasing the likelihood of it being cited more frequently than more recent studies; (ii) the author, Rhys Jenkins, has a considerable number of publications involving Brazil and China; (iii) the study was published in a journal with international visibility and relevance (Journal of Current Chinese Affairs); and (iv) the central theme of the study (the China and Brazil relationship) closely aligns with the search criteria adopted in academic databases (Table 1).

² Retrieved in June 2024, from <https://www.connectedpapers.com/>.



Table 2. Prior works by ConnectedPapers based on Jenkins (2012)

Title	First author	Year	Citations	Graph citations
(Moreira, 2004)	M. Moreira	2004	208	17
(Lall et al., 2004)	S. Lall	2004	181	16
(Jenkins & Edwards, 2006)	R. Jenkins	2006	131	12
(Lall & Albaladejo, 2004)	S. Lall	2004	372	11
(Rodríguez et al., 2006)	J. Rodríguez	2006	128	10
(Rodríguez-Clare et al., 2006)	A. Rodríguez-Clare	2006	152	9
(Lederman et al., 2008)	D. Lederman	2008	72	9
(Eichengreen et al., 2007)	Barry Eichengreen	2007	172	8
(Greenaway et al., 2006)	D. Greenaway	2006	171	8
(Athukorala, 2009)	P. Athukorala	2009	200	8

Source: Generated by the authors via the ConnectedPapers platform.

Available at:

<https://www.connectedpapers.com/main/f75f0fa46fccb678e130c9d2cfb3291da8a3be4a/China-and-Brazil%3A-Economic-Impacts-of-a-Growing-Relationship/derivative>.

Table 2 shows the studies considered seminal by the ConnectedPapers platform. The number of citations of the study and the citations associated with the work in the connection graph classifies the study as seminal. Subsequently, Table 3 presents the articles considered derivatives—these are articles that cite many of the articles in the graph. The derivative articles are studies on the field or recent relevant works inspired by many articles (Eitan *et al.*, 2021).

Table 3. Derivative works by ConnectedPapers based on Jenkins (2012)

Title	First author	Year	Citations	Graph references
(Jenkins, 2022)	R. Jenkins	2022	30	10
(Jenkins & Edwards, 2015)	R. Jenkins	2015	0	8
(Stanojevic et al., 2020)	S. Stanojevic	2020	8	7
(Xu, 2016)	Yan-Qing Xu	2016	4	7
(Barker, 2013)	C. Barker	2013	0	6
(Urdínez, 2017)	Francisco Urdínez	2017	0	6
(Cunha, Lélis, Haines, & Franke, 2022)	André Moreira Cunha	2022	1	5
(Sekakela, 2016)	Kedibonye Sekakela	2016	7	5
(Cunha et. al., 2013)	André Moreira Cunha	2013	4	5

Source: Generated by the authors via the ConnectedPapers platform.

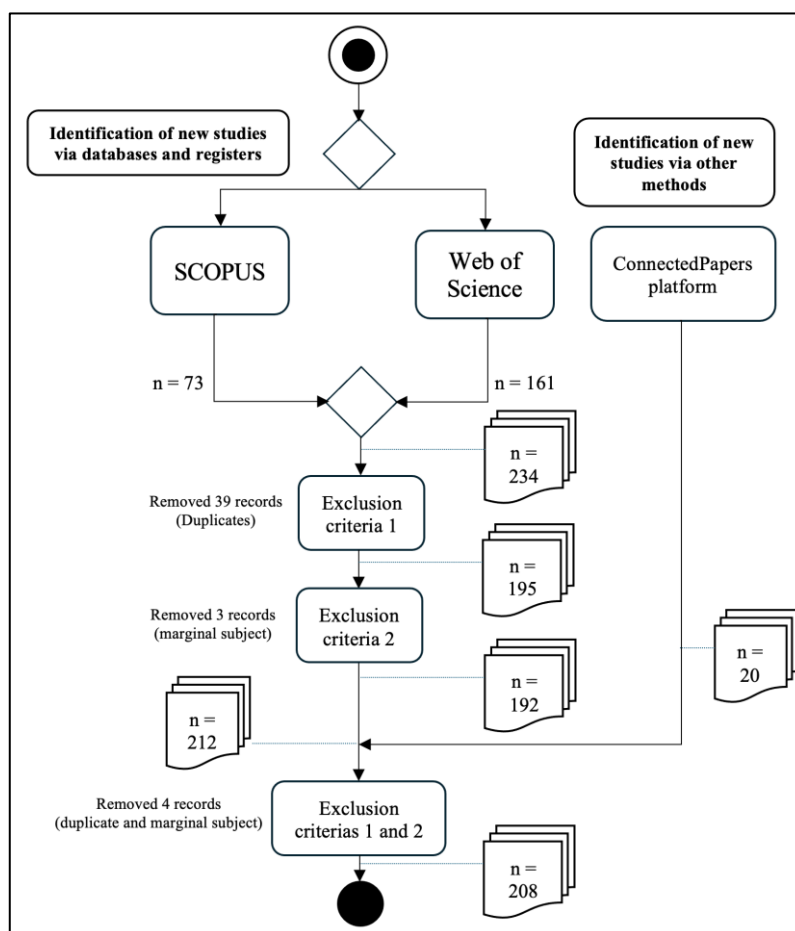
Available at:

<https://www.connectedpapers.com/main/f75f0fa46fccb678e130c9d2cfb3291da8a3be4a/China-and-Brazil%3A-Economic-Impacts-of-a-Growing-Relationship/derivative>.



We used a total of 208 documents in our analyses, combining 192 studies identified in the SLR and references suggested by the ConnectedPapers platform. Figure 2 detailed graphically the Systematic literature review procedure.

Figure 2. Systematic literature review procedure



Source: Developed by the authors based on PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

For the lexical analyses, we employed Iramuteq software, version 0.7 alpha 2³. Iramuteq allows various lexical analysis techniques on a textual corpus (Ramos, Lima & Amaral-Rosa, 2019). Among these techniques is Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC), which categorizes text segments according to their vocabularies. DHC seeks to identify classes of Elementary Context Units (ECUs) or Text Segments (TSs). An ECU exhibits similar vocabularies within a class and distinct vocabularies between classes (Marchand & Ratinaud, 2012).

Iramuteq also supports Correspondence Factorial Analysis (CFA), which utilizes a Cartesian plane to represent the different words and variables associated with each DHC

³ Retrieved in June 2024, from <https://iramuteq.org>.



class. Simpler analyses, such as word clouds and Similarity Analysis, are also possible. Similarity Analysis, while less complex, utilizes graph theory to depict the relationships among words (Marchand & Ratinaud, 2012).

The textual corpus used in Iramuteq was extracted from the abstracts of 208 studies selected through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and ConnectedPapers platform. First, we used Mendeley software to register the metadata of the documents and extract the study abstracts. Next, we exported the data from Mendeley in .RIS format and imported it into the Rayyan platform⁴ (Johnson & Phillips, 2018).

On the Rayyan platform, we analyzed the data and then exported it in .csv (Comma-Separated Values) format for import into Microsoft Excel©. This process resulted in a spreadsheet of the 208 documents with their metadata (Dataset available at Frogeri & Li, 2024). To conduct lexical analyses using the Iramuteq software, we copied the abstracts of 208 documents and pasted them into a new Microsoft Word© document. This procedure produced an 89-page .DOCX file. Finally, the abstracts in Microsoft Word© were standardized (Chaves, Santos, Santosa & Larocca, 2017).

The first step in standardising the textual corpus was to remove the copyright data that is exported along with the abstracts (e.g. ©All authors or ©Elsevier Ltd.). Extracting these data resulted in a total of 87 pages in the Microsoft Word© document. Next, we searched for compound terms (e.g. International Relations, Foreign Policy, etc.) to adjust them to the format that the Iramuteq software recognises. Words separated by spaces are treated individually by the software; therefore, compound words need to be organised with an underscore between the terms (e.g. International_Relations).

The term "international relations" was replaced with "international_relations", "foreign policy" with "foreign_policy", "Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS)" with "BRICS", "Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)" with "OECD", "European Union (EU)" with "European_Union", "Latin America" with "Latin_America", "U.S." with "United_States", "bilateral trade" with "bilateral_trade", "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)" with "Belt_Road_Initiative", and "South-South" with "South_South". The character "&" was also replaced with an underscore to prevent its influence on the analyses (Camargo & Justo, 2013). The Find and Replace feature in Microsoft Word was used to standardise the terms. After the standardisation procedure, the textual corpus consisted of 87 pages and 49,374 words.

Finally, the data from the .DOCX document were exported to a .TXT file and encoded in UTF-8 format. This configuration is required for the data to be imported into the Iramuteq software (Salviati, 2014).

Analysis and discussions

To organize the study's content, we have divided the analyses into two sections. The first section presents bibliometric analyses based on the Bibliometric Laws of Zipf and

⁴ Retrieved in June 2024, from <https://www.rayyan.ai/>.



Bradford (Araújo, 2006; Frogeri et. al., 2023; Pritchard & Wittig, 1981). The second section presents lexical analyses (Chaves et al., 2017; Marchand & Ratinaud, 2012).

Bibliometric Analysis

Our initial analysis focuses on the frequency of scientific publications over the past three decades that discuss the relationship between Brazil and China. Graph 1 highlights that the first publication occurred in 1999 (1) and reached its peak in 2016 (24). There is a noticeable increase in scientific publications involving the two countries (Brazil and China) starting from 2004.

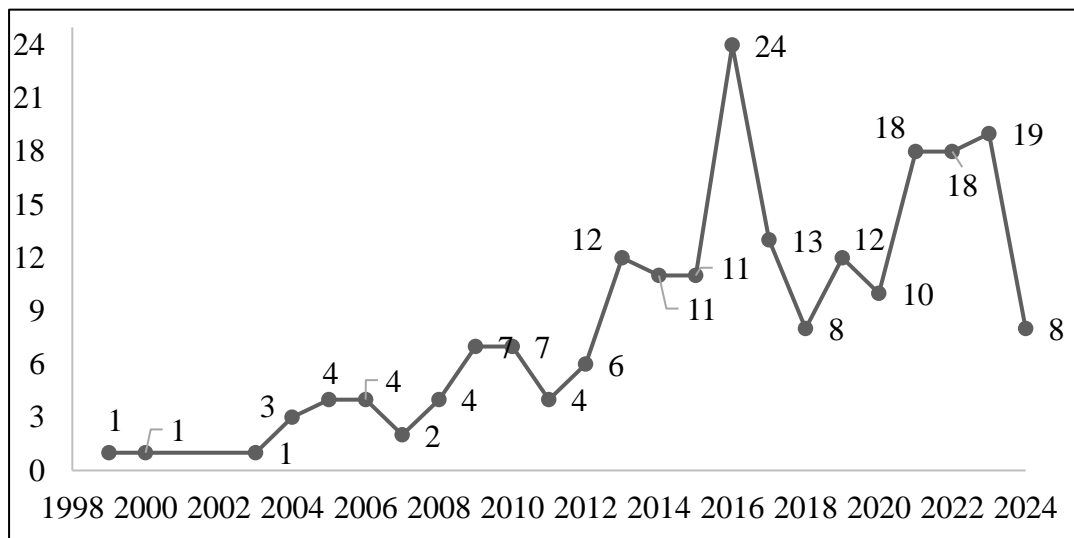
The data on publications involving Brazil and China coincide with periods of political transitions in Brazil and in the international relations between the two countries. The year 2002 saw the beginning of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's first term and the subsequent strengthening of relations between the two countries (Lessa, 2010). The peak in the number of publications occurred in 2016, following the impeachment of former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and the ascension to power of her Vice-president, Michel Temer (Silva & Pérez, 2019).

In 2016, scientific publications began to discuss the BRICS (e.g., Armesilla Conde, 2016; De Andrade, 2016; Joshi & Ganeshan, 2016; Larionova, 2016; Muhr, 2016; Singh, 2016; Tian, 2016), Mercosur and Chinese influence in Latin America (e.g., Bizzozero & Raggio, 2016; Selden, 2016; Urdinez, Burian, & De Oliveira, 2016; Xu, 2016), and South-South cooperation (e.g., Amanor & Chichava, 2016; Zeng, Deng, Dong, & Hu, 2016).

The data in Graph 1 suggest that the number of scientific publications involving China and Brazil increased during periods of political change in Brazil (e.g., 2016, during the term of former President Michel Temer, and 2021-2023, during the term of former President Jair Messias Bolsonaro). This increase in publications was particularly noticeable when the change in Brazil's political leadership was not associated with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva or his successor, Dilma Rousseff. While we do not have scientific evidence to explain this trend, it can be speculated that the profile of the newly inaugurated president or their diplomatic stance in Brazil-China relations (e.g., Hirst & Valls Pereira, 2022; Vazquez, 2022) may prompt investigations by the scientific community.



Graph 1. Number of publications per year



Source: Developed by the authors.

Next, we analyzed the main funding agencies for research. The analyses highlighted the National Natural Science Foundation of China (5 - China), Economic Social Research Council - ESRC (3 - European Union), European Research Council - ERC (3 - European Union), and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development - CNPq (2 - Brazil). The data indicate a predominance of incentives from research funding agencies in China and the European Union - these analyses suggest that there is room for Brazil to advance in funding research that involves the country's international interests, particularly in Brazil-China relations.

Regarding the scientific journals with the most publications, the following stood out (Table 4):

Table 4. Journals with the highest number of publications addressing China and Brazil relations

Title	Country	Count
International Organisations Research Journal - ISSN: 1996-7845	Russia	10
Third world quarterly - 0143-6597	UK	7
Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional - 0034-7329	Brazil	4
World development - 0305-750X	UK	4
IDS bulletin - 0265-5012	UK	4
Journal Of Contemporary China - 1067-0564	UK	3
Global Policy - 1758-5880	UK	3
Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft - 0945-2419	Germany	3
India quarterly - 0974-9284	India	2
Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe - 0041-4751	South Africa	2
Economy of Regions - 2072-6414	Russia	2



East Asia – 1096-6838	Netherlands	2
Politische Vierteljahresschrift - 00323470	Germany	2
Economic Annals-XXI – 1728-6220	Ukraine	2
Space and Culture, India – 2052-8396	UK	2
Journal of environmental management – 0301-4797	U.S.	2
Tropical geography/Redai Dili – 1001-5221	China	2
Oxford Development Studies – 1360-0818	UK	2
Foresight – 1463-6689	UK	2
POLITIKON – 0258-9346	UK	2
World Economy and International Relations – 0131-2227	Russia	2

Note. The table only shows journals with a total of two or more publications.
Source: Developed by the authors.

The journal with the highest number of publications was the International Organisations Research Journal of the Russian Federation. Its mission is to disseminate Russian and international research on global governance, international cooperation, and international multilateral institutions (e.g., G20, BRICS, OECD, World Bank, IMF, WTO, UN, among others). The journal with the second highest number of publications was the Third World Quarterly from the United Kingdom (UK), which aims to disseminate studies on the Global South. The third journal is from Brazil and is titled "Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional - RBPI" (Brazilian Journal of International Politics). The RBPI journal publishes studies on topics related to International Relations in general (Politics, Economy, Sociology, Security, History, Foreign Policy, Environment, and other relevant issues on the contemporary international agenda).

Our analyses suggest that despite the journal with the highest number of publications being from the Russian Federation, there is a predominance of UK journals discussing topics related to the relationship and cooperation between Brazil and China.

Continuing with our bibliometric analyses, we observed which authors were the most prolific (Table 5).

Table 5. Most prolific authors

Author	Country	Affiliation	Count
Papa, Mihaela	U.S.	Tufts University	4
Lessa, Antônio Carlos	Brazil	University of Brasilia	3
Cezne, Eric	Netherlands	Utrecht University	3

Note. Only authors with a number of publications equal to or greater than three are listed due to the large number of authors with two or just one publication.
Source: Developed by the authors.

The author with the highest number of publications among the 208 studies analyzed was Professor Mihaela Papa from Tufts University in the U.S. Professor Mihaela Papa published studies on the BRICS (Han & Papa, 2022; Papa, Han & O'Donnell, 2023), India's multi-alignment with the Russia-India-China (RIC) triangle (O'Donnell & Papa, 2021) and the



We began the lexical analyses with the simplest analysis, the word cloud.

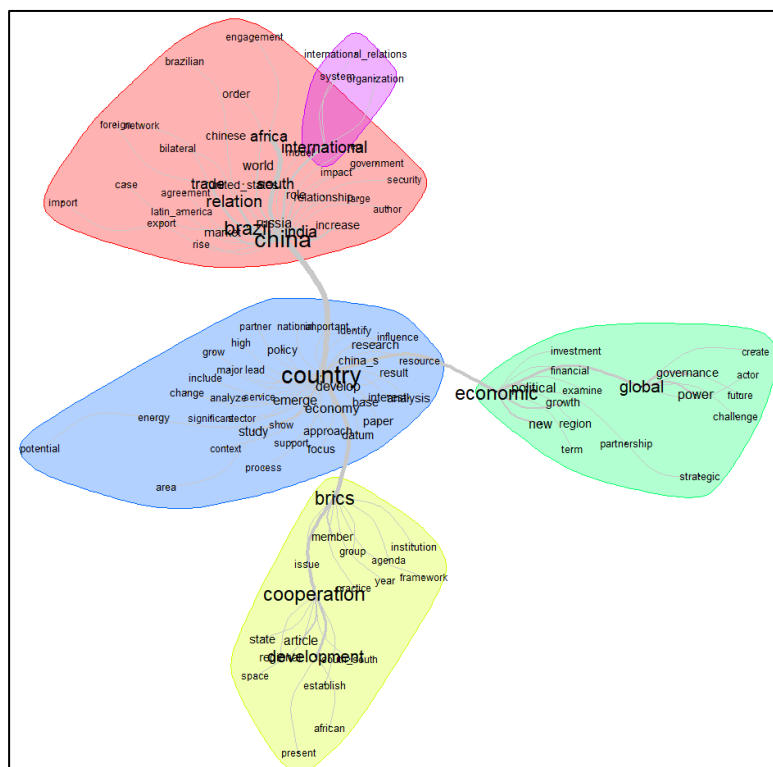
Figure 3 graphically presents the words with the highest frequency among the 208 abstracts analyzed. The word "country" had the highest frequency (454), followed by "china" (400), "BRICS" (308), "cooperation" (293), "economic" (290), "brazil" (289), "development" (244), "global" (241), and "relation" (210). Other words appear less frequently, with fewer than 200 occurrences.

The word cloud data suggest that the analyzed studies involve economic and development aspects between Brazil and China, in addition to global discussions with a focus on the BRICS group. However, the word cloud is limited in determining the context of one or more studies by observing only the frequency of words. Therefore, we proceeded with more robust analyses.

The next analysis performed was the Similarity Analysis (Figure 4), which allows for identifying and visualizing the relationships between words or terms in a textual corpus (Camargo & Justo, 2013).

Figure 4 shows how the words presented in the word cloud are interconnected within the analyzed texts. The clusters presented with their respective keywords such as "country,"

Figure 3. Similarity analysis of the text corpus



Note. The similarity analysis was generated for words with a frequency greater than 50.
Source: Developed by the authors via Iramuteq.



"economic," "BRICS," "cooperation," "Brazil," and "China" suggest the topics or sub-themes within the textual corpus.

The red cluster, at the top of the figure, highlights the words "China," "Brazil," "Russia," and "India" with thick branches leading to terms like "international," "Africa," "south," "trade," and "relation," suggesting that this cluster involves studies associated with BRICS countries and the African continent (e.g., Barbosa et al., 2009; Deych, 2015; Jenkins, 2022; Kamwengo, 2017).

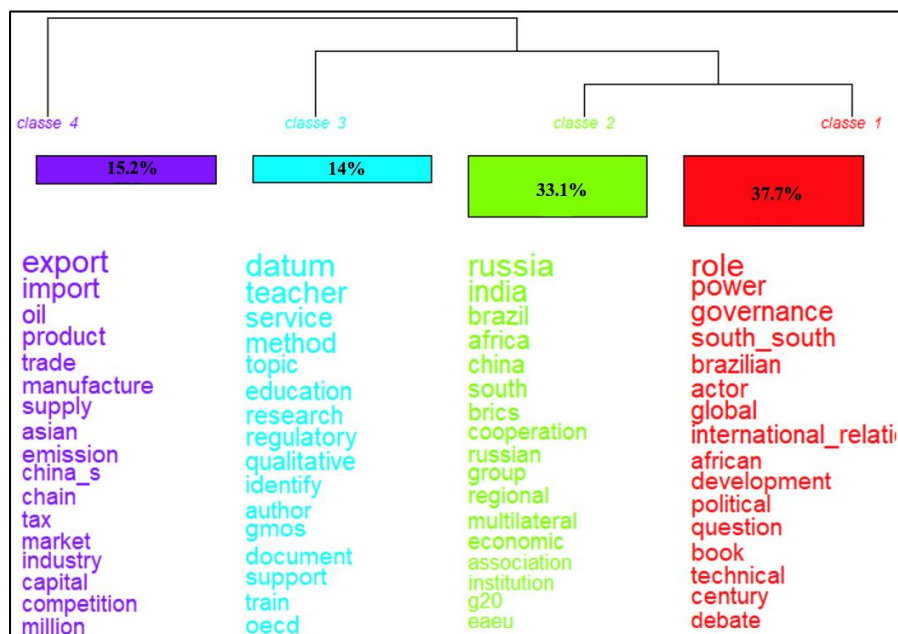
The second cluster, in blue, has "country" as its keyword, serving more as a linking cluster among the others. This cluster contains words with low frequency and less thick connections between them. Moving on to the next cluster in Figure 3, the green cluster. Nesse cluster, as palavras "economic" e "global" apresentam a maior frequência. In this cluster, the words "economic" and "global" have the highest frequency. The word "economic" is associated with "investment," "financial," "growth," "partnership," and indirectly linked to "strategic" through "partnership." The strongest (thickest) link is between "economic" and "global," which in turn derives terms such as "governance" and "power." The green cluster suggests studies discussing economic aspects (e.g., Rana, 2019) and global governance (e.g., Cruz, 2015; Fues, 2007; Larionova, 2016; Pere, 2005; Shaw, Cooper & Chin, 2009).

Finally, the yellow cluster presents the words with the highest frequency "BRICS," "cooperation," and "development." The term "BRICS" has a strong association with the word "cooperation," suggesting discussions related to mutual cooperation among the group's countries in the pursuit of development (e.g., Iqbal, Yadav & Rahman, 2023; Kubayi, 2022; Muhr, 2016; Trivedy & Khatun, 2023; Vazquez, 2021; Yarygina, Lukashenko, Lee, Washington & Tsarev, 2021). The term "south-south" also appears in this cluster, suggesting studies focused on Global South countries (e.g., Alencastro & Cezne, 2023; Amanor, 2013; Amanor & Chichava, 2016; Cezne & Hönke, 2022; Gardini, 2021; Harrison, 2015; Kragelund, 2019; Malacalza, 2019; Vieira & Alden, 2011).

Although the similarity analysis allows for the grouping of the most frequent terms into clusters, it is still not possible to understand in detail the context discussed in the studies associated with each cluster. Therefore, we applied the Reinert Method or Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC), generating the following dendrogram (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Dendrogram of Reinert's Method (Hierarchical Descendent Classification)



Source: Developed by the authors via Iramuteq.

Figure 5 details the four classes generated by the Hierarchical Descendant Classification technique. Each class shares a similar vocabulary, and thus a common theme or topic. It is important to note that the colours or words presented in the Hierarchical Descendant Classification are not the same as those in the Similarity Analysis (Figure 3). This new analysis uses a different algorithm from the Similarity Analysis.

The red and green classes contain the highest percentages of Elementary Context Units (ECUs), with 37.7% and 33%, respectively. These classes are close together because they are subdivisions of broader classes (classes 3 and 4). The analysis using the most frequent words in each class is similar to the one conducted previously through the Similarity Analysis. To deepen our analysis, we generated the "Corpus couleur" for the HDC. The "Corpus couleur" file presents complete excerpts of the classes' keywords in an .HTML format (Salviati, 2014), enabling contextual analysis of the classes.

Our first analysis concerns the **Red Class (1)** [words in red color] and the discussions are presented in the following paragraphs.

The Red class (1) examines diverse facets of international politics and the dynamic evolution of global relations. Red class objective is to provide a framework for understanding recent transformations in international politics, focusing on the ascendance of China and the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches and highlights the contributions of Latin American scholars, especially from Brazil, to global academic debates.



The Class discusses the strengthening of state roles in local, national, and global economies and advocates for a robust system of South-South relations based on revitalized third-world institutions and a framework that transcends Eurocentric views. It examines the foundations of Brazilian diplomacy over the past half-century, focusing on changes in the 1980s and 1990s up to the foreign policies of Lula's government (2003-2009). The analysis recognizes advancements in Lula's foreign policy, especially towards Africa, but questions whether Brazil's economy can sustain such policies.

Further, the Class explores the political and economic cooperation between Brazil and African countries, providing an overview of trade and investment relations within the region and with key partners. It examines the BRICS group's evolution from a financial category to a political entity, focusing on their coordinated efforts on global economic and political issues.

The class also addresses China's ideological engagement in Latin America since the 1950s, transitioning from cultural diplomacy and revolutionary rhetoric to pragmatic economic initiatives. It evaluates the impacts of China's economic boom on Latin American and Caribbean countries, analyzing post-global financial crisis trends in Sino-Latin American economic relationships, with an emphasis on Brazil's experience. In addition, the class assesses China's significant economic growth and its implications for Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. It documents China's varied economic involvement and its social, political, and environmental impacts on these regions.

The Class further examines China's and India's roles as major global economic players, their impact on Sub-Saharan African countries, and the broader implications for manufacturing and development in Latin America. It discusses the competitive challenges posed by China and the policy options available for Latin American countries to address these challenges.

Finally, the Red class addresses the BRICS' role in global governance, particularly after the 2008 financial crisis, and the challenges faced by southern powers in reshaping the existing power configurations. It evaluates the strategic implications of China's economic performance for Latin American growth and development and examines the diplomatic and economic relationships between Brazil and China in recent years.

Overall, the Red class provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolving dynamics in international relations and the intricate economic and political interactions between major global players and Latin American countries.

Next, we analysed the data from the **Green class (2)** [words in green color] discussing the shifting dynamics of global economic and political influence, focusing on the BRICS countries. It covers their emergence as significant players in the international system and the implications for global governance. The 2008-2010 economic crisis is highlighted as a pivotal moment prompting changes in the international order, necessitating broader geopolitical cooperation and the inclusion of regional powers. The BRICS countries' coordinated efforts within the G20 to push for global governance reforms are emphasized. Additionally, the Class also explores diplomatic, political, and economic interactions among BRICS nations, examining whether they operate independently or



cohesively. It analyzes China's strategic partnerships with Latin American countries, the asymmetry in these relationships, and the benefits to China.

Regional economic cooperation organizations' roles in reshaping trade groups and the significance of trade among major global economies, including the U.S., China, and European countries, are addressed. The class examines the motivations behind foreign aid and the duality in managing development cooperation agendas within the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Russia's strategic partnerships and economic relationships with Latin American countries, driven by domestic political motivations and economic interests, are analyzed. India's engagement with Russia and China through multilateral alignments like BRICS and the SCO, despite geopolitical tensions, is also considered.

The Green class (2) concludes by discussing the broader implications of the BRICS countries' rise for global power dynamics and potential systemic changes. While the BRICS have achieved some success in establishing an alternative global order based on cooperation, mutual respect, and a balance of interests, it is premature to assert the creation of a fundamentally new type of international institution within the BRICS structure at this stage.

The **Lilac class (3)** [words in Lilac color] covers a range of topics, including the dynamics, agreements and educational systems between the BRICS countries and US hegemony in Latin America from 2001 to 2015. The Class also examines economic and social inequalities in BRICS, relations between the US and Brazil, and the impact of major international institutions on higher education. Future scenarios of global governance are explored. Legal frameworks for outer space and BRICS participation in international treaties are discussed, especially cooperation between Brazil and China. Finally, the potential of South-South cooperation for alternative development is analyzed, including the role of GMOs and the OECD in risk assessment.

Overall, the Class offers a comprehensive analysis of BRICS interactions, legal structures and educational systems, with an emphasis on cooperation, market dynamics and political implications.

Finally, the **Purple Class (4)** [words in purple color] initially discuss the dynamics of economic relationships and trade patterns between various countries, particularly focusing on the influence of China's economic ascent on Latin American countries. It outlines how China's rise has created asymmetrical trade relationships, often positioning Latin American countries as exporters of raw materials while importing manufactured goods from China. The analysis highlights the increasingly regressive production and trade specialization in Brazil due to its trade relations with China.

The Class also discusses the mutual trade structures between Botswana and China, highlighting Botswana's export of primary products and its import of intermediate and capital goods from China. Similarly, in Brazil, the relationship between its regressive specialization and China's international competitiveness is analyzed. The growth of China's market share often coincides with a decrease in Brazil's share, impacting Brazil's competitiveness in global markets, particularly in manufactured goods. The class suggests that Latin American countries should diversify their export agendas towards



China, develop new productive partnerships, and increase the competitiveness of their firms.

Additionally, the Class examines the global trade network of oil crops, revealing Brazil's increasing market share and its impact on the U.S. It discusses the structure of the oil crop trade network, noting China's significant role despite risks from concentrated import sources. The discussions into the Class recommends China to diversify its import sources, deepen trade cooperation, and ensure the security of oil crop imports. Moreover, the analysis of the global woody forest products trading network shows increased complexity and changing trade positions, with China playing a crucial role.

In summary, the Purple class (4) provides a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted trade and economic relationships influenced by China's rise, emphasizing the need for strategic diversification and competitiveness enhancements in Latin American economies.

To compile the discussions of our analyses, we created Table 6, in which the central themes of each class are presented.

Table 6. Summarization of the Red, Green, Lilac, and Purple class

Class	Summary
Red Class	The Red class examines international politics, focusing on the rise of China and the strengthening of state roles in economies. It explores South-South relations, Brazilian diplomacy, BRICS evolution, and China's impact on Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. The class highlights local conditions' role in shaping China's economic effects and compares geopolitical significance between Brazil and China.
Green Class	The Green class discusses the BRICS countries' emergence as global players and their role in global governance post the 2008-2010 economic crisis. It covers diplomatic and economic interactions within BRICS, regional economic cooperation, motivations behind foreign aid, and strategic partnerships, particularly focusing on China, Russia, and India's relations with Latin America and each other.
Lilac Class	The Lilac class explores interactions within BRICS, analyzing China's market influence on Brazil and U.S. hegemony in Latin America. It discusses indirect expropriation in investment agreements, and BRICS summits' achievements. The class addresses economic and social inequalities, U.S.-Brazil relations, higher education's influence by international institutions, and future global governance scenarios, including legal frameworks for outer space and South-South cooperation.
Purple Class	The Purple class focuses on economic relationships and trade patterns, especially China's impact on Latin America. It highlights asymmetrical trade relationships, regressive production in Brazil, and Botswana's import dynamics. The class discusses Brazil's competitiveness, diversification of export agendas, global trade networks of oil crops and woody forest products, and the relation between innovation efforts and export performance. It also examines the significance of OECD and UN model conventions in Canadian tax treaties.

Source: Developed by the authors.



Now, considering our analyses and discussions, we suggest new avenues to be explored in future research.

Emerging Geopolitical Dynamics and the Role of BRICS

- The inclusion of Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates in the BRICS membership and the resulting implications for global geopolitics.
- The strategic partnerships and diplomatic interactions between BRICS countries, and how these are shaping regional and global power dynamics.
- The role of BRICS in overhauling global governance institutions like the UN Security Council, and the challenges encountered in achieving these changes.
- Comparative analysis of the BRICS model of cooperation versus traditional Western-led institutions like the G7.

Economic and Trade Relationships within BRICS

- The evolving trade and investment patterns between BRICS countries, and the impact on economic development in these regions.
- Strategies adopted by BRICS countries to enhance their competitiveness and diversify their export baskets, especially in the context of China's growing economic influence.
- The role of regional economic cooperation organizations within the BRICS framework, and their impact on intra-BRICS trade and investment.
- Implications of BRICS initiatives like the New Development Bank and the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement for the global financial architecture.

South-South Cooperation and Alternative Development Models

- The potential of South-South cooperation, as exemplified by BRICS, to foster alternative development pathways that challenge traditional North-South dynamics.
- The role of BRICS in promoting a multipolar world order and challenging Western-centric models of development and global governance.
- A comparative analysis of the BRICS approach to development cooperation versus traditional aid models advocated by the OECD and other Western-led institutions.
- Exploration of the BRICS countries' engagement with the Global South, including Africa and Latin America, and the implications for regional integration and development.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on BRICS

- An examination of the legal frameworks and international treaties that govern the participation of BRICS countries in global governance, particularly in domains such as outer space.
- Analysis of the social, political, and environmental impacts of BRICS countries' economic rise, and the potential for sustainable development models.
- Exploring the role of education systems and workforce development within BRICS countries, and their implications for global competitiveness.



Conclusion

Despite the substantial bilateral relations between Brazil and China, we were particularly interested in understanding the discussions within the scientific literature over the past 30 years and identifying new avenues for future research. Our results revealed that the peak of publications involving Brazil and China occurred in 2016. The scientific journals with the highest number of publications were the International Organisations Research Journal (ISSN: 1996-7845) of the Russian Federation, followed by Third World Quarterly (ISSN: 0143-6597) from the UK, Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional (ISSN: 0034-7329) from Brazil, World Development (ISSN: 0305-750X), and IDS Bulletin (ISSN: 0265-5012), both from the UK. The most prolific authors were Professor Mihaela Papa from Tufts University (U.S.), Professor Antônio Carlos Lessa from the University of Brasília (UNB, Brazil), and Eric Cezne from Utrecht University (Netherlands).

After reviewing the bibliometric data, we focused on identifying new avenues for research based on our SLR. Several key topics are frequently discussed in the context of China-Brazil relations. Central themes include the rise of China as a global power and the increasing role of states in economic affairs, with particular attention to how these dynamics influence international politics. The strengthening of South-South relations, particularly through diplomatic engagements facilitated by Brazil, is also a significant area of interest. Additionally, the evolution of the BRICS grouping and China's economic and political influence on Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa are important themes. Our findings also highlight the importance of local conditions in shaping China's economic effect and the geopolitical significance of Brazil and China.

Furthermore, we consider that expanding BRICS membership to include Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates could have significant implications for global geopolitics, potentially altering the balance of power. Strategic partnerships and diplomatic interactions among BRICS countries may increasingly shape regional and global dynamics, influencing economic and political landscapes. Furthermore, BRICS might play an essential role in advocating for reforms in global governance institutions, despite facing substantial challenges, and could offer a distinct model of cooperation compared to traditional Western-led institutions like the G7.

The evolving trade and investment patterns between BRICS countries could significantly impact economic development within these regions. Strategies adopted by BRICS nations to enhance competitiveness and diversify their export baskets, especially in light of China's growing economic influence, may prove pivotal. Additionally, regional economic cooperation organizations within the BRICS framework and initiatives like the New Development Bank and the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement might reshape the global financial architecture and boost intra-BRICS trade and investment.

South-South cooperation has the potential to foster alternative development pathways that challenge traditional North-South dynamics. BRICS may play a pivotal role in promoting a multipolar world order and challenging Western-centric models of development and global governance. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the BRICS approach to development cooperation versus traditional aid models promoted by the OECD and other Western-led institutions, along with the engagement of BRICS countries



with the Global South, including Africa and Latin America, could have significant implications for regional integration and development.

Finally, interdisciplinary perspectives on BRICS include examinations of the legal frameworks and international treaties that govern BRICS countries' participation in global governance. Furthermore, analyses of the social, political, and environmental impacts of BRICS countries' economic rise, along with explorations of their education systems and workforce development, could shed light on potential sustainable development models and implications for global competitiveness.

Despite the rigorous methodological procedures followed in this study, certain limitations must be considered. Our Systematic Literature Review was limited to the SCOPUS and Web of Science databases, which do not cover all scientific journals. Furthermore, our search was restricted to descriptors in English, excluding studies published in Portuguese, Spanish, or Chinese. We also consider the absence of discussions on the literature involving BRICS and the G20 to be a limitation of this study.

Therefore, in addition to the themes we identified as research opportunities, we suggest that future studies conduct a Systematic Literature Review using descriptors in various languages and incorporating other databases (e.g., SciELO.org, EBSCOhost, JSTOR). Finally, we suggest that the literature on the G20 and BRICS groups be considered in future studies.

Data available

Frogeri, R. F., & Li, Y. (2024). Dataset - Systematic Literature Review of China-Brazil Relations (1993-2023): Exploring New Research Directions [Data set]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12665713>

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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 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".



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 MEMBER¹

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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)². 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

² 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 translation³).

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 translation⁴). 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)⁵.

³ 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."

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

⁵ 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)⁶ 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

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



Brazil.”⁷ (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

⁷ 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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BRAZIL-CHINA BILATERAL LINK DURING THE 21ST CENTURY: BUSINESS AS USUAL

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Abstract

Throughout 50 years of bilateral relations, the link between Brazil and China was built slowly but steadily, reaching an unusual dynamism in the 21st century. This was the result of State policies, which found in their counterpart fertile ground for their own foreign policy to flourish, as well as an important economic and commercial complementarity. For this reason, the aim of this article is to examine China's rise on Brazil's foreign agenda over the course of this century, paying special attention to existing commercial interests, particularly in the energy sector. Chinese penetration since 2000 has maintained continuity and dynamism, regardless the ideological turnovers, since trade and energy business have become its backbone. While the PT governments took the political and economic dimensions of diplomacy towards China along the same track, Bolsonaro's administration decoupled these dimensions, although he had to relegate his 'anti-communist cultural battle' in the face of China's status as the main economic partner and the exuberant portfolio of investments in renewable and non-renewable energies. With a qualitative methodological design, this paper presents two sections: the first begins with the declaration of the bilateral link as a strategic partnership and goes through the Petistas governments; the second focuses on the post-impeachment period and sustains the alliance despite Jair Bolsonaro's speeches against Chinese 'communism'. The results are clear: the relationship between Brazil and China over the course of this century is unprecedented in the regional scenario and is highly unique. Each country sees in the other a first-rate partner to satisfy a set of interests that, at times, run parallel to political and commercial dimensions and, at others, are decoupled, with one of them prevailing above all: the economic one. For this reason, the short circuits that existed during Bolsonaro's term did not divert the relationship from its usual path.

Keywords

China, Brazil, Energy Sector, Foreign Agenda, Ideological Turnovers.



Resumo

Ao longo de 50 anos de relações bilaterais, o vínculo entre o Brasil e a China foi-se construindo de forma lenta, mas constante, atingindo um dinamismo invulgar no século XXI. Este foi o resultado de políticas de Estado, que encontraram no seu homólogo terreno fértil para o florescimento da sua própria política externa, bem como uma importante complementaridade económica e comercial. Por esta razão, o objectivo deste artigo é examinar a ascensão da China na agenda externa do Brasil ao longo deste século, prestando especial atenção aos interesses comerciais existentes, particularmente no sector energético. A penetração chinesa desde 2000 manteve a continuidade e o dinamismo, independentemente das reviravoltas ideológicas, uma vez que o comércio e os negócios energéticos se tornaram a sua espinha dorsal. Enquanto os governos do Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), levaram as dimensões política e económica da diplomacia em relação à China no mesmo caminho, a administração de Bolsonaro dissociou essas dimensões, embora tenha tido de relegar a sua "batalha cultural anticomunista" face ao estatuto da China como principal parceiro económico e o exuberante portefólio de investimentos em energias renováveis e não renováveis. Com um desenho metodológico qualitativo, este artigo apresenta duas secções: a primeira inicia-se com a declaração do vínculo bilateral como parceria estratégica e passa pelos governos do Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT); a segunda centra-se no período pós-impeachment e sustenta a aliança apesar dos discursos de Jair Bolsonaro contra o 'comunismo' chinês. Os resultados são claros: a relação entre o Brasil e a China ao longo deste século é inédita no panorama regional e altamente singular. Cada país vê no outro um parceiro de primeira ordem para satisfazer um conjunto de interesses que, por vezes, correm paralelamente às dimensões política e comercial e, outras vezes, são dissociados, prevalecendo sobretudo um deles: o económico. Por isso, os curtos-circuitos que existiram durante o mandato de Bolsonaro não desviaram a relação do seu rumo habitual.

Palavras-chave

China, Brasil, Setor Energético, Agenda Externa, Mudanças Ideológicas.

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BRAZIL-CHINA BILATERAL LINK DURING THE 21ST CENTURY: BUSINESS AS USUAL

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Introduction

2024 is not just another year in the relationship between Brazil and China. The two countries, whose contacts date back to colonial times, are celebrating 50 years of uninterrupted diplomatic relations since their re-establishment in 1974 under the Geisel administration. They are also commemorating 20 years of the creation of the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Commission for Coordination and Cooperation (COSBAN), a decisive section in bilateral political dialogue and in positioning themselves in relation to some impact issues impact on the global agenda.

Throughout this time, the link was built step by step, acquiring an unusual dynamism after the arrival of Lula da Silva in 2003 when the respective national interests converged. On the one hand, during the first decade of the current century, the Brazilian government focused, among other things, on South-South relations and the diversification of international partnerships as part of its global player aspirations. On the other hand, the Chinese government found in Brazil, as in the rest of Latin America, the opportunity to import large volumes of raw materials that would feed the accelerated growth of its economy and boost its strategy of global projection through investments and loans (Paulino, 2020).

At the end of Lula's second government, China displaced the United States as the main destination for Brazilian exports, narrowed the gap with imports from that country and its direct investments made a notable leap in the areas of energy, metals and transport, among others. As the Chinese proverb says, "the one who has displaced the mountain is the one who started by removing the small stones" and, in this sense, the Asian giant was able to take advantage of its positive assessment of time, understood as a continuity of long-term actions, and its economic and commercial power.

In this paper, we aim to examine China's rise on Brazil's foreign agenda during the 21st century, paying special attention to existing commercial interests, particularly in the energy sector. The decision to analyze the bilateral relationship through the energy business was not a random one. First, we must bear in mind that China plays a strong



role in the chess game of global energy geopolitics thanks to its exponential growth. It leads the world in primary energy consumption and, with Japan, in international trade in liquefied natural gas (LNG); it is the largest importer of crude oil; it sets the pace —along with India— in global coal production; and it exhibits very attractive growth in renewable energy generation (it ranked first in 2022), as well as in the production of technologies for its development (Energy Institute, 2023). In short, it aims to dominate the energy business fronts, i.e. as a consumer, buyer and supplier in the clean energy industry.

Second, the place of Chinese energy investments in Brazil. In fact, energy is the sector that has received the most investment since Lula's first government, and Brazil is the main recipient in the South American scenario, regardless of the political turnovers experienced in the region in general and in the country in particular in recent years. An eloquent fact is that, in 2021 during Jair Bolsonaro's administration (2019-2022), Brazil was the largest recipient of Chinese investment in the world (Cariello, 2022).

Bearing in mind that, since the mid-2000s, Chinese penetration in Brazil has been vertiginous and voracious, we argue that it has maintained continuity and dynamism, without being overshadowed by Brazilian political turnovers. Despite fluctuating on the left-right spectrum, the pragmatic and strategic sense of the bilateral link has prevailed, where trade and energy business have become its backbone. While the PT governments took the political and economic dimensions of diplomacy towards China along the same track, Bolsonaro's administration decoupled these dimensions, although he had to relegate his "anti-communist cultural battle" in the face of China's status as the main economic partner and the exuberant portfolio of investments in renewable and non-renewable energies.

The paper is structured based on a qualitative methodological design that includes the analysis of bibliographical documentation, statistics and declarations by high-level officials. It is organized in two sections. The first is framed temporally at the beginning of the launch of the strategic partnership and goes through the *Petistas* governments. In the second section, which begins post-impeachment, we focus on showing that the strategic association with the communist country is sustained, at least in economic terms and mainly in the energy sector, despite the discourses against Chinese "Marxist globalism".

From strategic partnership to global strategic partnership

The end of the Cold War and, consequently, the process of international restructuring in political and economic terms, not only reaffirmed the path taken by China and Brazil in previous years, but also catapulted bilateral ties to a new level. In November 1993, after the visit of the then Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, to Brazil, the relationship was defined as a *strategic partnership*, and since then it has been the expression used to refer to contacts between the two countries.

However, as Gonçalves & Bauab Brito (2010) express, there is no univocal definition of what a strategic partnership is, although there is a shared understanding regarding its essence. A strategic partnership refers to a partnership between three core elements: fruitful dialogue, commitment in the medium and long term and close links in different



areas. In this sense, it represents "(...) relations between nations that have common interests and are committed to cooperate and coordinate their actions in the international environment" (Gonçalves & Bauab Brito, 2010, p. 12). Brun (2016, p. 195) summarizes the issue by indicating that a strategic partnership refers to "(...) a priority relationship over time and with multiple facets with benefits for both partners". In this sense, for Brazil, the recognition of strategic partnership was the first attempt to establish a priority relationship with an important actor in the international arena, outside the Latin America-United States-Europe axis. For China, it was an opportunity to continue deepening its process of international opening through rapprochement with a major player on the Latin American stage that stands out geographically, economically and in terms of population, and which also has the necessary conditions to exercise leadership among other developing countries (Biato Junior, 2010).

The strategic partnership declaration placed the bilateral relationship between China and Brazil in a central position, which explains the proliferation of agreements throughout the 1990s for the joint treatment of economic-commercial, educational, scientific-technological, agricultural, industrial and technical issues, among others (República Federativa do Brasil, Ministério das Relações Exteriores, n.d.). Simulating a game of cards, the definition of strategic partnership represented shuffling and re-shuffling. In practice, this commitment, which does not imply the non-existence of differences between the partners, must be read with certain caveats. First, it should be understood as a kind of foundation on which the bilateral relationship rests in all its dimensions. It is a mechanism for regulating and coordinating actions at the State-State level and in the international arena. Considering this, it will not necessarily generate automatic results, nor will they have the same intensity in all the areas involved. Secondly, and in connection with the above, in the Sino-Brazilian case the understanding of strategic partnership favored the recovery of trade exchange but was not decisive. Biato Junior (2010) explains that the increase in trade values responded mainly to the process of economic recovery and growth experienced by both countries and the increase in the purchasing power of the population. The 1997-1998 Asian crisis generated a phase of deceleration in trade that was quickly reversed towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the current one. As can be seen in Table I, in 1990-2000 period, the United States led the market for Brazilian products, followed at a marked distance by Argentina, the Netherlands and Japan.

China's share began to grow from 1993 onwards, although in 1995, with the highest export peak of the decade, it only represented 2.5% of Brazil's total sales. Imports replicated the same behavior as exports, i.e. in the years 1995-1997, and reached 2% of total purchases at that time. *Prima facie*, these numbers seem insignificant. However, if we consider the size of the partners and the fact that in previous years trade oscillated between 0.6% and 0.7%, the result is more than eloquent.

**Table I: Brazil's exports by main destinations (in millions of dollars)**

Year	United States	Argentina	The Netherlands	Japan	China
1990	7594	645	2494	2348	381
1991	6264	1476	2147	2556	226
1992	6932	3039	2338	2305	460
1993	7843	3658	2488	2313	779
1994	8816	4135	3077	2574	822
1995	8682	4041	2917	3101	1203
1996	9182	5170	3548	3047	1113
1997	9368	6765	3997	3065	1087
1998	9741	6743	2741	2204	904
1999	10662	5359	2589	2190	674
2000	13160	6229	2794	2471	1084
2001	14148	4993	2861	1984	1901
2002	15325	2337	3124	2096	2516

Source: Authors elaboration with data from Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria, Comércio e Serviços (COMEX STAT) (<https://comexstat.mdic.gov.br/>)

With the arrival of Lula to the presidency, the Sino-Brazilian relation took on a priority character thanks to the convergence of concrete interests between the two countries and the possibilities for growth derived from the international context. Brazil had much to offer China and China to Brazil, especially after its admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001.

The PT leader's decision to amplify and consolidate Brazil's international presence; to build, in Celso Amorim's words, an *ativa e altiva* foreign policy, permeated by a universalist vision, advocating multilateralism, with a view to strengthening South-South relations (Gomes Saraiva, 2010; Lessa, 2010, among others) found in China the ideal candidate: a market with an immense consumption capacity and a powerful political partner for addressing the central issues of the global agenda. For China, Brazil was a window of opportunity both bilaterally and multilaterally. Bilaterally through the provision of raw materials and basic inputs, as a space for the internationalization of its companies and as a partner in the construction of an international architecture in line with the 21st century. During his visit in November 2004, the then President Hu Jintao summed up this issue in his speech to the Brazilian Congress: "(...) at the political level, we support each other to be trustworthy and time-tested friends (...) at the economic level, we promote mutual complementation with our respective advantages to be mutually beneficial cooperation partners on the basis of a new starting point" (Hu Jintao, 2010). At multilateral level, the convergence on strengthening multipolarity and the need to democratize international relations stood out. Lula delivered his first speech as president-elect to parliament in 2003 underlining the word *mudança*. These were times of change at home and abroad.



We aim not only to increase Brazil's presence on the international market, but also to stimulate the incipient elements of multipolarity in contemporary international life. The democratisation of international relations without hegemonies of any kind is as important for the future of humanity as the consolidation and development of democracy within each state (da Silva, 2003).

During the PT's tenure in office, ties with China grew by leaps and bounds. In 2012, Dilma Rousseff and Hu Jintao agreed to recategorize it as a global strategic partnership, raising the scale of convergence and commitment, guided by the following guiding principles: strengthening political trust and dialogue between equals, intensifying trade exchange with reciprocal benefits, deepening international cooperation on bilateral and global agenda items, and promoting knowledge between the societies of both countries (República Federativa do Brasil, 2004). This resulted, among other things, in the creation of COSBAN in 2004, the Brazil-China Cooperation Fund in 2015 and the signing of Joint Action Plans (2010-2014, 2015-2021) and a Cooperation Plan (2012-2021), which "(...)" in a spirit of equality and pragmatism and aiming at obtaining positive results for both parties' set the objectives and guidelines for joint work in all areas of the relationship" (República Federativa do Brasil, 2015). As Brun (2016, p. 198) puts it, such an alliance "(...)" does not resemble classic alliances for at least three reasons: it does not include a military component, it involves collective initiatives, and it does not suggest a systematic commitment".

COSBAN deserves a brief mention. This mechanism is made up of 11 thematic sub-commissions¹ and plays a key role in the dynamics of the relationship, as it not only establishes dialogue between the States at the executive level —vice prime minister of the State Council for China and vice president for Brazil—, but is also in charge of promoting and sustaining bilateral contact and establishing the steps to be taken.

Of all the dimensions involved in the relationship, two undoubtedly stand out: trade and investment, particularly in the energy sector. In 2003, Brazilian exports to China represented 6.2 per cent of the total, compared to 22.8 per cent of sales to the United States as the main trading partner. This situation was reversed during Lula's second term (see Table II), when North America was displaced by the emergence of China in 2009 as the number one destination for Brazilian exports (13.8 per cent of the total), made up mainly of soybeans, iron ore, oil and sugar, among others. This behavior has continued to the present day, in addition to the widening of the gap in terms of trade with the United States. In terms of volume, Dilma's administration surpassed Lula's, with a peak of USD 46,023 million, reaching 19.8% of total exports in 2013².

¹ Politics, Economic-Commercial and Cooperation, Economic-Financial, Industry, Information and Communication Technologies, Agriculture, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Issues, Energy and Mining, Science, Technology and Innovation, Space Cooperation, Culture and Tourism, and Environment and Climate Change.

² It should be clarified for organizational purposes that the data expressed in the Rousseff administration, as well as those contemplated in Temer's mandate, were considered by virtue of the calendar year, despite the impeachment that led to her removal from office in mid-2016.



In terms of imports, the increase in Chinese presence was remarkable. In 2003, Brazil bought USD 2143 million, or 4.3% of its total imports, while in 2010 they reached USD 25,591 million. During the period 2003-2010, the average import value was USD 11.66 billion, while during 2011-2016, this value was USD 32.62 billion (República Federativa do Brasil, Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria, Comércio e Serviços, n.d.).

Table II: Brazil's exports by destinations (in millions of dollars)			
Year	United States	China	Argentina
2003	16659	4531	4559
2004	20002	5438	7371
2005	22643	6826	9967
2006	24507	8398	11733
2007	25051	10776	14409
2008	26547	16519	17598
2009	15598	20994	12781
2010	19300	30747	18507
2011	25776	44304	22701
2012	26646	41225	17986
2013	24643	46023	19612
2014	27016	40611	14277
2015	24037	35155	12793
2016	23155	35133	13417

Source: Authors' elaboration with data from Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria, Comércio e Serviços (COMEX STAT) (<https://comexstat.mdic.gov.br/>)

The other side of the economic dynamism between the two States is around investment, which we consider to be the spearhead of China's strategy to reach, and thus expand, both in Brazil and in the rest of Latin America through loans, financing, the sale of technological equipment, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), in the strict sense of the word. As mentioned above, the energy sector, without being the only one, has been the main beneficiary of the large amounts of money that the Chinese government has invested in the South American country over the course of this century. This can be explained by the insertion of the two countries in the bilateral energy scheme. On the one hand, China has directed its international strategy towards energy security in the short, medium and long term through the diversification of sources and countries in a context of global projection and gigantic energy consumption, which it satisfies mainly through imports. On the other hand, Brazil possesses enormous potential in renewable and non-renewable resources. The seriousness of the Venezuelan crisis and the discoveries of pre-salt oilfields make it a leading actor in the production of crude oil; a key resource in the export basket to China, and a regional leader in the production of electricity through clean sources, especially from hydroelectric sources (Energy Institute, 2023). In other words, the same sector in which the Chinese government has bet heavily



on electricity generation. After coal, Chinese electricity is produced through the implementation of hydroelectric power plants that feed consumption throughout the country.

According to data from the China Global Investment Tracker (American Enterprise Institute, 2024) and the Brazil-China Business Council (CEBC), during Lula's first presidency, Chinese investment³ was almost nil. Except for a few specific projects in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, China's sights were focused on other geographical areas, such as Australia, the United States, Russia and part of Africa. As stated by da Silva & Soares (2011), the qualitative leap took place after 2010, coinciding not only with China's expansion as a global investor, but also with the dynamism acquired in trade, particularly after the displacement of the United States as the main destination for Brazilian exports. In the authors' words, "(...) the Chinese investments in Brazil announced in 2010 followed two patterns. The first was the inclusion of Brazil in the international base of suppliers of raw materials for China. The second was the entry of the Chinese into the consumer market and the Brazilian industrial arena" (da Silva & Soares, 2011, p. 7).

According to information provided by the American Enterprise Institute (2024), in Lula's second term (2007-2010), Chinese investments, in their three basic modalities (total or partial mergers and acquisitions, formation of joint ventures or greenfield projects), reached a value of USD 14.99 billion, with USD 12 billion identified in the energy sector. Here we find the participation of players such as China Investment Corporation (CIC), China Petroleum and Chemical (SINOPEC), State Grid and SINOCEM (American Enterprise Institute, 2024).

The case of State Grid is noteworthy. This company is the world leader in the electricity transmission and distribution business. Its figures are superlative. In China, it supplies more than 1.1 billion customers, covers around 88% of the national territory and has deployed operations in different countries in the five continents. In 2010, Brazil was the first destination outside Asia where State Grid made its first major investment. Its growth has led it to control transmission lines that cross 13 States, equivalent to 10% of the total national high-voltage grid (State Grid Brazil Holding, n.d.).

In comparative terms, during the Rousseff administration, Chinese investment policy showed similarities, but also some nuances. According to the American Enterprise Institute (2024), investments totaled USD 35.62 billion, with energy accounting for around 73.9 per cent, or USD 26.34 billion (Graph I). This was possible thanks to the commitment of three large companies: Three Gorges, China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) and China National Off-shore Oil (CNOOC), which, together with those mentioned above, eclipsed the Brazilian energy industry in renewable and non-renewable matters, as well as in its distant phases. It is not a minor fact that three of the four companies

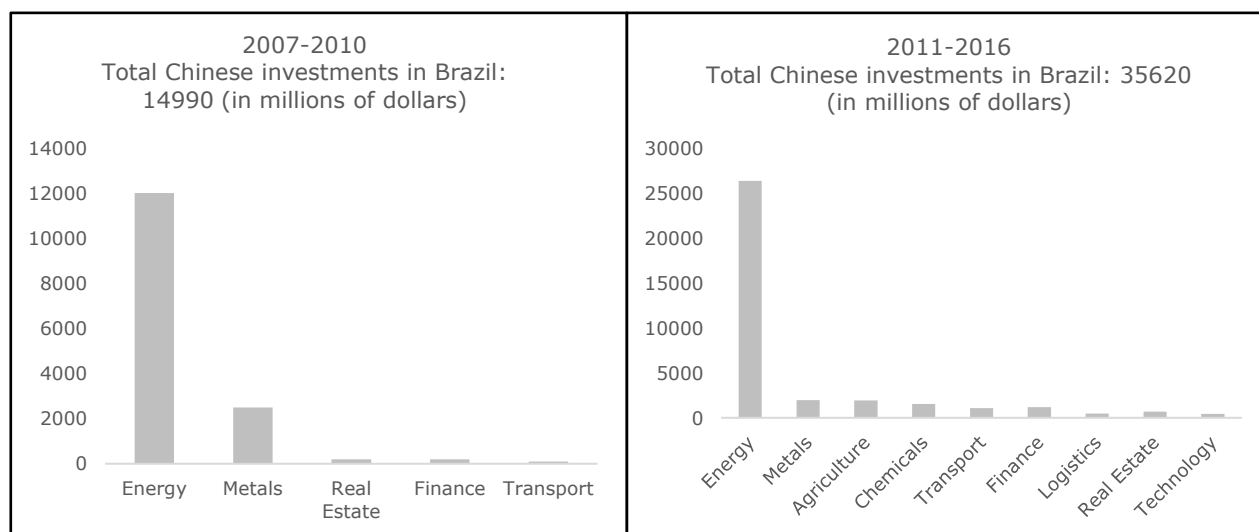
³ We agree with Paulino (2020) on the difficulties in addressing the issue of Chinese investments in Latin America and the world due to the existence of different methodologies to quantify them. For methodological and operational purposes, we opted for the information from China Global Investment Tracker (American Enterprise Institute, 2024) to homogenize the data for the different periods and because its interactive online access allows for permanent contact and comparisons with other countries.



(State Grid, Three Gorges and SINOPEC) have Brazil as the main destination for activities outside China.

In contrast to the period 2007-2010, the remaining percentage of investments was diversified in terms of portfolio. Sectors such as agriculture, logistics, technology and chemicals, among others, were added. A colorful fact is presented in the behavior of investments during Dilma's administrations. In her first term investments of USD 16.09 billion were recorded, while in the following two years, coinciding with the greatest period of national political instability because of *Lava Jato* Operation and the impeachment, this amount rose to USD 19.53 billion. This shows that the ups and downs of investments are subject to a myriad of factors and sometimes there is no unidirectional relationship in terms of variables. Paulino (2020) notes that in 2012-2014 there was a slowdown in Chinese investments in Brazil because in that period the effects of the 2008 international financial crisis were felt most strongly in Europe and developing countries. Commodity prices fell and both the global economy and growth in Brazil and China slowed down, respectively, which led to a decline in investment volumes.

Graph I: Chinese investments in Brazil by periods



Source: Our elaboration with data from China Global Investment Tracker (<https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000618>)

From Temer to Bolsonaro: business is business

When Michel Temer assumed the presidency in 2016, after Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, foreign policy was not one of his priorities, which to some extent was expected given the complexity of the domestic context (Pereyra Doval, 2019). It did undergo budgetary adjustments and adjustments in terms of perspectives since it was led by a political leader who, unlike his predecessor, belonged to the center-right spectrum. Gone were the intentions of understanding the region as a platform for the country's international projection, of consolidating itself as a global player, or of



appealing to South-South dialogue and cooperation. These were times of revitalizing State-State relations fundamentally in economy.

And as *business is business*, Temer's first international mission was to China in September 2016. At the Brazil-China High-Level Business Seminar, the former president expressed his admiration for Chinese culture and people and described the bilateral relationship with words such as *trust*, *genuine friendship* and *allies*, among others (Temer, 2016). At the same time, he stated that the trade relationship with China not only remained the same, but that he had clear intentions to deepen it. Given the economic recession and the socio-political turmoil resulting from the impeachment, it was imperative for Temer to sustain the flow of Chinese investment, at least in the short and medium term, and to recover export volumes, which had fallen in 2014-2015.

In terms of trade, the 2017-2018 period was positive for the sale of Brazilian products. While in those two years the average amount of exports to China was approximately USD 55.708 million, during the Rousseff administration this amount was USD 40.408 million. In 2018, China accounted for 27.5% of total Brazilian exports, made up of crude oil, iron ore, soybeans and sugar, among others.

What happened to investments? The information provided by China Global Investment Tracker (American Enterprise Institute, 2024) shows that there was no halt in terms of amounts, although they did have a stealthier behavior. This process was influenced by a set of variables such as the temporary nature of Temer's term, the uncertainty of the upcoming electoral process and the reduction of Chinese investments in the world. Between 2017 and 2018, China invested USD 11.48 billion, with the energy sector absorbing USD 6.84 billion. The power generation, transmission and distribution sector led the way in receiving funds, especially through State Grid and Three Gorges (Cariello, 2019).

Jair Bolsonaro's triumph in the 2018 presidential elections generated astonishment in some quarters, although it was a foreseeable fact. From a global perspective, it reflected what was happening in the region and in other parts of the world, to wit the advance of right-wing governments (Pereyra Doval & Souroujon, 2021). From a domestic perspective, without being the sole cause, as Nunes (2024) argues, the *Lava Jato* institutional corruption scandal provided a unique opportunity for ultra-liberals and anti-communists to push a new narrative of polarization that Brazilian right-wing forces were able to capitalize on.

Supported by sectors of the armed forces, the agribusiness lobby and evangelical groups, Bolsonaro arrived at the Planalto Palace with the mission to "(...) restore and rewrite [the] country, definitively freeing it from corruption, criminality, economic irresponsibility and ideological submissiveness" (Bolsonaro, 2019). In short, his mission as a "good citizen" was to combat everything that progressivism, identified with the PT, had built at the domestic and international levels and, in this sense, Bolsonaro has given us something to talk about (Pereyra Doval, 2019).

Regarding foreign policy, during his presidential campaign, where there was no lack of a violent and reactionary narrative, Bolsonaro pointed out certain elements that would act as a compass for his vision of the world. Thus, the idea of rebuilding Brazil's greatness



and promoting its development was anchored in the pursuit of a privileged relationship with the United States, a move away from regional schemes, and a critical stance towards China and governments associated with communism (Frenkel, 2018; Brun, 2019; Pereyra Doval, 2019).

Of the three points, the link with China was undoubtedly the one that set alarm bells ringing in academic, government and business circles. In February 2018, amid the election campaign, Bolsonaro visited Taiwan. Since the recognition of China as a Republic in the 1970s, he was the first presidential candidate to embark on such an adventure. And as if that were not enough, there was no shortage of hostile appraisals of China, described, among other things, as a “predatory economic power” that was not investing in Brazil, but rather buying it.

When he took over the executive, the battle between his verbose anti-China rhetoric and pragmatism was defined in favor of the latter by the existence of institutional counterweights. This included the balancing of vice-president Hamilton Mourão through official visits, Brazilian support for the Chinese candidate in the elections to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the intervention of the agribusiness, a sector that did not hesitate to pressure Bolsonaro for fear of the consequences for exports (Brun, 2019; Pereyra Doval, 2019). In this sense, in addition to the political counterweight, Mourão took advantage of the meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Qishan, at the fifth COSBAN meeting, held in May 2019, to propose turning over a new leaf and putting the relationship back on track. However, the calm was short-lived. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the world in human, health, economic and commercial terms. Likewise, in politics it was used not only by the United States and China to settle yet another front in their dispute for global hegemony, but also by other actors to justify their vision of politics and international reality anchored in a dichotomous right-left reductionism. Bolsonaro's government was one of them. In addition to the exchanges between Eduardo Bolsonaro, deputy and son of the former president, and the Chinese ambassador to Brazil, Yang Wanming, the former blaming the Chinese government for the virus and the latter blaming him for a 'mental virus', there were insinuations of the then president about COVID-19 as a possible laboratory virus created by China to launch an international bacteriological or chemical war: “Are we not facing a new war? Which country recorded the highest GDP growth? I'm not going to tell you”, Bolsonaro asked in a public statement (France 24, 05/05/21). However, in practice, the political distance between Bolsonaro and Xi Jinping was overshadowed by the good performance of the economic-trade plane in terms of trade and investment. As shown in Table III, Brazilian exports performed positively during the Temer and Bolsonaro governments, with a brief decline between 2018 and 2019, despite being part of a political spectrum more inclined towards understanding with the United States than with China. A curious fact is that during 2020 and 2021, complex years for trade flows due to the pandemic, Brazilian exports, precisely because of their composition and destination, experienced a significant rise compared to previous years. Bolsonaro ended his mandate in 2022 with 26.7% of total exports to China, a value very similar to that of Temer. Meanwhile, the recovery of imports was a little slower due to the weakening of Brazilian economy.



Table III: Brazil-China trade (2017-2022) (in millions of dollars)

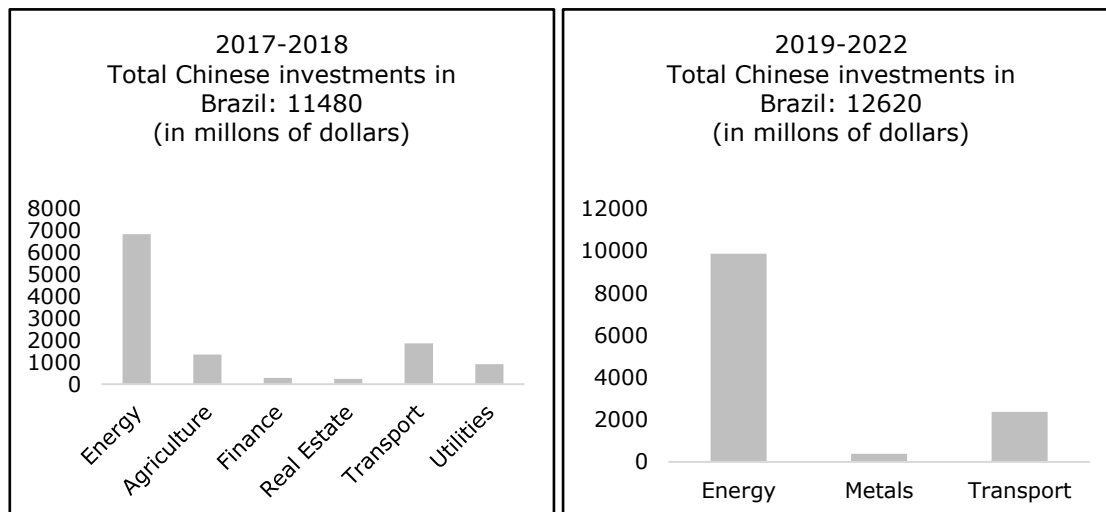
Year	Exports	Imports
2017	47488	27553
2018	63928	35157
2019	63357	36028
2020	67788	34778
2021	87907	47650
2022	89427	60743

Source: Authors' elaboration with data from Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria, Comércio e Serviços (COMEX STAT) (<https://comexstat.mdic.gov.br/>)

In terms of investments, volumes were not exuberant compared to previous stages, but they were on the order of the day, with no interruptions⁴ or diversions. The pandemic effect, the consolidation of ongoing projects and the challenges of the economies involved help to understand these dynamics. Having overcome the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 expansion, the CEBC defined 2021 as "a year of rebound" in terms of the flow of Chinese investment in Brazil, with the number of projects having grown by 250% compared to 2020. For China Global Investment Tracker (American Enterprise Institute, 2024), 2021 was a paradigmatic year for the Brazil-China link, as the South American country was the one that received the most investments from the Asian giant in the world; it is also the actor that concentrates around 48% of the flows invested by China in South America (Cariello, 2022). Continuing the trend, the energy sector accounted for USD 9.87 billion, 78.2% of the total invested in the period 2019-2022 (Graph II), with the entry of PowerChina, the developer of clean energy infrastructure, such as solar and hydroelectric, and China General Nuclear, dedicated to the implementation of renewable energy plants, standing out (Cariello, 2022).

The facts show that, *vis-à-vis* China, Bolsonaro spent his mandate in a constant tension between his ideology and the need to take certain actions to address the needs of the country's domestic and foreign agenda. This situation led him, with his lack of foreign policy knowledge, to many discursive missteps, many of which have escaped the basic forms of diplomacy. Trade dynamism and investment policy reflect the fact that Bolsonaro's slips have not overshadowed the pattern that has characterized the Sino-Brazilian relationship for decades.

⁴ The case of the current Argentine executive can be taken as a reference to demonstrate the validity of our hypothesis. In this sense, in the Argentina-China bilateral relationship, ideological divisions are currently taking precedence over pragmatic considerations, which has had repercussions for Chinese investment in Buenos Aires. The clearest example of this was the stoppage of the construction of two dams in Santa Cruz and the consequent dismissal of workers, as well as a possible lawsuit for breach of contract. All of this was a consequence of President Milei's reservations about the bilateral link and the executive's delay in signing contracts (Pereyra Doval, 2024).

**Graph II: Chinese investments during the Temer and Bolsonaro governments**

Source: Our elaboration with data from China Global Investment Tracker (<https://www.aei.org/china-global-investment-tracker/?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000618>)

Lula's return to the national executive has generated new expectations for the relationship between Brasilia and Beijing. The current president made his third State visit to China in April 2023 with the aim of writing a new chapter in the bilateral relationship, probably with the 'illusion' that it would be like the one written during his first term in office. The little time that has elapsed shows promising traits both economically - exports and investments - and politically. However, one can only hope, as history is still being written.

Conclusion

The process of building and strengthening ties between Brazil and China over this century is unprecedented in the South American scenario. Undoubtedly, the weight of the actors involved, the trajectory of the bilateral relationship and how it is inscribed in global geopolitics are factors that differentiate it from other countries in the region.

The evolution from strategic partnership to global strategic partnership has been the result of the continuous presence of both States in their respective foreign policy guidelines, thanks to the identification of the same objective: the generation of a business agenda with a medium- and long-term impact. The data are more than eloquent. For more than a decade, China has displaced the United States as Brazil's main trading partner and has a compulsive investment policy. China's interest in a key portfolio such as energy provides it with a solid base for political and economic expansion towards the rest of Latin America. For its part, Brazil has found in the Asian giant a first-rate source of foreign currency due to the magnitude of the market and a major partner that contributes to redefining its position on the international stage.



Brazilian executive's ideological turns in the left-right spectrum did not overshadow the continuity of business or generate changes in the bilateral trade dynamic. In this sense, both the PT governments and the administrations of Temer and Bolsonaro shared a pragmatic and strategic vision of the bilateral relationship, anchored in the economic-commercial sphere because, ultimately, business is business.

In the case of the PT, the objectives complementarity in foreign policy between Brasilia and Beijing made it possible to strike a balance between the political and economic dimensions of the shared agenda. The systemic changes at the beginning of the century allowed Brazil and China to forge closer ties through convergence in common spaces and the creation of multilateral forums such as BRICS. Brazil's active role in successive and simultaneous global negotiations brought it closer to the Asian country, which was also expanded economically at the international level. The shifts that emerged from the 2008 financial crisis continued to generate spaces for China's expansion, which became the main competitor of the United States. Latin America thus became a scenario in dispute for hegemony.

At this juncture of intra-hegemonic struggle, Bolsonaro's government positioned itself on the side of the "West". To this end, the design of his foreign policy moved away from Itamaraty's traditional guidelines. In this way, the political-diplomatic and economic-commercial dimensions were decoupled. However, perhaps due to pressure from agribusiness —one of Bolsonaro's electoral backers— or the actions of Hamilton Mourão —who in his role as vice-president carried out a kind of counter-balance - the ideological struggle against China of the ex-president was mitigated. The short-circuits that existed during Bolsonaro's term in office did not divert the relationship from its usual path. Bilateral relations between Brazil and China, even in years of diplomatic tensions, were sustained and expanded in their economic aspect. Business as usual.

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BEYOND IRON ORE: REFRAMING THE BRAZIL-CHINA PARTNERSHIP AS A MULTIFACETED ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolving multifaceted engagement between China and Brazil, focusing on the catalytic role of the iron ore trade in shaping their strategic partnership. Driven by China's growing demand for iron ore and its strategic need to diversify supply chains, the relationship has evolved beyond economic interests into a broader strategic alliance. This alliance encompasses increased economic integration, characterized by trade, infrastructure projects, and technology transfer, as well as shared ideological alignment within multilateral institutions like BRICS and the G20. This paper argues that the China-Brazil partnership, fueled by their mutual reliance on iron ore, exemplifies how resource-driven partnerships can evolve into strategic alliances with significant implications for global politics and economics. The alliance signifies a shift in global power dynamics, with emerging powers like Brazil playing an increasingly important role in shaping the future of international relations.

Keywords

Iron ore, China-Brazil relations, resource-driven, multilateral institutions, global power dynamics.

Resumo

Este artigo examina a evolução do envolvimento multifacetado entre a China e o Brasil, concentrando-se no papel catalisador do comércio de minério de ferro na definição da sua parceria estratégica. Impulsionada pela crescente procura de minério de ferro por parte da China e pela sua necessidade estratégica de diversificar as cadeias de abastecimento, a relação evoluiu para além dos interesses económicos, para uma aliança estratégica mais ampla. Esta aliança abrange uma maior integração económica, caracterizada pelo comércio, projectos de infra-estruturas e transferência de tecnologia, bem como um alinhamento ideológico partilhado dentro de instituições multilaterais como os BRICS e o G20. Este artigo argumenta que a parceria China-Brasil, alimentada pela sua dependência mútua do minério de ferro, exemplifica como as parcerias orientadas para os recursos podem evoluir para alianças estratégicas com implicações significativas para a política e a economia globais. A aliança significa uma mudança na dinâmica do poder global, com potências emergentes como



o Brasil desempenhando um papel cada vez mais importante na definição do futuro das relações internacionais.

Palavras-chave

Minério de ferro, relações China-Brasil, instituições multilaterais orientadas por recursos, dinâmica de poder global.

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BEYOND IRON ORE: REFRAMING THE BRAZIL-CHINA PARTNERSHIP AS A MULTIFACETED ENGAGEMENT

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Introduction

The Brazil-China relationship, once hailed as a "perfect match" due to their complementary economic strengths, has faced significant challenges in recent years (Freitas, 2014). This "perfect match" envisioned a mutually beneficial partnership, with China's burgeoning demand for raw materials aligning with Brazil's abundant resources. This initial optimism was tempered by a downturn in 2014, however, that was characterized by economic contractions and declining levels of engagement. Beyond a few large corporations, most Brazilian companies struggled to penetrate the Chinese market, leaving Brazil with a trade deficit. Despite these challenges, a new window of opportunity emerged in the 2020s. China's shift away from Australia, driven by geopolitical tensions and economic statecraft, created a demand for alternative sources of raw materials, particularly iron ore. Brazil, with its vast reserves, emerged as a key alternative, offering China a chance to diversify its supply chain and reduce its dependence on Australia. This shift has the potential to reshape the Brazil-China partnership, opening avenues for deeper economic integration and strategic cooperation.

While iron ore remains a crucial commodity in this evolving relationship, it is only one aspect of a multifaceted engagement. This paper explores recent shifts in Brazil-China relations and proposes a new framework for analyzing their complex relationship, looking at geopolitical, technological, strategic, multilateral, economic, and political dimensions. This framework will be illustrated through the lens of the rising importance of Brazil's iron ore supply to China, demonstrating how this single commodity can serve as a case study for understanding the potential for a deeper and more strategic partnership between the two nations. Realizing the full potential of this partnership, however, would require addressing the economic disparities, geopolitical tensions, and technological collaboration needs. This paper will explore how both countries can navigate these challenges and build a more resilient and mutually beneficial relationship in the face of a changing global landscape.



Literature Review

The turn of the century saw China and Brazil, both aspiring regional powers, seeking closer collaboration. Niu (2010), a Chinese research fellow at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, examined the impact of the Lula era on the evolving bilateral strategic partnership. He recognized that the conversations and exchanges between the two countries were becoming more substantive, covering a broader spectrum of topics, and wielding a greater impact on the global stage. Niu advised both countries to layer more regional and global components into their bilateral agenda, to enhance ties in terms of economic cooperation and social interaction.

Cardoso (2012) echoed Niu's observation, highlighting the rise of trading volume and the establishment of high-level bilateral institutions, particularly in their collaboration within various multilateral institutions and mechanisms. Cardoso focused his research on relevant domestic actors and the strategic meanings behind this partnership. He found that both countries were eager to cooperate and seize this window of opportunity. The establishment of the BRICS marked the starting point of this collaboration, aiming to influence the world order and global governance. However, ten years later, the question remains: what has this partnership achieved?

Armony & Velasquez (2016) recognized that a complex matrix of interactions, encompassing developmental, political, cultural, and "soft power" dimensions, was behind the rapid growth of China-Brazil economic relations. While acknowledging a clear "honeymoon" sentiment among Brazilians towards China, they cautioned that the benefits Brazil received might not be long term, due to unpredictable circumstances. This warning proved prescient as bitterness began to rise as Brazilian companies faced difficulties penetrating the Chinese market and the potential threat of China's aggressive strategy in potentially taking over physical control of Brazil's (and other Latin American countries') natural resources (Rocha and Bielschowsky, 2018).

Despite these difficulties and hazards, Brazilians remain eager to seek closer collaboration with China, particularly in terms of investments to diversify its manufacturing economy (Hiratuka, 2020). As China has established itself as Brazil's main supplier of manufactured products, Brazilian elites have raised concerns about the concentration of Brazilian exports in a few products, the potential hidden environmental costs, and the impact of the influx of Chinese products on the domestic market. Brazil urgently needs to upgrade its manufacturing capacity and diversify its economic growth. Chinese companies, like BYD, may be able to provide the technological guidance and assistance that Brazil seeks. Hiratuka emphasizes that the presence of these Chinese companies requires appropriate coordination from Brazilian policymakers.

Iron Ore's Role

Scholars have observed that despite shifts in Brazilian political leadership, the relationship between Brazil and China grew stronger and more multifaceted from 1995 to 2020, regardless of whether the Brazilian government was left-leaning or right-leaning. Vazquez (2022) observed that Brazil's trade with China and its trade with the United States moved in tandem, demonstrating a shared pattern of growth and evolution



over the course of the study. The transformation of Brazil-China relations over a quarter of a century, according to Vazquez, is evident in three key areas: the strengthening of diplomatic ties through an expanded network, the significant growth of trade and investment, and the convergence of their positions on global governance issues. He argued that Brazil's relationship with China should not be viewed solely through the lens of political ideology. Under President Jair Bolsonaro, Vazquez points out, the relationship has become more pragmatic, adapting to shared interests rather than ideological clashes, without necessarily being dependent on or excluding Brazil's ties with the US.

The growing importance of iron ore is a crucial aspect of the Brazil-China partnership that requires further analysis. Iron ore is a vital ingredient for making steel, a massive industry that builds everything from bridges to buildings. The demand for steel has grown quickly, so iron ore production has been booming since the year 2000. Australia and Brazil are the biggest suppliers of iron ore, and China is the biggest buyer. The iron ore industry is working to improve its technology to make it more efficient, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective. These advancements include the adoption of automated mining systems, advanced processing techniques, and sustainable mining practices. This research aims to bridge the gap in existing scholarship by examining the increasing importance of iron ore trade in the context of the broader Brazil-China relationship, analyzing its implications for both countries, and exploring the potential for a more multifaceted and strategic engagement.

Research Methodology

This research aims to answer the question: How has the increasing importance of iron ore trade shaped the evolving relationship between Brazil and China? Contextual analysis is particularly relevant to this research because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors shaping the Brazil-China relationship, especially in the context of iron ore trade. The research draws on a variety of data sources, including: 1) academic journal articles, which provide in-depth analysis of Brazil-China relations, including the role of iron ore trade; 2) news reports, which offer insights into current events and the evolving dynamics of the Brazil-China relationship; and 3) think-tank reports, which provide expert analysis and policy recommendations on various aspects of Brazil-China relations, including trade and investment.

The data collected from these sources is analyzed through a process of thematic analysis, identifying key themes and patterns in the literature related to the Brazil-China relationship and iron ore trade. Thematic analysis will focus on identifying key themes such as the evolution of trade patterns, the impact of geopolitical shifts on iron ore trade, the role of technological advancements in the iron ore industry, and the broader implications of the Brazil-China partnership for regional and global stability. This analysis will involve coding the data, identifying patterns and relationships between themes, and drawing conclusions based on the emerging insights.

While this research draws on a diverse range of sources, it is important to acknowledge that the study is limited by the availability of publicly accessible data, particularly



regarding government documents and internal company reports. Future research could benefit from conducting interviews with key stakeholders in the Brazilian and Chinese iron ore industries to gain deeper insights into the dynamics of their relationship.

Geopolitical Analysis of China-Brazil Relations: Economic Ties, Political Ideology, and Commodities

Bilateral relations between Brazil and the People's Republic of China are relatively recent. In 1974, Brazil formally recognized the People's Republic of China. The Deng Xiaoping era was crucial for Brazil as Deng Xiaoping's government incorporated Brazil into Chinese plans. This culminated in 1984 with the first visit of a Brazilian president to China. In the last three decades, the relationship between China and Brazil has evolved significantly, spanning economic, political, and strategic dimensions. This analysis delves into the multifaceted nature of their ties, exploring the dynamics of economic integration, ideological alignment, and the significance of commodities in shaping their relationship.

What drew the attention of President João Figueiredo to China was the economic situation. The 1980s is known as the lost decade for Brazil, where the Brazilian economy was in decline. By contrast, China had already experienced significant economic growth, with a 15.2% increase in 1984 (World Bank, n.d.). João Figueiredo's visit to China was more symbolic, as he presented only a speech emphasizing a "convergence band" between China and Brazil. President Figueiredo's speech highlighted that while China and Brazil were extremely different countries in several factors, both sought international clout in a similar manner. Neither Brazil nor China wanted to be aligned with superpowers like the United States or the Soviet Union. Both countries prioritized development and believed that internal stability was crucial for achieving it. This meant refraining from interfering in the affairs of other countries (Horta, 2016). Although President Figueiredo returned to Brazil without reaching any formal agreement with China, he managed to demonstrate to China the mutual necessity for the two countries to draw closer together to achieve joint international integration as sovereign nations. This shared focus on economic development would eventually lead to a significant increase in trade between the two countries, particularly in commodities like iron ore, which would become a key driver of their relationship in the years to come. This early focus on economic cooperation and non-alignment would lay the groundwork for a more multifaceted relationship in the decades to come, with iron ore trade emerging as a crucial factor shaping the dynamics of their engagement.

China-Brazil Technological and Strategic Partnership

In 1988, another Brazilian president traveled to China. President Sarney visited the People's Republic of China, and during this visit, Brazil and China signed an agreement called the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS). This marked a significant moment as both countries ventured into space satellite technology. The project is a collaborative effort utilizing technology from both nations. The primary goal of CBERS is to track the Earth's crust, mapping natural resources, monitoring deforestation, and



tracking sea currents. This early technological collaboration would later pave the way for joint ventures in the mining sector, including the development of more efficient and sustainable iron ore extraction technologies.

In 1992, Brazil received two Chinese statesmen. The first was Jiang Zemin, who succeeded Deng Xiaoping as the leader of China, marking the first visit of a Chinese head of state to Brazil. Later that year, Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji also visited Brazil. During Zhu Rongji's visit, Brazil and China established a strategic partnership, meaning a bilateral agreement signifying mutual importance in each other's foreign policy objectives. This partnership would lay the foundation for a more integrated economic relationship, with the iron ore trade being pivotal in strengthening their economic and strategic ties. Over time, this relationship evolved from a strategic partnership to a global strategic partnership, denoting even greater significance between the two nations (Jenkins, 2012, p.21).

Brazil-China Trade Partnership

In the 1990s, Brazil witnessed a large trade surplus with China. Brazil imported inexpensive manufactured products, known as low-value-added manufactured products, from China during this period. Meanwhile, Brazil exported raw materials and commodities such as iron ore and soybeans to China (Bull, 2011, p.231). From 1998 to 2004, Brazil experienced a significant surge in commodity trade due to China's increasing demand, solidifying its position as a global player in the exports of soybeans, oil, and iron ore (Barbosa & Mendes, 2006, p.2).

In 2004, President Lula made his first visit to China. During the same year, Embraer, the Brazilian multinational aerospace corporation (Aulakh, 2006, p.93) established a presence in China. Additionally, the Brazil-China Business Forum was inaugurated. This business forum, along with the earlier technological collaborations, facilitated the development of joint ventures in the mining sector, contributing to the growth of iron ore exports. The purpose of this business forum was to facilitate business and contracts between Brazilian and Chinese companies, reducing the necessity for government intermediation. While the government continued to participate in negotiations, companies gained greater autonomy in forming agreements and conducting business. Since then, Brazil has made larger investments in China, and China has become one of the largest investors in Brazil, within various sectors. Brazil has primarily sold raw materials to China, while China has sold manufactured products to Brazil; this relationship is similar to the interactions between an underdeveloped and a developed country (Powell, 2017, p.416). While Brazil benefits from increased demand for its raw materials, China gains access to essential resources for its industrial development, creating a mutually beneficial relationship. Nevertheless, Brazil began encouraging China to produce goods in Brazil, so as to train Brazilian labor and help foster Brazil's development.

In 2013, trade with China was worth \$83 billion, covering a wide range of products. Brazil continued to export iron ore, soybeans, and now oil to China (Government of Brazil, 2022). Between 2006 and 2016, total trade with China increased from \$20 billion to \$68



billion (Wei, et al., 2019, p.1). From 2020 to 2021, Brazil's iron ore exports reached a total of 357.7 million tons (OEC, 2024). In 2024, Brazil's iron ore exports alone reached \$2.41B, representing a growth of China (\$669M) in total exports representing (\$9.77B) on Brazil's export to China, its biggest trade partner, according with trade data from The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC, 2024). The continued growth of iron ore exports suggests a strong foundation for further economic integration, but addressing the trade imbalance and fostering technological collaboration will be crucial for maximizing the potential of this partnership.

Multilateralism

China places significant emphasis on multilateralism over bilateral agreements, a stance that extends to various international negotiations. This approach is particularly highlighted in the perspectives of both China and Brazil, as they argue that multilateral frameworks carry greater significance compared to exclusive agreements such as those within the G7, where they are not present. Consequently, both China and Brazil prioritize engagements within the G20, recognizing it as a more inclusive and impactful platform for global discussions and agreements. This shared commitment to multilateralism has also influenced their approach to iron ore trade, as they seek to create a more equitable and sustainable global framework for resource management.

Moreover, Brazil's relationship with China extends beyond general diplomatic ties to encompass collaboration on specific issues. This collaboration is evident in Brazil's participation within groups such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China), where they work closely with China on shared objectives and policies. While they share a commitment to multilateralism, navigating the complexities of these groups and balancing their national interests can pose challenges to their collaboration. These partnerships within larger multilateral frameworks underscore the strategic importance that China and Brazil attribute to fostering broader international cooperation and consensus-building (Sauvant, 2006 p.373).

Robust Economic Ties

China and Brazil have forged a robust economic partnership over the past 30 years, marked by increasing trade volumes, investment flows, and collaborative ventures. At the heart of this relationship lies the exchange of commodities, with Brazil emerging as a key supplier of raw materials to fuel China's rapid industrialization and economic growth. Iron ore, in particular, has been a cornerstone of Sino-Brazilian trade. China's insatiable demand for iron ore, driven by its booming steel industry, has thrust Brazil into the spotlight as one of its main suppliers.

Historically, Australia dominated 60% of the iron ore market (Rodrigues & Lengyel, 2023, p.44), but Brazil's rise as a major exporter of iron ore and other commodities has significantly altered China's supply chain dynamics. Commodities beyond iron ore span a diverse range of products, including soybeans, oil, and agricultural products. This broad



commercial relationship has fostered mutual interdependence with China, which is unlikely to diminish in the future. Brazil is poised to remain a major international player due to its abundant natural resources and robust agricultural production, which enable it to offer bulk volumes at competitive prices that are difficult for other countries to match. However, this reliance on commodity trade also presents certain vulnerabilities, such as price fluctuations and the potential for market disruptions. Technological collaboration in areas like mining and resource management can help to mitigate these risks and foster a more sustainable and balanced economic partnership.

In recent years, bilateral trade between China and Brazil has soared to unprecedented levels, reflecting the deepening integration of their economies. Strategic initiatives such as the China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism have facilitated dialogue and cooperation across various sectors, laying the groundwork for sustained economic collaboration (Chinese Embassy, 2024). The importance of raw materials in shaping China-Brazil relations cannot be overstated, especially in the context of the iron ore trade. Brazil's emergence as a major supplier of iron ore to China has not only transformed the global commodities market but also catalyzed closer economic integration between the two countries.

Diplomatic Engagement, Ideological Alignment and Commodities Trade

The political dimension of China-Brazil relations was initially characterized by a mutual technological and economic partnership within the context of developing countries, which later evolved towards elite interests and ideological alignment. This alignment is supported by shared principles of multilateralism, global cooperation, and the distancing from old alliances and partnerships from the Cold War period. Historically, both China and Brazil have advocated for principles of non-interference and respect for national sovereignty in international affairs. This shared commitment to sovereignty and non-alignment has served as a cornerstone of their diplomatic relations, fostering trust and cooperation on global issues ranging from climate change to international peacekeeping. Furthermore, China and Brazil have actively sought to strengthen ties within the framework of multilateral institutions such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and the G20. As founding members of the BRICS bloc, China and Brazil have collaborated closely on initiatives aimed at promoting economic development, improving global governance, and reforming international financial institutions.

China's diplomatic overtures toward Brazil also reflect its broader strategy of cultivating strategic partnerships with emerging powers in the Global South. By engaging with Brazil on issues of mutual interest, such as infrastructure development, energy cooperation, and technology transfer, China seeks to consolidate its influence and leverage in Latin America and beyond. From a Brazilian perspective, engagement with China offers significant economic benefits and opportunities for technological exchange and training. Brazil's alignment with the BRICS framework exemplifies its commitment to deepening cooperation and connectivity with Asia, Africa, and Europe, thereby enhancing its global competitiveness and strategic relevance.



Around 30 years ago, when Brazil began to take its first steps towards China, the country saw a gradual shift in its policies, moving away from a strategic alignment that had fought alongside the Allied powers in the Second World War and continued throughout the Cold War, following the lead of the United States of America and its anti-communist stance. Throughout the military administration in Brazil, the government adopted a stringent and openly anti-socialist and anti-communist position.

At the end of the military period and with the beginning of democratization in Brazil in 1988, the country gradually began to implement social policies and change its outlook towards communist and socialist regimes. This shift is evident in the eight-year presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was identified as a social democrat, followed by the extensive rule of the Workers' Party (PT), with Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff being elected and re-elected over three consecutive terms. Subsequently, Brazil experienced a period of conservatism under Jair Bolsonaro for four years (Piza, 2023, p.41) followed by a return to left-wing governance with the re-election of Lula and the Workers' Party.

The partnership between the Workers Party (Piza, 2023, p. 45), led by the iconic figure Lula, and China has evolved into a strategic alliance characterized by deepening trade relations, robust diplomatic engagements, and shared socialist ideologies. One of the pillars of the Workers' Party and China alliance was the significant expansion of bilateral trade during Lula's presidency (2003-2010). This trade expansion, fueled by the growing demand for iron ore from China, solidified Brazil's position as a key supplier of raw materials and strengthened the economic foundations of their partnership. Brazil, under the PT's leadership, leveraged its abundant natural resources to become a key supplier of commodities such as soybeans, iron ore, and oil to China. In return, Brazil imported manufactured goods and technology from China, fostering a mutually beneficial economic relationship. This trade expansion not only boosted economic growth but also enhanced Brazil's strategic position in the global market (Green & Leuhrmann, 2018, p.345).

To achieve this trade expansion, PT-led administrations actively pursued diplomatic initiatives to strengthen ties with China. High-level visits, diplomatic dialogues, and cooperation agreements were hallmarks of this engagement, signaling a commitment to deepening political and strategic understanding. Brazil, under PT's influence, aligned itself with China on various international issues, supporting China's initiatives in forums like the United Nations. This diplomatic synergy reinforced mutual trust and laid the foundation for broader collaboration.

The alliance between PT, Lula, and China is not merely transactional but also ideological. While they share a commitment to multilateralism, navigating these differences and finding common ground on complex issues will be crucial for sustaining their ideological convergence. Both parties share socialist ideologies, albeit with contextual differences, leading to a convergence of interests on social welfare, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development. This shared vision extends to global governance, where PT and China advocate for a multipolar world order that accommodates diverse voices and promotes equitable development. Their cooperation transcends traditional power dynamics, challenging hegemonic structures and fostering a more inclusive international system. The strategic alliance between PT, Lula, and China carries significant implications



for global politics and cooperation. It represents a model of South-South cooperation based on mutual respect, shared values, and strategic alignment. This alliance not only strengthens Brazil-China relations but also contributes to shaping a more balanced and multipolar global order. The return of the PT to power in Brazil suggests a continuation of this strategic alliance, but navigating global challenges and balancing their national interests will be crucial for maintaining the momentum of their partnership. As PT and China continue to collaborate on economic, diplomatic, and ideological fronts, their partnership serves as a testament to the potential of cooperation among emerging powers to drive positive change on the world stage.

The China-Australia Relations and the Rise of Brazil on Iron Ore Supply

Over the past four years, China has purchased billions of tons of iron ore. With Australia being its largest supplier of iron ore, it was presumed that relations between the two countries remained in an almost permanent state of goodwill. However, trade relations between China and Australia began to experience strong turbulence in the last decade due to China's significant interference in international politics in Southeast Asia, directly impacting Australia's internal policies. Recognizing China as a growing international and regional threat in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific, Australia has visibly and gradually shifted away from China while aligning itself with security partnerships to counter China's long-standing maritime expansion in the region. These security partnerships are reflected in initiatives such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) coalition.

China saw Australia as no longer a reliable partner for its strategic raw material needs, especially as Australia entered into security alliances with China's geopolitical rivals. For its part, the Chinese Communist Party has redirected its efforts to other sources of ore and raw materials to mitigate the impact of Australia's strategic pivot. Brazil's proactive engagement with China, coupled with its abundant iron ore reserves and competitive pricing, has positioned it as a key alternative to Australia. This Chinese maneuver demonstrates a concerted effort towards a common goal, not only between China and Brazil countries operating under the logic of South-South cooperation but also between two parties with similar political ideologies, once again reinforcing their global strategic partnership. Brazil, a steadfast economic partner and reliable diplomatic friend of China for decades, has steadily deepened its diplomatic engagement with China, resulting in increased trade. China has become Brazil's largest export partner over the years.

When it comes to iron ore, Brazil ranks only behind Australia as a supplier to China for its steel production. Therefore, as China considers diversifying its sources of raw material extraction, it primarily looks at smaller countries in Africa. However, in terms of iron ore, Brazil is likely to remain China's top priority as the main supplier for the foreseeable future. However, maintaining this position will require addressing environmental concerns related to mining and navigating potential competition from other emerging iron ore producers. The growing interdependence between Brazil and China in the iron ore sector suggests a promising future for their partnership, with potential for further collaboration in areas like resource management and technological development.



Conclusion

The multifaceted relationship between China and Brazil, spanning economic, political, and strategic domains, has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, culminating in a mutual global strategic partnership. Rooted in the quest for natural resources and driven by geopolitical imperatives, this partnership has evolved into a strategic alliance with far-reaching implications for global geopolitics. At the core of China-Brazil relations is the trade in raw materials, especially iron ore, which serves as the backbone of China's industrial complex, infrastructure development, and military efforts. China's strategic imperative to secure diversified sources of raw materials has led to an increasing dependence on Brazil, positioning it as a key partner in China's quest for resource security and strategic dominance.

Brazil's abundance of natural resources, coupled with its strategic diplomatic position, makes it an attractive proposition for resource negotiations with China. As China seeks to mitigate its dependence on traditional suppliers such as Australia and explore alternative sources, Brazil is emerging as a key player in shaping the global raw materials market and facilitating China's economic expansion. Economic ties between China and Brazil have flourished in recent years, with bilateral trade volumes reaching unprecedented levels. Brazil's emergence as a strategic trading partner for China underscores the deepening economic integration between the two nations, driven by mutual interests in raw materials, technology transfer, and infrastructure development.

BRICS, alongside other summit forums involving key states, serves as a convergence point to enhance economic cooperation and connectivity between China and Brazil, opening up new avenues for trade and investment. Leveraging Brazil's strategic position in South America, its diplomatic prowess, and vast resource base, China aims to consolidate its economic influence and expand global reach through infrastructure projects and trade routes. The political alignment between China and Brazil is characterized by shared interests and principles of multilateralism, sovereignty, and non-interference. Both nations actively collaborate within multilateral institutions such as BRICS, G20, and other international summits to advocate for a more equitable global order and reform international financial systems. China's diplomatic overtures towards Brazil reflect its broader strategy of cultivating strategic partnerships with emerging powers in the Global South. By engaging with Brazil on mutual interests such as infrastructure development and technology transfer, China seeks to enhance its geopolitical influence and shape the future trajectory of international relations.

As both countries continue to navigate the complexities of global politics and economics, their partnership is poised to shape the future of international relations, particularly in the context of resource security and global governance. The China-Brazil relationship, fueled by their mutual reliance on iron ore, serves as a compelling example of how resource-driven partnerships can evolve into strategic alliances with far-reaching implications for global politics and economics.



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PRC-BRAZIL COLLABORATION IN RENEWABLE WIND ENERGY: A CASE STUDY OF INTERDEPENDENCIES THROUGH THE LENS OF LIBERAL INTERDEPENDENCE THEORY

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Abstract

This paper examines the strategic collaboration between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Brazil in the renewable wind energy sector. PRC's strategic engagement with Brazil in renewable wind energy has significantly impacted global energy markets, enabling the PRC to expand its investment, technological exports, and geopolitical influence in wider Latin America (LA). This study addresses the concerns surrounding the PRC's growing role in Brazil's wind energy sector- including investments and control over renewable energy production. Guided by the theoretical framework of Liberal and Economic Interdependence, this paper aims to answer the research question of how the PRC's renewable wind energy strategy in Brazil contributes to creating strategic dependencies and potential vulnerabilities associated with reliance on Chinese capital. Employing a qualitative methodology combining official document analysis, political discourse analysis, and expert interviews, this paper examines PRC's official strategies, energy diplomacy, and security implications, as well as the political and economic motivations driving its investments, technological exchanges, and joint ventures. The study evaluates the prospects of mutual interdependence between PRC and Brazil and offers insights from international renewable wind energy experts on the geopolitical implications of PRC's involvement in the global wind energy sector. Concluding that PRC's strategic engagement drives collaboration and growth in Brazil's wind energy sector, creating mutual interdependencies. However, these interdependencies are asymmetrical, resulting in greater



dependencies for Brazil compared to the PRC. Despite this imbalance, the cooperation also fosters some dependencies for the PRC, albeit to a lesser extent. The study contributes to the understanding of Sino-Brazilian energy relations and offers insights into the geopolitical implications of PRC's involvement in emerging renewable energy markets.

Keywords

Brazil, Economic Interdependence, PRC, PRC-Brazil Collaboration, Renewable Wind Energy.

Resumo

Este artigo examina a colaboração estratégica entre a República Popular da China (RPC) e o Brasil no setor das energias eólicas renováveis. O envolvimento estratégico da RPC com o Brasil na energia eólica renovável teve um impacto significativo nos mercados globais de energia, permitindo à RPC expandir o seu investimento, as exportações tecnológicas e a influência geopolítica na América Latina (AL) mais ampla. Este estudo aborda as preocupações em torno do papel crescente da RPC no setor da energia eólica do Brasil - incluindo investimentos e controlo sobre a produção de energia renovável. Guiado pelo quadro teórico da Interdependência Liberal e Económica, este artigo pretende responder à questão de investigação de como a estratégia de energia eólica renovável da RPC no Brasil contribui para a criação de dependências estratégicas e potenciais vulnerabilidades associadas à dependência do capital chinês. Empregando uma metodologia qualitativa que combina a análise de documentos oficiais, a análise do discurso político e as entrevistas com especialistas, este artigo examina as estratégias oficiais, a diplomacia energética e as implicações de segurança da RPC, bem como as motivações políticas e económicas que impulsionam os seus investimentos, intercâmbios tecnológicos e joint ventures. O estudo avalia as perspetivas de interdependência mútua entre a RPC e o Brasil e oferece insights de especialistas internacionais em energia eólica renovável sobre as implicações geopolíticas do envolvimento da RPC no setor global da energia eólica. Concluindo que o envolvimento estratégico da RPC impulsiona a colaboração e o crescimento no setor da energia eólica do Brasil, criando interdependências mútuas. No entanto, estas interdependências são assimétricas, resultando em maiores dependências para o Brasil em comparação com a RPC. Apesar deste desequilíbrio, a cooperação também promove algumas dependências para a RPC, embora em menor grau. O estudo contribui para a compreensão das relações energéticas sino-brasileiras e oferece insights sobre as implicações geopolíticas do envolvimento da RPC nos mercados emergentes de energias renováveis.

Palavras-chave

Brasil, Interdependência Económica, RPC, Colaboração RPC-Brasil, Energia Eólica Renovável.

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BEYOND IRON ORE: REFRAMING THE BRAZIL-CHINA PARTNERSHIP AS A MULTIFACETED ENGAGEMENT

LORHAN DE OLIVEIRA PEREIRA

KAI YIN ALLISON HAGA

1. Introduction

The 21st century has seen profound changes in the global energy sector due to the impacts of climate change caused by extensive fossil fuel use. Transitioning to green energy is essential for sustainable socioeconomic development, and mitigating climate change effects. In recent years, PRC and Brazil have increased their bilateral cooperation in renewable energy production, which has come with an increase in Chinese investments and technological exchange. PRC companies produce around 90% of solar and wind technologies in LA. PRC's increased control over Brazil's renewable energy production and distribution has raised international concerns (Myslikova & Dolton-Thornton, 2023). While the PRC's growing presence in Brazil strengthens its economy, it also affects Brazil's politics and security. Although this partnership offers sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels, concerns persist over the PRC's geopolitical strategy, which may lead to dependence on PRC capital and control over Brazil's critical infrastructure. Therefore, analyzing the PRC-Brazil collaboration in wind energy provides a valuable case study on the opportunities and risks involved. This paper analyzes the PRC's strategy and investments in renewable wind energy in Brazil, examining the implications for interdependence between the PRC and Brazil through the lens of *Liberal* and *Economic Interdependence Theories*.

The *central argument* is that while cooperation in renewable wind energy can provide benefits like technology transfer and increased investments, the PRC's strategy in Brazil can create asymmetric dependencies on Chinese capital, potentially limiting Brazil's autonomy.

To address the research question, of *how the PRC's renewable wind energy strategy in Brazil contributes to creating strategic dependencies and potential vulnerabilities associated with reliance on Chinese capital*- this study employs a qualitative methodology encompassing several key components. Firstly, an extensive *document analysis* was conducted, scrutinizing official publications and strategic documents from both the PRC and Brazil. This analysis utilized sources in multiple languages, including Chinese,



English, Latvian, Portuguese, and Spanish, to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject matter. Secondly, a *political discourse analysis* was implemented to elucidate the political and economic motivations underlying the PRC's renewable energy investments and strategies. This involved a meticulous examination of speeches, policy documents, and official statements, providing insight into the strategic rationale behind the collaboration. Furthermore, the study incorporated expert *interviews* with international renewable wind energy specialists, garnering diverse perspectives on the geopolitical implications of the PRC's involvement in Brazil's wind energy sector. This multifaceted approach was chosen to facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of the strategic dependencies and potential vulnerabilities associated with the PRC-Brazil collaboration in the renewable wind energy sector.

The research presented in this article encompasses a time frame, spanning from the early 2000s to 2023, to analyze the collaborative efforts between the PRC and Brazil in the renewable wind energy sector. This timeframe is strategically chosen to capture the full arc of this partnership, beginning with PRC's initial forays into global economic expansion and culminating in the most recent developments as of early 2023. By examining over two decades of engagement, the study provides a longitudinal perspective that allows the identification of significant trends, policy impacts, and investment patterns. This period of analysis enables a nuanced understanding of how geopolitical initiatives, such as the PRC's "Going Out" Policy (走出去战略),¹ and the *Belt and Road Initiative* (一带一路) (BRI), have shaped the trajectory of Sino-Brazilian cooperation in wind energy, by offering insights into both historical and contemporary contexts.

To answer the research question, this article will systematically analyze several key topics and follow a structured approach. The *Introduction* sets the contextual background, introduces the PRC-Brazil collaboration in the energy sector, and presents the central research question and objectives. The *Literature Review* introduces the theoretical frameworks of Liberal Interdependence Theory and Economic Interdependence and examines the historical and geopolitical context of PRC-Brazil relations, alongside existing literature on their renewable energy collaboration and perspectives from both PRC and Brazilian scholars. The section on *Official PRC Strategies* offers a detailed analysis of PRC's strategies in the renewable wind energy sector, including historical policies and initiatives like the "Going Out" Policy and BRI. The *PRC's Energy Diplomacy and Security Implications* section explores PRC's energy security concerns and the role of its energy diplomacy and resource security. *PRC Investments* section analyzes the investments made by PRC in Brazil's renewable wind energy sector and the impact of Chinese companies and financial flows. The *Prospects for Mutual Interdependence* section examines the mutual dependencies created by PRC-Brazil cooperation, discussing potential risks and benefits for both countries. Insights from *International Renewable Wind Energy Experts* provide a summary of expert interviews on PRC's involvement in global wind energy and diverse perspectives on the topic of mutual interdependence. Finally, the *Conclusions* answer the research question, summarize the findings, assess

¹ Also known as the "Going Global Strategy".



the asymmetric interdependencies between PRC and Brazil, and offer policy recommendations for Brazil.

2. Literature Review

The *liberal interdependence theory* in IR suggests that actions by one entity significantly impact the outcomes and values of others (Coate, Griffin, & Elliott-Gower, 2017). There are two key dimensions of interdependence: *sensitivity* and *vulnerability*. *Sensitivity* measures the response to external influences before policy changes, while *vulnerability* reflects the costs imposed even after policy adjustments (Keohane & Nye, 2001).

Whereas *economic interdependence* refers to a state where parties- individuals, groups, companies, or nations- engage in transactions to satisfy their mutual needs through trade. This implies that all parties are interwoven in a network of economic dependencies, which drives international trade and cooperation. While mutual dependency may foster trade and profit opportunities it also poses potential risks like inequality and exploitation by dominant parties. Excessive reliance on a few external suppliers can lead to vulnerabilities in supply chains, which, in the event of disasters like economic downturns or natural calamities, could halt business operations and lead to economic downturns. Thus, evaluating supply chain stability and considering risk factors is crucial for minimizing negative business impacts and establishing fair, transparent, and sustainable economic relations (Tomasetti, 2024). Risks associated with economic interdependence include supply chain disruptions and increased costs. Excessive interdependence can be seen as a matter of national vulnerability- where participants may face significant costs if their relationship deteriorates (Baldwin, 1980).

While liberal scholars believe economic interdependence reduces political conflicts by incentivizing trade over aggression- the First and Second World Wars have demonstrated that high interdependence does not prevent war (Copeland, 1996).

The political and economic relations between the PRC and Brazil began centuries ago, but the end of the Cold War and the bipolar international order facilitated the development of broader relationships. Until the 1990s, Brazil's development was primarily financed by the US. Yet PRC has capitalized on diminishing US influence to expand its economic presence through economic instruments like trade, loans, and investments- facilitating Brazil's distancing from US, and creating favorable conditions for PRC's expansion.

Yet, there is limited literature on the PRC-Brazil collaboration in the renewable wind sector, thus it is helpful to examine the official perspectives from both sides by scrutinizing the official strategic initiatives and bilateral agreements between the two to assess the extent of the potential interdependencies derived from this cooperation.

To better understand Chinese perspectives, previous research has outlined the necessity of analyzing specifically the Chinese-language material through political discourse analysis examining official PRC's policies and strategies (Berzina-Cerenkova, 2024).



Economic cooperation directs PRC's foreign policy and prioritizes relations with other countries. Chinese and Brazilian scholars alike emphasize that this partnership is driven by the global shift transitioning toward renewable energy sources, exacerbated by escalating petroleum costs and environmental concerns associated with nonrenewable resources (Peng et al., 2019; Junior et al., 2019). Both states position the collaboration in renewable energy as an opportunity to enhance their efforts in sustainable energy production (Xie et al., 2021; Vardiero et al., 2020). As one of the world's largest carbon emitters, PRC's move towards clean energy is significant on a global scale. The latest PRC's 14th Five-Year Plan (十四五规划)(2021-2025) underscores its commitment to innovation-driven, sustainable, and low-carbon renewable energy production from 2021 to 2025- aiming to cap PRC's CO₂ emissions by 2030 (Global Wind Energy Council, 2023). Yet, the rapid expansion of renewable energy projects in LA has raised concerns regarding the PRC's growing geopolitical and economic influence. Approximately 90% of renewable technologies in LA are produced with PRC support. PRC's dominance in renewable energy supply chains has raised international alarm, prompting LA countries to seek ways to secure sustainable energy resources independently (Myslikova & Dolton-Thornton, 2023).

Increased Chinese influence has sparked discussions on the security of global renewable energy supply chains and the associated risks of energy dependence. Since 2021, PRC has been the world's largest and fastest-growing renewable wind energy producer. As of January 2023, the PRC's total operational wind park capacity was 278,353 megawatts (MW), affirming its position as the global leader in the renewable energy sector (Maguire, 2023).

Moreover, PRC has made substantial investments in wind energy projects in Brazil, reflecting its long-term commitment to sustainable energy production in Brazil (Geng et al., 2021). The largest PRC investors in Brazil are the PRC state-owned enterprises (SOEs) such as *China Three Gorges Corporation* as well as private firms [albeit with significant government support and involvement] such as *Goldwind* and *Envision*. These enterprises are the key drivers of PRC-Brazil's collaboration in the renewable wind energy sector providing investments and technical expertise (Dudgeon, 2011). According to Chinese scholars, *Goldwind* and *Envision* investments in financing and developing wind energy projects in Brazil have led to economic benefits in both countries (Bai et al., 2010).

By mirroring practices in the US, to incentivize the development of wind farms Brazilian government has launched several fiscal programs. Noteworthy, these projects have been aligned with Brazilian national development goals for sustainable energy production (Hansen & Zambra, 2020).

PRC-Brazil wind energy collaboration is executed through various organizations and initiatives, focusing on partnerships and investments, especially in regions of Northeast Brazil (Chen et al., 2009). Chinese investments in Brazil are mostly channeled through Brazilian government initiatives such as the *Programme of Incentives for Alternative Electricity Sources* (PROINFA), which aims to increase the use of alternative energy sources and enhance Brazil's renewable energy capacity, by including wind, biomass, and



small hydroelectric power in Brazil's electricity mix. Through PROINFA Brazil has aligned wind farm development with the PRC's sustainable energy objectives (Ma et al., 2021). Thus, facilitating PRC's contributions to Brazil's renewable energy development (Deng et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Chinese scholars emphasize that such joint policy shifts have created favorable conditions for future collaboration (Zhao et al., 2013). Yet, despite these positive developments, Chinese scholars admit that challenges such as cultural differences, regulatory barriers, and logistical issues persist, requiring enhanced strategic planning (Chen et al., 2009).

Additionally, Brazilian institutions such as the *Brazilian Electricity Regulatory Agency* (ANEEL) and the *Energy Research Office* (EPE) provide essential research data on renewable energy generation to PRC. Other mechanisms such as the *Auction of Alternative Sources* have been further institutionalized to promote this collaboration (Vardiero et al., 2020).

Brazilian scholars note that the technological transfer of PRC's wind turbine technology has boosted Brazil's renewable energy capacity and simultaneously contributed to advancing innovation in Brazil's local industries (Diagne et al., 2020).

Chinese scholars note that the main motivation for the PRC's collaboration with Brazil lies in strategic diversification attempts of PRC's energy investments abroad to enhance PRC's national energy security, in line with its broader geopolitical objectives (Han et al., 2015). The main policy framework governing this bilateral collaboration is executed through initiatives like the BRI, which is also the driving force of PRC's foreign policy (Deng et al., 2023).

As reported by the PRC's official *Belt and Road Energy Cooperation Network*, BRI is beneficial to Brazil as it aims to leverage its influence to enhance Brazil's national development strategies. For example, Brazil has announced ambitious plans for renewable energy development by 2030 aiming to increase the proportion of renewable energy in the country's energy matrix to 45%. Which includes a shift towards non-hydropower renewable sources like wind, solar, and biomass (一带一路能源合作网, 2019).

To Enhance infrastructure and energy sector collaborations, PRC-Brazil signed the "*Ten-Year Cooperation Plan*," (十年合作计划)(2012-2021) which allowed Brazil to align its national development strategies with PRC's renewable energy strategies under the BRI umbrella. This reflects Brazil's commitment to diversify its energy sources to support economic growth. BRI serves as the core platform for PRC to foster renewable energy cooperation with Brazil. During Xi Jinping's (习近平) visit to Brazil in 2014, a joint statement was issued that underscored the importance of renewable energy production for sustainable development (IIGF观点, 2019). In 2020, PRC's BRI investments in the renewable energy sector in Brazil accounted for 57% of total investments, in alignment with PRC's "*3060 carbon neutrality goals*". Furthermore, although Brazil is not an official member of BRI, PRC has actively advocated for Brazilian industries to join the initiative to "*leverage the BRI to foster sustainable, low-carbon growth through enhanced Sino-Brazilian cooperation in renewable energy sectors.*"(巴西《经济价值报》, 2021).



As reported by PRC state-run *Xinhua News Agency*, a tangible example of PRC-Brazil collaboration is the 180-MW wind energy project in Bahia [Northeastern Brazil], developed by *China General Nuclear Power Group's Brazilian subsidiary*. Xinhua emphasizes that "*this project exemplifies the integration of economic and social benefits through shared development and technological advancements; [...] and that the project which was completed ahead of schedule has received positive recognition for PRC's contributions to the local renewable energy development in Brazil and thus has strengthened the two-state bilateral relations.*" (罗婧婧, 2023).

Noteworthy, as Chinese scholars note, these interdependencies make them *economically* and *politically* dependent. Increased political engagement primarily arises from intensified bilateral interactions and economic impulse primarily stems from strengthening commercial ties. This mutual dependency has made political and economic relations more conventional and predictable (Guo, 2023).

Yet, Chinese and Brazilian academics alike view this collaboration as a positive-sum game, where both countries benefit- PRC gains access to Brazil's rich resources and opportunities for technological exchange, and Brazil gains Chinese investments and expertise in renewable energy technologies (Peng et al., 2019; Vardiero et al., 2020). According to Chinese scholars, this partnership is focused on achieving mutual environmental benefits while contributing to progress towards the UN's global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Shi et al., 2004).

The existing academic literature, while limited, recognizes that the PRC's collaboration with Brazil in the renewable wind energy sector is driven by strategic, economic, and geopolitical motivations. PRC's reliance on coal has supported its rapid economic development but also led to significant environmental issues like acid rain. PRC's strategies include investments, technology transfers, and policy support, with SOEs and private firms playing crucial roles. Despite challenges, both governments view this partnership as beneficial for sustainable development and bilateral relations. Although Brazil is not officially part of the BRI, its alignment with BRI-like development strategies facilitates Chinese investments in Brazil's renewable energy sectors, creating opportunities for asymmetric dependencies between the two countries.

3. Official PRC's Strategies

When PRC opened its economy to the world in 1978, it facilitated the growth of commercial interactions between PRC and global market. This process accelerated significantly after the PRC's admission to the WTO in 2001. The "*Going Out*" Policy (1999) was one of the first Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) strategies implemented to facilitate economic growth; aiming to promote Chinese investments abroad; and enhance access to foreign markets, natural resources, and advanced technologies to support the PRC's economic growth. It was launched in response to an internal crisis related to industrial overcapacity and in connection with the PRC's accession to the WTO. It aimed to promote the PRC's national interests globally by internationalizing PRC state financing and investments to ensure long-term access to energy and raw materials from abroad. From the PRC's perspective, this strategy aims to transform Chinese SOEs into corporations



with global reach (Jáuregui & González, 2022). Thus, this policy is a component of the PRC's overall national economic modernization strategy (Nash, 2012).

In March 2001, at the East Asia-Latin America Forum, the former PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan (唐家璇) emphasized the need to foster the economic and political exchange between the two regions through the PRC's "South-South" (南南合作) framework (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2001). Just a couple of months later in December 2001, PRC acceded to the WTO. Since then, its global strategy has consistently evolved (WTO, 2024).

The adoption of the "Going Out" Policy as part of the CCP's 10th Five-Year Plan (第十个五年计划)(2001-2005), officially endorsed Chinese entities to enter international markets and resources. During this period, initially, only a few Chinese companies operated in Brazil that were supported by both governments to establish relationships and develop the necessary financial, legal, and physical infrastructure to facilitate Chinese company operations. In the following CCP's 11th Five-Year Plan (第十一五规划)(2006–2010), CCP encouraged companies to "Go further outwards." (Policy Asia-Pacific Energy, 2024).

During this period, Chinese companies engaged in larger and more complex foreign investment transactions internationally, using strategies such as forming *joint ventures*; establishing *wholly owned subsidiaries*- particularly in the manufacturing sector; and focusing on *mergers and acquisitions* (M&A) that offer quick access to new markets and technologies.

One of the most significant changes over the past two decades is that Brazil has assumed an important role in PRC's global strategy. As identified from the literature review, building on these initial "South-South" collaborations, on June 21, 2012, in Rio de Janeiro, both parties signed a new strategic framework- the "Ten-Year Cooperation Plan" (十年合作计划)(2012-2022). This foundational document serves as a blueprint for the strategic partnership between PRC and Brazil; emphasizing technology, innovation, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges, with a focus on renewable energy technologies, including wind energy (中华人民共和国商务部, 2012).

PRC's success in Brazil stems from a grand, well-calculated strategy that combines political impulses with economic resources. Since 2012, Xi Jinping has designated Brazil as a "comprehensive strategic partner"- the highest status of its kind. Since 2012, both country leaders have visited each other multiple times, Xi visited Brazil 3 times and Brazilian presidents have visited PRC 4 times. As Xi stated in 2017, "Latin America is a natural extension of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road."(Hobbs & Torreblanca, 2022).

Brazil possesses abundant natural resources- holding a significant share of the world's rare earth minerals (REEs) needed for renewable energy production- which makes Brazil an attractive region for wind energy development. While Brazil is leveraging these resources to enhance economic growth and improve energy security, it is also witnessing heightened PRC's involvement.

The "Going Out" Policy is undoubtedly part of the PRC's broader, more active foreign policy. However, the PRC's domestic economic conditions have also been a major driving



force. This includes growing challenges with the old growth model and changing relationships between the government, SOEs, and banks.

Overall, the "Going Out" Policy has yielded benefits both domestically and internationally, as capital flows that once came from the West are now reversing, creating mutual advantages. However, the impact of the PRC's investments and its broader "Going Out" Policy on the global political and economic order remains uncertain. Since the policy's introduction at the turn of the century, Chinese companies have increasingly invested and operated overseas. Initially a major recipient of FDI, PRC has now become a significant source of FDI abroad. For example, the *China Investment Corporation (CIC)*- PRC's largest sovereign wealth fund, was established in 2007 with \$200 billion in investable assets which now has at least doubled (Nash, 2012). This shift exemplifies a substantial expansion of the PRC's financial influence beyond its borders. Chinese investments have increasingly targeted energy and raw materials sectors- which the PRC needs to maintain its domestic growth objectives. Significant FDI flows to resource-rich countries and regions, like Africa, Australia, Canada, LA, and Southeast Asia have raised global concerns that PRC may be attempting to hoard a dangerously large portion of the world's natural resources and implement a neo-colonial agenda that disregards human rights and humanitarian issues (Nash, 2012).

PRC's global strategy in renewable wind energy is supported by the "Going Out" Policy. For example, to establish wind farms Chinese wind turbine manufacturers enter new markets through *joint ventures* and *technology licensing* (Oxford Business Group, 2023). The "Going Out" development strategy has been significantly facilitated by the BRI infrastructure program- a complementary governmental effort launched in 2013 by Xi Jinping- which aims to create new opportunities for international cooperation through tangible large-scale infrastructure projects connecting Asia with other continents. However, there is a tendency to underestimate the obstacles facing the BRI, both domestically and internationally, leading to excessive optimism from its supporters and exaggerated concerns from those fearing wider PRC influence globally (Wang, 2016).

While BRI offers opportunities for infrastructure development and economic growth in LA, it also presents challenges and risks that must be carefully managed. PRC's ambitious investments in the region strengthen its influence over global supply chains, creating new challenges and opportunities in renewable energy development and geopolitical stability. Although Brazil is not part of BRI, Brazil must engage with BRI in ways that maximize benefits and minimize risks.

PRC-Brazil collaboration in renewable wind energy sector is executed through strategic frameworks like the "*Ten-Year Cooperation Plan*" [as part of BRI] and the "Going Out" Policy. These frameworks facilitate the PRC's economic presence by establishing infrastructure projects and trade routes between PRC and Brazil. These initiatives have facilitated significant investments and technological integration, contributing to Brazil's renewable energy goals, while the primary goal of these initiatives is to ultimately transform Chinese SOEs into global corporations.



4. PRC's Energy Diplomacy and Security Implications

Energy security is a global issue and a concern of national security; only few countries can ensure independent supply. As a large developing country with over 1.3 billion people, PRC's energy needs are projected to grow significantly, and PRC must continually increase its energy supply to meet these demands. The "Going Out" Policy and the BRI have significantly influenced the global energy market through extensive external investments and rapid growth in the renewable energy sector. As a leader in wind and battery technology, exemplified by companies like BYD (比亚迪汽车), PRC competes robustly in the global technology market challenging other nations in transitioning to renewable energy (Hilton, 2024).

Energy security remains a significant concern for PRC- influencing both its domestic and international energy strategies. Energy investments are a critical component of the PRC's diplomacy, representing its initial multilateral approach to establishing global influence. Bilateral relations with resource-rich regions, such as Africa, Central Asia, and LA, reflect a nuanced strategy tailored to the specific characteristics and ideological preferences of each country.

PRC's energy diplomacy utilizes a concept of *resource diplomacy*, defined by David Zweig as "diplomatic actions aimed at enhancing nation's access to resources and its energy supply security" (Oxford Business Group, 2023). *Resource security* involves ensuring a stable provision of energy at affordable prices and the ability to transport these resources efficiently.

PRC's "New Security Concept" (新安全观), declared in 1996, emphasized that energy is a *primary national interest* and that *acquiring foreign resources is essential for achieving this goal*. While some Western analysts view PRC's overseas energy investments as a means to expand its hegemony, Chinese scholars argue that these investments are primarily focused on securing energy supplies (Oxford Business Group, 2023; Zhou, 2015). Thus, it could be argued that PRC's energy diplomacy is driven by both resource security and economic growth, rather than solely by climate change concerns.

PRC's bilateral relations with Brazil illustrate complex interdependence, with significant investments in Brazil's wind energy sector fostering mutual influence. PRC's strategy targets both energy-rich and developed countries to secure its vast energy needs. Chinese analysts distinguish between "energy security" and "energy sufficiency," noting that since the 1970s while PRC lost self-sufficiency in energy, it has improved its energy supply security through international cooperation (Aggarwal, 2022).

Chinese companies have rapidly expanded across Brazil, implementing projects and providing materials to local companies to boost renewable energy production. Chinese loans and investments finance numerous infrastructure, energy, and mining projects. PRC's extensive involvement in Brazil's energy sector is part of a broader strategy to expand its influence in LA. From 2000 to 2019 PRC invested over \$58 billion in the LA region's energy industry (Instituto de las Américas, 2024).

PRC's drive towards renewable energy and obtaining critical minerals is driven by large-scale purchases and international tenders won by Chinese companies. For example, in



2020 Chinese M&As in the LA energy sector reached \$7.7 billion, underscoring its strategic vision for increased global economic influence (Bloomberg, 2020). Supported by Chinese banks, Chinese renewable energy equipment suppliers have penetrated LA markets by offering low-cost, competitive technologies. This state financial backing has facilitated the development of renewable energy projects, even in the face of local regulatory challenges (Instituto de las Américas, 2024).

This strategic involvement while beneficial, raises concerns about economic and political dependencies on the PRC. Excessive reliance on Chinese investments could lead to vulnerabilities in local markets and labor sectors. As PRC plays a leading role in global wind energy development, its substantial investments and exports of wind turbines in Brazil underscore its influence in the renewable energy sector. This strategy of capital flow highlights Brazil's growing dependence on Chinese technologies and financial resources, enabling PRC to expand its global market presence in wind energy development. Therefore, it is crucial for Brazil to develop its own energy technologies and promote local businesses to ensure a sustainable and independent energy supply.

5. PRC Investments

PRC operates as a non-traditional partner and is a valuable external stakeholder for Brazil. Chinese investments, trade, and relations with Brazil have exacerbated over the last decade. PRC invests across various sectors and these investments generally align with the publicly stated CCP objectives. From 2000 to 2020, the trade value between PRC and Brazil increased from \$1.3 billion to over \$90 billion by 2020, marking a 69.2-fold increase (Atlantic Council, 2021). Projections suggest that by 2035, this trade volume will exceed \$700 billion (Atlantic Council, 2021). Currently, PRC is Brazil's largest trading partner (King's College London, 2022).

The key element of PRC's economic growth has been government support- enabling Chinese SOEs to gain market shares in strategically important sectors. Recently, this support has shifted towards advancing green energy production (Ellis, 2024). Over the past decade, PRC companies have advanced in the development of critical green energy sectors, including hydroelectric, solar, wind, EV manufacturing, energy storage, and transmission. The strengthened positions of Chinese SOEs in these areas enable PRC to gain substantial profits and strategic leverage as governments worldwide transition from fossil fuels to green energy (Ellis, 2024).

Companies supported by CCP government and banks have been key investors in LA's wind energy sector. In 2008 and 2016, PRC issued two policy documents, reflecting Beijing's strategic importance in LA region. They have facilitated the region's transition to renewable energy, as approximately 90% of all wind and solar technology installed in LA is produced by Chinese companies, or partners financially backed by PRC banks. This increasing dominance of PRC suppliers means that a disproportionately large share of renewable energy projects in the region, directly or indirectly benefit PRC. These PRC companies, financed by Chinese banks, use low-cost turbines and other equipment, with technology largely appropriated from European partners (Ellis, 2024).



For example, in the 2023 ranking of wind turbine manufacturers *Goldwind* [PRC], took first place with 16.4 GW of projects, followed by *Envision Energy* [PRC] with 15.4 GW. Next were *Vestas Wind Systems* [Denmark] with 13.4 GW, *Winday* [PRC] with 10.4 GW, and *Mingyang* [PRC] with 9.0 GW, surpassing the popular *General Electric* [US], which had 8.1 GW (Evwind.es, 2023). However, these gradually growing investment projects have been associated with security and environmental issues.

Furthermore, the entry of Chinese companies into the region as “local participants” has changed the business and political environment. In Brazil, on the one hand, it created new opportunities for local stakeholders to access Chinese capital for large-scale projects. On the other hand, it triggered a defensive reaction from domestic actors, who perceived themselves as threatened. Other types of investments include FDIs, where PRC companies either acquire local businesses or establish local branches or factories, and local investment financing with PRC funds.

During a speech at the first summit of PRC and the *Community of Latin American and Caribbean States* (CELAC) (2015), Xi Jinping indicated that over the next decade, Chinese investments in the region could increase to \$250 billion. He emphasized that in recent years, the PRC has become not just a trading partner and lender to the region but an increasingly significant investor, increasing the physical presence of its companies and people in the region (Ellis, 2018).

The maturation of economic relations, due to accumulation of experience by Chinese companies operating in the region has merged with new international confidence in Xi Jinping’s government to position Chinese companies for new achievements. On the other hand, the new protectionism discourse emanating from Donald Trump’s administration in the US (2017-2021), and its public rhetoric on issues such as immigration, has confused and alienated important industries in LA, increasing the political desire to cooperate with PRC, although not everyone in the region is ready to welcome PRC with confidence and enthusiasm. The presence of PRC-backed companies and citizens working in Brazil has raised concerns about the socio-political conditions, laws, and policies in the region, which now impact the operations, profits, and security of these companies.

For example, in Brazil since 2003, Chinese companies have implemented 87 projects worth \$46.8 billion (Ellis, 2018). This new role of investor increases PRC’s political influence in the region and also acquaints CCP with complex decisions about how and when to use its growing influence to protect and promote the interests of its companies in the region, adhering to the principles of “non-interference” in the sovereign affairs of LA countries (Ellis, 2018). In this process, the PRC positions itself as an actor historically and politically located in the Global South. It has achieved a significant role in the development of renewable energy in LA, directly influencing global strategic positioning. Consequently, LA is being shaped as a strategic platform for PRC’s positioning in the Western Hemisphere. For example, Zhang, Y. discusses that the geostrategic projection from Beijing to LA is embedded in a global vision where the “developing world” or the Global South is seen as a political support base for the major project of restoring PRC’s power at “*la base*” (Ellis, 2018). Thus, PRC’s growing significance in LA within the Global South sphere holds strategic and symbolic importance.



This unveils two directions explaining the systematic entry of Chinese economic diplomacy into LA. On one hand, the geopolitical element seeks to expand PRC's spheres of influence, including its efforts to internationally isolate Taiwan. This pattern of behavior benefits from the PRC's inevitable commercial dynamism, which involves a geo-economic strategy aimed at capturing LA's markets, energy, natural resources, minerals, and REEs (Ellis, 2018).

Reevaluating its bureaucratic orientation and belief in central planning, CCP forms relationships with countries through carefully crafted and announced plans and policies, intended for both domestic and international audiences. The government possesses numerous political and institutional levers to coordinate its conduct even abroad. For Chinese companies, government plans and policies are akin to the Northern Star crucial in guiding their actions and indicating which activities abroad are officially approved and prioritized. For Chinese companies, an important reference from the "Going Out" Policy is the 2008 "White Paper" (中国对拉丁美洲和加勒比政策文件) on LAC states, which outlined CCP's intentions to develop interactions across almost all sectors, ranging from political and economic to military, considering a wide range of sectors to promote trade and investment exchanges with the region.

Another significant policy indicating the CCP's approach was the "1+3+6" trade interaction concept (中拉"1+3+6"合作新框架) announced by Xi Jinping in July 2014, during his visit to Brazil for the BRICS summit in Fortaleza. Where Xi emphasized the unified nature of Chinese operations in LA, along with the three main means of implementation, which are *trade, loans, and investments*, and the six key sectors that were their operational priorities in the region, including- *energy and natural resources, infrastructure construction, agriculture, manufacturing, science and technology innovations, and information technology*. The "1+3+6" concept was also incorporated into the PRC-CELAC cooperation plan (2015-2019), which was intended as a roadmap for fostering relations with PRC. Both were mentioned in the second "White Paper" on PRC's policy towards LA, published in November 2016, highlighting that the priority of these six economic areas is an official government policy to direct Chinese investments, loans, trade, and other activities in the region.

At the national level, investments and other commercial activities are also promoted and managed through state diplomacy, incorporating official visits, memorandums of understanding, and other agreements, as well as the establishment and management of contracts and "strategic partnerships". This process is fundamentally based on diplomatic recognition. With few exceptions, official relations are necessary for the Chinese government to approve loans and set investment priorities in a country. Similarly, diplomatic relations facilitate the participation of Chinese SOEs in national tenders in the host country. For example, changes in diplomatic relations, recognizing PRC combined with its role as a logistics and financing center for the entry of Chinese products into the region, could open doors for significant Chinese company investments and projects in the country. Chinese investments in renewable energy are considered the most significant opportunity to expand trade between Asia and LA. Simultaneously, increasing



oil and gas extraction in US has prompted major Chinese renewable energy companies to seek more attractive alternatives.

6. Prospects for Mutual Interdependence

Since 1993, PRC and Brazil have recognized the potential for a strategic long-term partnership, emphasizing their shared identities as major developing nations. Brazil has consistently ranked among the PRC's top trading partners and serves as a key destination for Chinese FDI. From 2012 to 2023, PRC was Brazil's leading trading partner, accounting for 22% of Brazil's trade in 2023, amounting to \$55 billion, compared to 15.9% (\$40 billion) with the US- Brazil's second-largest trading partner (TrendEconomy, 2024). According to data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), Brazil appears to be a country where PRC is investing significant resources in clean energy production in LA (Diálogo Chino, 2024).

Although Brazil is not a member of the BRI, it is a member of the *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* (AIIB). The PRC-Brazil partnership is marked by expanding commercial ties and significant Chinese loans and investments. Since 2007, the *China Development Bank* (CDB) and the *Export-Import Bank of China* (EXIM) have extended over \$28 billion in loans to Brazil, primarily directed toward the energy sector (Gallagher & Myers, 2020).

Brazil's commitment to renewable energy began with the 1997 "Law 9478", establishing the basis of its national energy policy. This evolved into the "Ten-Year Energy Expansion Plan" (PDE), emphasizing the development of wind energy to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The PDE 2031 projects that renewable energy sources will comprise about 56% of Brazil's total energy matrix by 2031 (Ministério de Minas e Energia, Secretaria de Planejamento e Desenvolvimento Energético, 2022).

In 2002, Brazil launched the PROINFA to promote wind, biomass, and small-scale hydropower energy (IRENA, 2015). This was later replaced by the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) auction procurement process, overseen by the *Brazilian Electricity Regulatory Agency* (ANEEL). Noteworthy, the expansion of renewable energy aligns with the PRC's "Going Out" Policy, making the PRC a significant investor in this sector.

From 2015 to 2019, Chinese FDI in Brazil reached \$25.9 billion, with wind energy comprising 72% of this investment. This cooperation has elevated Brazil-PRC energy sector collaboration to new heights, with substantial capital from Chinese investors, manufacturers, engineering service providers, and financial institutions (Barbosa, 2020).

Chinese investments in Brazil's wind energy sector are driven by the notable complementarity between the two countries. Brazil's abundant resources, expanding capacity needs, and favorable market conditions align well with PRC's financial power and technological capabilities. This synergy has facilitated Chinese enterprises' entry into Brazil, exemplified by the investments and operations of companies like *State Grid Corporation of China* (SGCC), *China General Nuclear Power Group* (CGN), and *China Three Gorges Corporation* (CTG) (Barbosa, 2020).



Brazil's wind energy sector has also benefited from PRC bank loans. For example, the CDB granted a \$56 million loan to *Desenvix Energias Renováveis* for constructing the *Barra dos Coqueiros* wind farm in 2012. Such investments have allowed Chinese companies to gain control over significant portions of Brazil's wind energy capacity, aligning future operations with their interests (Ellis, 2024).

The PRC's active involvement in Brazil's [and wider LA's] energy markets reflect CCP's strategic vision for increased global economic strength. Through significant financial investments and project acquisitions, PRC has established close economic and political ties with LA countries, becoming a key player in the energy market. Such Chinese influence could pose threats to the energy security of Brazil and other LA countries.

Elizabeth C. Economy notes, "*Xi is the first Chinese leader to align the country's capabilities with vision and strategy to realize the ancient 'Chinese dream of national rejuvenation'. CCP is not satisfied with China's position in the international system. They seek to change the world order.*" (Elizabeth C. Economy, 2021).

Similar notions are exemplified by the former Peruvian presidential candidate Julio Armando Guzmán who noted that, "*The Chinese attitude towards LA has changed. Initially, China's influence was primarily based on soft power, trying to convince LA countries that China's rise would benefit the region. Now, however, China is willing to impose its power and use hard force to try to make countries do what it wants.*" (Pettus, 2023).

According to Pedro Barbosa, PRC companies own 12% of Brazil's wind energy production, transmission, and distribution segments, making PRC the most significant foreign investor in this sector. This dominant role could lead to political influence, with security experts highlighting risks if PRC companies monopolize the electricity sector from production to transmission and retail. Thus, it could be argued that the PRC establishes asymmetric and coercive economic ties with other countries and uses these ties to deeply influence local and national governments. The PRC may have been conducting comprehensive government efforts for years, serving its objectives and undermining democratic principles through involvement in LA. From policy analysis, it is evident that PRC's strategy in Brazil's renewable wind energy sector fosters mutual dependency through investments, technology transfer, economic growth, and energy security. The PRC's greater resources and financial capabilities may create asymmetry, allowing PRC to control projects and gain advantages, making Brazil more dependent on Chinese investments and technologies, thus creating an imbalance in opportunities and influence. *Interdependence* in global politics involves mutual influence between countries; Keohane and Nye's theory of interdependence asserts that global politics is shaped by "complex interdependence" among states, non-state actors, and transnational issues. They emphasize the importance of power and interests intertwined with economic and social interdependence (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

PRC's strategy involves diverse connections, beyond governmental ties, including business relationships, non-governmental involvement, and multinational participation (Rana, 2015). In the renewable wind energy sector, PRC and Brazil exhibit mutual interdependence through trade partnerships, technology transfer, and joint ventures.



PRC's investments in Brazil's wind energy projects highlight this interdependence, creating economic and political linkages.

PRC's foreign and economic strategy in bilateral relations with Brazil is based on diverse connections, including liberal market principles and national interests. This institutionalized system indicates that PRC's policymaking and actions with Brazil depend on both international trade principles and national strategies. The main objective of this cooperation is to ensure a steady supply of energy resources, natural minerals, and REEs to support PRC's economic growth and development, particularly in renewable wind energy.

Nye and Keohane identified three main features of "complex interdependence"- *multiple channels, the irrelevance of military power, and the importance of international institutions*. These features are evident in PRC-Brazil relations, particularly in the wind energy sector. PRC's significant economic and political influence is highlighted, emphasizing the mutual benefits and potential risks of this bilateral partnership. Keohane (1984) states that "*power is no longer used to consider behavior; rather, it provides the language for describing political action.*" This means military power is less important, while language and communication are crucial for understanding PRC-Brazil relations. Complex interdependence aligns with renewable energy and energy security concepts. PRC's institutional ties with Brazil are executed through investments, cooperation, and policy frameworks in the renewable wind energy sector, therefore the institutional context is crucial for understanding PRC-Brazil relations- suggesting that military power is not the sole factor influencing IR.

Economic interdependence between PRC and Brazil includes trade, acquisition of wind farms, investments in wind projects, manufacturing components, and control over power grids. This interdependence is also tied to *resource security*, as PRC seeks access to Brazil's natural resources, including minerals, lithium, and REEs essential for renewable energy development. PRC's cooperation with Brazil significantly contributes to the development of Brazil's renewable energy sector, including the construction and operation of wind farms. However, this raises energy security issues, as PRC's energy policies impact Brazil, making Brazil vulnerable to PRC's decisions in the energy sector. Addressing this cooperation is essential to balance the asymmetry of mutual dependence, thereby reducing Brazil's *sensitivity* and *vulnerability* to PRC. Keohane and Nye (1977) distinguish between *sensitivity*- the response to costly external impacts before policy changes occur, and *vulnerability*- which arises when a nation's welfare depends on the behavior of others. Despite PRC's partial *vulnerability* and *sensitivity*, asymmetrical mutual dependence in energy relations between Brazil and PRC functions as a source of power for PRC and a potential threat to Brazil's energy security.

PRC's investments in Brazil's wind energy sector demonstrate the interaction of economic, political, and strategic interests. These investments reflect a form of mutual economic dependence, benefiting all parties through cooperation and shared resources. However, this mutual dependence also raises concerns about asymmetric dynamics, potential dependency risks, and PRC's influence over Brazil's wind farms and energy



resources. While PRC has diversified its international relationships, Brazil is significantly engaged with PRC, relying heavily on Chinese investments and production.

7. Insights from International Renewable Wind Energy Experts

In the context of this study, interviews were conducted with six diverse international experts from the renewable energy industry to gauge the prospects for potential interdependencies. These experts, who have chosen to remain anonymous, hail from various companies and hold different professional titles. Two of the interviewees are high-ranking employees from *Goldwind*-a company backed by PRC. Another two hail from *Siemens Gamesa Latam* and *Central Puerto Renovables*, companies operating in LA, and headquartered in Spain and Argentina, respectively. The last two interviewees are high-level managers from two separate renewable wind energy companies, based in Denmark and operating in Taiwan. They represent both local Taiwanese and European professionals working in Taiwan.

The experts' views on PRC's involvement in the global wind energy sector, with an emphasis on their collaboration with Brazil and the potential for dependencies, were diverse. Post-interview, a dichotomy emerged between the perspectives of experts working within Chinese companies and those employed by European and LA counterparts. This dichotomy was particularly evident about mutual interdependence. Representatives from *Goldwind* expressed hope for an increased PRC presence in LA, asserting that PRC-made engines match the quality of their European equivalents.

However, when discussing the influence and collaboration between the PRC and other nations, a divergence of perspectives surfaced. While representatives from Chinese companies [engineer and a high-level manager from *Goldwind*] expressed optimism about PRC's involvement and dismissed dependency concerns, representatives from non-Chinese financed companies expressed caution. While acknowledging the competitiveness of Chinese technology, these experts, from *Siemens Gamesa LATAM* and *Central Puerto Renovables*, showed a preference for European technology and investments, citing their proven quality over the years. They also underscored the need for strategic caution to prevent potential monopolization.

The discourse around mutual interdependence was a recurring theme in these interviews. While PRC's technological advancements and financial investments substantially contribute to the renewable energy sector, the experts emphasized the need for balance to avoid over-dependence. They suggested multiple strategic recommendations, including diversification of investment and technology sources, bolstering local manufacturing, promoting competitive supply chains, establishing robust policy and legal frameworks to facilitate market entry for international companies, and conducting ongoing quality and reliability assessments of imported technologies.

Interestingly, all the experts from non-Chinese companies admitted to not being concerned about the PRC posing risks in the global wind energy market. They maintained that their respective companies have their own vision for the future, implying an inherent confidence in their strategic direction and resilience.



Conclusions

In conclusion, this study analyzed the complex dynamics of the PRC's engagement in Brazil's renewable wind energy sector. This article aimed to answer the research question of *how the PRC's renewable wind energy strategy in Brazil contributes to creating strategic dependencies and potential vulnerabilities associated with reliance on Chinese capital?*

Our analysis reveals that while the PRC's strategy has indeed fostered significant collaboration and growth in this field, it has also led to the creation of strategic dependencies and potential vulnerabilities for Brazil. The relationship between the two nations in this sector is characterized by mutual interdependencies, but these are notably asymmetrical in nature. Brazil has become increasingly reliant on Chinese capital and technology, whereas the PRC's dependencies on Brazil are comparatively minor. This imbalance underscores the potential risks associated with Brazil's growing dependence on Chinese resources in its renewable energy development.

In 1996, PRC introduced its "New Security Concept" emphasizing energy as central to PRC's national interests and prioritizing the acquisition of foreign resources. As one of the world's largest economies and leading energy consumers, PRC is also at the forefront of renewable energy. PRC's cooperation with Brazil in the renewable wind energy sector is driven by strategic factors, including- resource availability, market expansion, technology transfer, climate goals, and geopolitical aims.

To sum up, PRC's "Going Out" Policy has advanced bilateral ties with Brazil. This strategy promotes long-term overseas investments and cooperation to access energy and raw materials while institutionalization of BRI has increased investments in infrastructure projects such as wind farms and mineral extraction.

Brazil's vast land areas, especially in the Northeast, are suitable for wind farms, and its commitment to renewable energy aligns with PRC's objectives. As one of LA's largest economies, Brazil's energy development is crucial for PRC. The establishment of numerous wind energy parks and the increase in Chinese investments have resulted in rapid growth of FDI in renewable energy. To further its interests in the wind energy sector, PRC has acquired many of Brazil's largest wind farms and established joint ventures.

Brazilian government policies, such as wind energy auctions, have been instrumental in this collaboration. Consequently, Chinese companies have become major investors in Brazil's renewable wind energy sector, both in terms of financial investment and raw material supply. However, this electricity sector faces risks like monopolistic control of Chinese companies.

Our findings affirm the initial *central argument* that the PRC's involvement results in strategic dependencies for Brazil, aligning with the theoretical framework presented earlier in this paper. However, it is important to note that these interdependencies created by the PRC-Brazil cooperation in the renewable wind energy sector while asymmetric, are not insurmountable. This cooperation results in greater dependencies for Brazil compared to the PRC. It is important to also emphasize that while this



partnership does create certain dependencies for the PRC, these are relatively minor when compared to those experienced by Brazil.

To address these challenges, we have proposed several policy recommendations aimed at helping Brazil mitigate risks and ensure sustainable development and energy security. These strategies are designed to leverage the benefits of international collaboration while safeguarding national interests and reducing vulnerabilities. As the global energy landscape continues to evolve, Brazil must navigate these partnerships strategically, balancing the advantages of foreign investment and technology transfer with the imperative of maintaining autonomy and resilience in its renewable energy sector.

In the future, Brazil should ensure Chinese compliance with local laws and renewable energy policies, while evaluating whether Chinese-financed projects support Brazil's renewable energy, economic growth, and SDGs. Prioritizing local companies for wind farm construction and energy production in renewable energy auctions could be beneficial. Brazilian specialists and engineers should ensure the operation of wind farms and manufacture quality parts that could compete internationally. Brazil should leverage Chinese investments to expand its national electricity transmission systems, crucial for meeting domestic needs. However, it is important that Chinese companies do not fully control these transmission enterprises, as this poses a significant threat to Brazil's energy supply security. A potential solution for Brazil might be diversifying flexible deals based on national interests with other major powers, partners, and economies. Although, attracting FDI requires a series of measures, such as the implementation of clear regulatory frameworks, streamlining of administrative procedures, and close cooperation with development institutions- such robust economic growth can be secured with strategic energy policy and resource development.

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BRAZILIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE QUEST TO PROMOTE PORTUGUESE: BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH MACAU

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Abstract

This article explores Brazil's role in the global promotion of the Portuguese language. Through the lens of Cooper's framework on the international promotion of languages, the study investigates the intertwined political, economic and cultural motivations behind language promotion initiatives. It analyzes Brazil's unilateral actions as well as engagement with the institutional framework of the Institute for the Promotion of Portuguese Language (IILP) within the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP). Drawing upon a review of scholarly works, official reports and policy documents, the paper shows that Brazil's foreign policy has actively promoted the Portuguese language in certain geographies, but has yet to prioritize China, despite significant bilateral relations between China and Brazil. Furthermore, the article highlights the role of Macau as a valuable bridge between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, which has been increasingly recognized by the People's Republic of China. The conclusion underscores the need for Brazil to effectively leverage Macau's strategic position to capitalize on these opportunities.



Keywords

Brazil, China, Portuguese language, language policy and planning, cultural diplomacy, Macau.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa o papel do Brasil na promoção global da língua portuguesa. Utilizando o quadro teórico de Cooper sobre a promoção internacional de línguas, o estudo investiga as motivações políticas, económicas e culturais que estão interligadas nas iniciativas de promoção linguística. O presente artigo analisa ainda as acções unilaterais do Brasil, bem como o seu envolvimento com o Instituto Internacional da Língua Portuguesa (IILP) dentro da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP). Com base numa revisão de literatura científica, relatórios e outros documentos oficiais, este artigo revela que a política externa do Brasil tem promovido activamente a língua portuguesa em determinadas geografias, mas não tem dado prioridade à China, apesar da importância da relação bilateral entre os dois países. Além disso, o presente artigo destaca o papel de Macau como ponte entre a China e os países de língua portuguesa, que tem sido cada vez mais reconhecido pela República Popular da China. A conclusão sublinha a necessidade de o Brasil aproveitar efectivamente a posição estratégica de Macau para capitalizar estas oportunidades.

Palavras-chave

Brasil, China, Língua Portuguesa, política e planeamento linguístico, diplomacia cultural, Macau.

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BRAZILIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE QUEST TO PROMOTE PORTUGUESE: BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH MACAU

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1. Introduction

The promotion of a language abroad is closely linked to language policy and planning frameworks. Several important theoretical models and empirical studies provide insights into this link. Einar Haugen's influential language planning model describes four main components: selection, codifying, implementation and elaboration (Haugen, 1983). Selecting the variety of the target language, codifying its standards, implementing curricula and developing its use in new areas are crucial to expanding a language's global reach. Based on this, Robert Cooper's work frames language planning as a socio-political process that aims to influence the function, structure and acquisition of linguistic varieties (Cooper, 1989). This perspective highlights how the promotion of languages abroad is often driven by political, economic and cultural interests, and requires coordinated policy initiatives. From this view, the promotion of a language abroad is not a neutral act, but can be a means of exercising soft power and furthering political, economic and cultural agendas. Governments, for instance, may support the global spread of their national language to enhance diplomatic influence, facilitate trade or propagate cultural values.

Empirical case studies such as those compiled by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) demonstrate how national and regional language planning efforts have focused on expanding the use of a language internationally through education, the media and diplomatic channels. For example, the promotion of Mandarin, Arabic and Spanish as global languages implies extensive policy planning and implementation.

The promotion of a language abroad is closely linked to the concepts of cultural diplomacy and soft power. Since the 1990s, scholars have explored these links in their research. For example, Joseph Nye's seminal work on soft power highlights how the attraction and appeal of a country's policies, culture and values can be a powerful tool for global influence (Nye, 2004). The promotion of a language abroad can be seen as a key strategy of influence, as it allows a country to project its cultural and linguistic capital globally.

Similarly, the concept of cultural diplomacy emphasizes the use of cultural exchange and



linguistic promotion as a means of promoting mutual understanding and building relations between countries (Cummings, 2003). Language can be a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy, as it enables intercultural communication, facilitates the dissemination of artistic and intellectual works, and creates opportunities for immersion and cultural exchange (Gienow-Hecht & Donfried, 2010). Several studies have collectively explored the intersection of foreign policy and language promotion across various countries, highlighting how nations use language as a tool of soft power to extend their cultural and political influence abroad (Gil, 2009; Diniz, 2012; Yudina & Seliverstova, 2020; Noack, 2022). In particular, Gil (2009) and Paradise (2009) examined China's initiatives to promote Chinese language globally as a means to increase its soft power and achieve foreign policy goals, while Mkhoyan (2016) and Yudina and Seliverstova (2020) discussed how various countries employ language policy and planning as an element of their soft power strategies.

In the context of Brazil, the world's largest Lusophone country, the promotion of Portuguese is not only a matter of linguistic expansion but also a strategic endeavor that aligns with the country's cultural diplomacy and soft power initiatives. Against this backdrop, this article examines Brazil's pivotal role in the promotion of the Portuguese language worldwide. The Portuguese language holds significant global importance, with a very promising growth projection in the coming decades. As the most populous Portuguese-speaking country, with more than 200 million speakers, Brazil occupies a unique position in driving the worldwide spread and influence of the Portuguese language. Some of the key factors highlighting its worldwide relevance include (Camões, 2022; Statista, 2024; Eberhard et al., 2024):

1. Number of speakers: Currently, Portuguese is spoken by over 264 million people on five continents. It is estimated that this number will reach almost 400 million by 2050 and exceed 500 million by 2100, with the African continent responsible for the largest increase. Portuguese is the seventh most spoken language in the world as a native language, and the eighth most spoken by total number of speakers.
2. As the most spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere: Portuguese has a strong presence in regions in South America and Africa.
3. Seventh most used language among all internet users and in terms of percentage of the top ten million websites on the world wide web
4. Adoption as the official language in multiple international organizations: Portuguese is an official and/or working language in 32 important international organizations, including the European Union, Community of Portuguese speaking countries, African Union, *Organização dos Estados Americanos*, Southern Common Market (*Mercosul*), *Comunidade de Estados Latino-Americanos e Caribenhos*, *Comissão Económica para a América Latina e Caraíbas*, *Organização dos Estados Ibero-Americanos* para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura, Economic Community of West African States, World Health Organization, Economic Community of Central African States, Community of Sahel-Saharan States, *Associação Latino-Americana de Integração*, Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic, Southern African Development Community,



Union of South American Nations, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, UNESCO.

5. The fact that, while English remains the dominant language, Portuguese has managed to create its own spaces for communication and scientific publication. Brazil has developed the Scientific Electronic Library Online, which sees significant participation from Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking countries. Additionally, there are a number of academic repositories and open-access online knowledge platforms, particularly in Portugal and Brazil.

Hence, the Portuguese language demonstrates a growing importance in the world scenario, in demographic, economic and political terms. Its role is likely to be further strengthened, especially considering the projected demographic development of Portuguese-speaking African countries. The perception of advantage of Portuguese as a common language stem from the high number of Portuguese speakers, the Brazilian demography, the language's dispersion over four continents and the consequent presence in various regional political and economic organizations such as those identified above. In addition, the influence of the Portuguese language can expand through demographic growth and digital technology in a knowledge-based economy and, according to authors such as Reto et al. (2012), Portuguese can evolve from an international language in a linguistic bloc to a language of functional communication across the globe.

This article examines Brazil's multifaceted role in the global promotion of the Portuguese language. First, we analyze Brazil's unilateral efforts in advancing the usage and reach of the Portuguese language. Secondly, the paper explores Brazil's engagement with multilateral frameworks such as the Institute for the Portuguese Language (*Instituto Internacional da Língua Portuguesa*, IILP) and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, CPLP) in coordinating language promotion initiatives. Thirdly, the article discusses Brazil's efforts to promote the Portuguese language in China. Finally, the paper concludes with an assessment of Brazil's overall impact and strategic positioning as the world's largest Lusophone country in the global promotion of the Portuguese language, emphasizing the need to prioritize China and the specific role Macau could play in this effort. The methodological approach employed in this study consists of a literature review and an analysis of official government documents and institutional reports, synthesizing existing theoretical frameworks and empirical findings from previous research along with insights into the practical implementation of Brazil's policies.

2. Brazil's unilateral efforts in promoting the Portuguese language

Brazilian foreign policy actively promotes the Portuguese language internationally, particularly in Latin America and Africa, through various initiatives. This includes the establishment of Brazilian Cultural Centers (CCB) and lectureships (Diniz, 2012; Carvalho, 2016), the implementation of language proficiency exams such as Celpe-Bras (Diniz, 2012) and participation in the CPLP (Miyamoto, 2009; Vieira de Jesus, 2012). The



lectureship program plays a crucial role in teaching the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture abroad (Oliveira, 2020).

Brazil's approach to language promotion overseas has been influenced by geopolitical interests and national security concerns (Rajagopalan, 2008). The country's language promotion efforts are closely tied to its foreign policy goals, such as to gain support for reforming the UN Security Council (Beckhauser, 2018). Brazil's rise as a regional power has also prompted increased interest in Portuguese language education, including in military contexts; in particular, the United States Department of Defense has acknowledged the strategic significance of Brazil and the vital need for its military leaders to be involved in South American operations to receive training in the Portuguese language and culture (Waldvogel & Souza, 2018).

The promotion of Portuguese is seen by some scholars as a tool for cultural diplomacy and for improving Brazil's global image (Beckhauser, 2018; Mendes, 2019), with a focus on transnational cooperation and development actions. Brazil's efforts have been aimed at strengthening its diplomatic relations, expanding its influence in developing countries, and increasing its voice in multilateral forums (Vieira de Jesus, 2012). The country's approach to language promotion is often framed within South-South cooperation and development aid, especially in Portuguese-speaking African countries. Ullrich and Carrion (2014, pp. 157–158) argue that Brazil's government support programs are being directed towards vocational training, adult literacy and public policies, in alignment with the country's economic objectives. They are leveraging South-South cooperation to build human capital and develop skilled workforces in potential areas of interest for the expansion of Brazilian companies. However, some scholars argue that more efficient language policies are needed to realize the full potential of Brazilian Portuguese as an international language (Bagno & Carvalho, 2015).

Silva (2011) and Mendes (2019) recall that the policy of promoting the Portuguese language in Brazil began in 1938 with the establishment of the Intellectual Cooperation Division within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1940, the Uruguayan-Brazilian Cultural Institute was established in Montevideo, the first Brazilian studies center and the starting point for the establishment of the Brazilian Education Network Abroad (RBEx). The RBEx is composed of Brazilian Cultural Centers, bilateral cultural institutes (IC), and lectureships, and is under the authority of the Division for the Promotion of the Portuguese Language (DPLP) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2005, the Brazilian government decided to create the Machado de Assis Institute (IMA), in cooperation with the Camões Institute, a Portuguese public institution devoted to the worldwide promotion of the Portuguese language and culture. The objective of this Machado de Assis Institute would be to disseminate Brazilian culture and the Portuguese language outside the Lusophone space. However, as Mendes (2019) suggests, this project did not move forward due to internal disagreements.

Brazilian foreign policy has been marked by continuous efforts to increase its influence on the international stage. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Brazilian diplomacy has worked to expand its room for maneuver, including seeking to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. From the early 1990s to the



present, Brazil has been taking a more active role in the international order, “trying to consolidate its perceived role as a constructive multilateral player” (Garcia & Coelho, 2018).

At the regional level, Brazilian foreign policy towards Latin America has consistently been guided by the integration, aid and cooperation of its members. This is reflected in the multiple regional associations created in recent decades, united by common purposes of economic cooperation represented by the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Union of South American Nations, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Latin American Integration Association, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, among others. In this broader context of regional cooperation, Brazil has played a significant role in promoting the use of the Portuguese language across Latin America (Mendes da Silva, 2021).

Brazil’s foreign policy during the Lula government consolidated the political concept of the “Global South”, seeking to strengthen relations with peripheral countries and increase Brazil’s protagonism on the international stage, by assuming a posture of a donor country in the field of international development cooperation, in particular in education. To this end, the strategy was to get closer to the neighboring South American countries and the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries. This approach aimed not only to expand Brazil's geopolitical influence but also to position the country as a significant player in international aid and cooperation (Ullrich and Carrion, 2014, p. 157). In this context, cultural diplomacy became a crucial tool for reinforcing Brazil's identity and influence, linking its foreign policy objectives to its cultural initiatives.

The Guimarães Rosa Institute (*Instituto Guimarães Rosa*, IGR) is the unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministério das Relações Exteriores*, MRE) responsible for Brazil’s cultural diplomacy. The concept of cultural diplomacy employed by the Brazilian government refers to the promotion of national interests in the field of foreign policy through actions in the areas of culture, education and the Portuguese language abroad. The IGR is comprised of four main divisions (MRE, n.d.):

- Division of Actions for the Promotion of Brazilian Culture
- Division of Multilateral Cultural Affairs
- Division of Educational Cooperation
- Division of the Portuguese Language

These divisions work together to develop and implement Brazil’s cultural diplomacy initiatives, with the overarching goal of promoting the language, culture and education on the international stage. The role of the IGR in promoting the Portuguese language can be summarized as follows (MRE, n.d.):

- To propose guidelines for Brazil’s foreign policy in the areas of cultural relations, education and the promotion of Portuguese abroad, in coordination with other government agencies.



- To promote Brazilian culture abroad to internationalize Brazil’s creative economy.
- To negotiate and oversee the implementation of international agreements in the areas of cultural and educational relations.
- To coordinate Brazil’s participation in international organizations and meetings related to multilateral cultural, educational, and Portuguese language promotion issues.
- To promote and oversee international educational cooperation initiatives.
- To manage the network of Guimarães Rosa Institutes abroad, which includes 24 physical units, six Brazilian Studies Centers at Brazilian embassies, and around 40 Portuguese language lectureships.
- To offer Portuguese language courses for expatriate Brazilian communities and foreigners, as well as the CELPE-Bras proficiency exam.
- To organize courses and activities related to Brazilian dance, music, cuisine and visual art to promote Brazilian culture.
- To administer the Leitorado Guimarães Rosa program, which places Brazilian language and literature professors as lecturers at foreign universities to promote the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture.

Over the past 70+ years, around 400 Brazilian lecturers have participated in the Leitorado program, and there are currently almost 40 Guimarães Rosa lecturers distributed across 30 countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Europe.

In addition to the official measures presented earlier for the promotion and dissemination of Portuguese, Vianna da Cruz (2013, pp. 25–26) draws attention to other actions taken by the Brazilian government. For example, the inauguration in 2006 of the Museum of the Portuguese Language in São Paulo, with the objective of preserving and showcasing the diversity of the language, celebrating it as a foundational element of culture. Another Brazilian strategy for the promotion and dissemination of the Portuguese language, according to the same author, was the creation of a university for the CPLP countries, the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony, created in 2008 as a proposal by the government of Lula da Silva to increase Brazil’s union with other Lusophone countries; this essentially went beyond just the language aspect to encompass also the social, economic and geopolitical factors. Prior to this, the Federal University of Latin American Integration had been created in 2007 in Foz do Iguaçu, with a mission to contribute to Latin American integration, through educational, scientific and cultural exchanges.

Despite the extensiveness and significance of the network under the responsibility of the Brazilian government for the promotion of language and culture, as the centers and lectureships are present on five continents, Mendes (2019, p. 45) argues that this network has very little presence in Asia, a strategic continent for the current global geopolitical landscape. Consequently, according to this author, countries like China, India and Russia should be more strongly benefited by the interests of promoting the language and culture as part of Brazilian diplomacy. Along the same line of reasoning, Beckhauser



(2018) explains that Brazilian cultural diplomacy has prioritized the teaching of the Portuguese language in countries with low representation in the international political and economic arenas, instead of expanding it to the new emerging powers, such as China, India and Russia. According to the author, Brazil has been betting on the creation of Brazilian Cultural Centers (CCBs) in Latin America and Africa, as Brazilian diplomacy seeks to publicize its image and win votes from developing countries for a future reform of the UN Security Council. This strategy reflects the country's attempt to strengthen its presence and influence in regions considered priorities for its international aspirations.

3. Brazil's engagement with IILP and the CPLP framework

The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) was conceived as a forum to promote cooperation between Portuguese-speaking countries, a legacy of their colonial and cultural historical ties. This community represents an attempt to unite diverse countries on different continents—Africa, South America, Europe and Asia—under a common vision of development, democracy and international cooperation. The idea of creating the CPLP was first mentioned in 1983 by Jaime Gama, Portugal's Minister of Foreign Affairs, during a visit to Cabo Verde. The proposal included rotating summits, annual ministerial meetings and frequent political consultations, thus strengthening dialogue and cooperation between Portuguese-speaking countries. The project gained decisive momentum in the 1990s, thanks to the work of José Aparecido de Oliveira, then Ambassador of Brazil in Lisbon, culminating in the first official meeting of the leaders of these countries in São Luís do Maranhão, Brazil, in 1989. At this meeting, it was decided to create the International Institute of the Portuguese Language (IILP), which focused on the promotion and dissemination of the language. In 1996, the CPLP was formally established in Lisbon, with the signing of its constitutive documents, which established the operational bases and objectives of the community. Since then, Timor-Leste has joined the CPLP (in 2002) after its independence, and Equatorial Guinea was admitted as a member in 2014 (CPLP, n.d.).

The CPLP defined in its statutes the materialization of projects aiming at promoting the Portuguese language as one of its main objectives. In order to pursue its objectives, the CPLP has adopted, through the IILP, several measures that reveal the language policy of the organization, insofar as it seeks to establish the major guidelines that embody a set of strategic options regarding the relations between the Portuguese language and social life (CPLP, 2021, p. 2).

The global strategies for the dissemination of Portuguese are reflected in the Action Plans of Brasília (PAB, 2010), Lisbon (PALis, 2013), Dili (PADíli, 2016) and Praia (PAP, 2021), which together provide institutional support and inform policy on the promotion and dissemination of the language. These documents highlight the language's potential as a global, pluricontinental and pluricentric language, well-suited for education, culture, the creative economy, scientific collaboration, and international organizations where it serves as an official and working language. These references to the Portuguese language reveal the strategic thinking of the CPLP regarding the social uses associated with its language in a perspective of consolidation and conquest of new domains of linguistic uses. The



conclusions on the assessment of the implementation of the PAB (2010) and the PALis (2013), presented at PADÍli (2016), state that the main strategic lines inscribed in the thematic axes registered different paces in their implementation, pointing to bigger strides in, for example, the diffusion of the teaching of the Portuguese language in the CPLP space and among the diasporas, but slower progress in the adoption of Portuguese in international organizations and its promotion within civil societies (CPLP, 2021, pp. 3–4).

Miyamoto (2009) argues that Brazil's engagement in the CPLP can be seen from two perspectives: on the one hand, Brazil is visible as it uses the CPLP to project its own interests abroad, i.e., the instrumentalization of the CPLP as part of Brazilian foreign policy to maximize the use of all existing possible resources; on the other hand, it can also be inferred that, despite the pragmatism of its foreign policy, Brazil also thinks in terms of joint action within the CPLP to serve "global interests that would impossible to obtain individually".

In an interview conducted by Barão (2023) with diplomat Lilian Pinho, First Secretary and Head of the Portuguese Language Division (DLP) of the Guimarães Rosa Institute, the Brazilian government agency focused on cultural and educational diplomacy, discussing the working principles of Brazilian foreign policy in the promotion and dissemination of Portuguese, as well as the development expectations of the IILP. Pinho begins by highlighting the importance of Brazilian foreign policy's recent reprioritization of focus onto culture and relations with African countries, with the recreation of the Ministry of Culture being an important step towards strengthening inter-ministerial work, while also exposing the need to reinstall the National Commission of Brazil in the IILP, which had been affected under the Jair Bolsonaro administration.

Regarding the working principles that guide Brazil's performance in the promotion of the Portuguese language and its projection within the IILP/CPLP, Pinho stressed the importance of networking for Brazilian language policy and its international projection, seeking collaboration with other government agencies, civil society institutions, universities, specialists and academics. In this sense, she marked the 70th anniversary of the Brazilian Lectureship Program—now the Guimarães Rosa Lectureship—which funds Brazilian lecturers to work in foreign higher education institutions in teaching and promoting the Portuguese language, as well as Brazilian literature and culture. In 2023, at the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the symposium that connects Brazilian lecturers stationed in different parts of the world was brought under the scope of the CPLP, in order to give visibility to a project that had been ongoing by Brazil and that contributes to the IILP's mandate. According to Pinho, with this move from Brazil, the expectation is to contribute to the improvement of the shared and transnational management of the Portuguese language, which is one of the foundations for the performance of the IILP/CPLP (Barão, 2023).

Finally, Pinho concludes that in addition to the Portuguese language being a language of contact and collaboration between countries marked by colonial history, its adoption in international contexts can also be a form of resistance to the predominance of English and French in diplomacy and multilateral politics. However, Pinho draws attention to the



fact that it is necessary to reflect on the development of the IILP and CPLP, and this discussion needs to involve not only decision-makers, but also the active involvement of civil societies (Barão, 2023).

As we have seen above, authors such as Beckhauser (2018) and Mendes (2019) argue that the Brazilian government has not prioritized the teaching of the Portuguese language in new emerging powers, including China. Other authors, such as Pestana (2019) and Tang (2020), highlight the growing demand for Portuguese in China, driven by the country's economic relations and the Belt and Road Initiative. In the next section, we will look at Brazil's initiatives to expand the Portuguese language learning in China.

4. Brazil's efforts to promote the Portuguese language in China

This section provides an overview of the historical developments surrounding the promotion of the Portuguese language in China. According to Jatobá (2020), since 1949, the teaching of foreign languages in China has oscillated between periods of openness and restriction. Following the Chinese Revolution, the nation required time to reorganize its society, and it was not until 1956 that *Putonghua*, the modern standard form of Mandarin Chinese, was established as the official language of the People's Republic of China (Jatobá, 2020). A significant milestone occurred in 1960, when higher education institutions in China began offering Portuguese language courses, driven by the growing demand for qualified professionals.

Zhang et al. (2020) categorize the history of Portuguese language instruction in China into four distinct periods: 1) 1960-1966; 2) 1966-1977; 3) 1978-1999; and 4) 2000 onward. This classification considers the social transformations that characterized each period.

The 1960s were marked by global turmoil, as highlighted by Li (2012). Events such as the Caribbean missile crisis, ideological rifts between China and the USSR, the Vietnam War, and imperialism in Africa contributed to widespread disorder. In response to these challenges, the People's Republic of China was compelled to recalibrate its foreign policy. It was during this tumultuous period that Portuguese language courses were first introduced in Beijing's higher education institutions, which later evolved into universities.

The second period identified by Zhang et al. (2020) spans from 1966 to 1977. The first formal Portuguese language course in mainland China was established in 1960, at the university presently known as the Communication University of China. The goal was to meet the need of training translators. As Chinese relations with the USSR soured in the 1960s, Soviet translators departed from China, which urged China to train its own translators. In order to meet this need, Beijing International Studies University (BISU) also inaugurated its Portuguese course in the early 1960s. The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) brought about the suspension of admissions in universities and of the *gaokao* (college entrance examination test), therefore creating an educational gap, as exposed by Professor Victoria Almeida from the Shanghai International Studies University - SISU (Radar China, 2022). As university activities resumed, SISU, for example, opened its



Portuguese course in 1977, with ten students (the same university had opened a mini-Portuguese course back in 1973 but with only three students) (Wang, 2001).

As Wang (2001) points out, that first Portuguese course offered back in the early 1960s had only 18 students. In the same year, the Institute of Foreign Languages in Beijing (present day Beijing Foreign Studies University, BFSU) opened a two-and-a-half-year course, with ten students all selected among Russian language interpreters. As years went by, the city of Guangzhou also started Portuguese courses, and Nanjing University eventually followed suit. Between 1960 and 2001, more than 400 students majored in Portuguese language and culture in Chinese universities. Yet according to Wang (2001), the first teachers of Portuguese language in China were Brazilian, both in Beijing and Shanghai. Then the first teachers from Portugal came via non-state channels, and, with time, they would outnumber the Brazilians. Due to the China-Portugal-Macau protocols, by the 2000s, as Wang (2001) would affirm, all lecturers in Chinese universities would be from Portugal, sent by the Camões Institute and Instituto Português do Oriente. Initially, Chinese and Portuguese lecturers would have complementary functions, with the former focusing on grammar and the latter on conversation and culture.

As Li (2012) points out, despite the challenges posed by the Cultural Revolution, institutions that evolved into the present-day Communication University of China and Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) graduated approximately one hundred students proficient in Portuguese under difficult conditions and with outdated methodologies. During the same period, Macau trained nearly forty professionals. Li (2012) notes that while the number of Portuguese speakers in the PRC was limited, their contributions were significant in advancing Chinese foreign policy.

Li (2017) further asserts that the first formal major in Portuguese language was established in 1960 by the institute that later became the Communication University of China. Subsequently, BLCU and SISU introduced their own Portuguese programs between 1966 and 1977. By the year 2000, these three institutions alone had collectively trained around four hundred translators and interpreters throughout China.

China has also resorted to sending students abroad for Portuguese studies. After all, sending students abroad is a resource when domestic conditions are not mature yet. This is why in 1959 there were mainland Chinese students—seven in total—studying Portuguese in Macau (Wang, 2001). Political turmoil inside China would also be responsible for adopting this strategy a few years later. For example, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), a five-student group was sent to Macau to study Portuguese. In the 1980s, more than ten Chinese were sent to Brazil as an experience abroad.

In contrast, Portuguese language education in Macau began much earlier. According to Li (2017), Portuguese teaching commenced in the 16th century, coinciding with the arrival of Portuguese explorers. Notably, the Colégio de São Paulo was founded in 1594. However, it was not until the 19th century that official schools began to emerge. Li (2017) highlights the significance of the Opium Wars in this educational evolution, listing several schools established during that period, including Escola Comercial Pedro Nolasco da Silva (1887), Liceu Macau (1894), and Escola Sínica (1914), which was the first translation school. Although none of these institutions were classified as higher education



establishments, they laid the groundwork for future developments in Portuguese language education in the region (Li, 2017).

From the 1980s on, Chinese students have gone to Portugal on scholarships from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Camões Institute and Fundação Oriente. The Chinese government has also put an effort toward the diffusion of Portuguese in order to train diplomats. In the 1990s, however, Macau would play a more important role. In the late 1990s, the Chinese government sent 16 to 18 people to study at the University of Macau, and by the 2000s, more than a hundred Chinese had been sent abroad by government authorities to study Portuguese (Wang, 2001).

Diplomatic ties were also very important to motivate Portuguese teaching in China. China established diplomatic relations with Brazil in 1974 and with Portugal in 1979. China was also interested in establishing ties with countries like Mozambique and Angola who had just become independent, respectively (Mozambique in 1975 and Angola in 1983). It is also noteworthy that all these relations have been important to China all along, from then to the present, as noted by SISU's professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022). Conditions were being created to make way to the 3rd phase proposed by Zhang et al. (2020), which was 1978-1999. This context set the stage for the third phase proposed by Zhang et al. (2020), which spanned from 1978 to 1999. This period was characterized by the reforms and opening-up policies initiated by Deng Xiaoping.

In China, foreign languages that are taught are divided into major languages (mainstream languages like English, Spanish and French) and minor languages (those considered "minority" languages). Historically, Portuguese has fit into the second category. Nevertheless, Portuguese learning has not only connected China to Brazil and Portugal but also to countries in Africa. This way, the Portuguese language has meant access to an important part of what is now called the Global South. In addition, Portuguese has become an important working language. As Wang (2001) points out, to learn Portuguese one would have to go to BFSU or SISU, for example, both of which being top elite universities in China. This may support the argument that a career in the Portuguese language in China is somewhat prestigious.

How would a young person choose a career related to the Portuguese language? Especially from 1949 to 1966, a student would be assigned a major considering what the state needed. That means this was not an individual choice. In other cases, students applied to universities and, once selected, the universities would assign them a major that was in demand in society. As Wang (2001) explains, that meant that Portuguese actually chose the students, not the other way round.

The current situation of Portuguese language education in China corresponds to the fourth phase identified by Zhang et al. (2020), which spans from 2000 to the present. Pires (2022) conducted a comparative analysis of existing data on Portuguese language institutions, educators, and students in the country. The analysis reveals that there are currently 6,370 students and 221 teachers of Portuguese across 56 higher education institutions in China; this number rises to 304 when including Macau (as of 2021).

Jatobá (2020) reviews the history of Portuguese language instruction in China and emphasizes the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of language policy and



planning in the region. He argues that this approach presents both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it facilitates the analysis of language education from multiple perspectives across different fields. On the other hand, the fragmentation of linguistic policy into various areas of study may lead to its marginalization, rendering it secondary both academically and socially. This subjugation to a specific discipline diminishes the autonomy of the language as a subject of inquiry. Consequently, the broader implications of language in shaping and influencing behaviors are often overlooked.

Yan (2019) highlights the period after 2000 as a significant time of progress for Portuguese language education in China. As the country has become more open and its economy has experienced substantial growth, the number of courses and learners has increased, accompanied by improvements in the quality of Portuguese teaching at universities. Moreover, the evolving diplomatic and socioeconomic contexts, along with new foreign language teaching policies in China, have contributed to this advancement. However, these developments also present both challenges and opportunities for Portuguese educators, particularly in the context of globalization and superdiversity. With a growing number of Portuguese speakers, teachers face increased competition in the job market, necessitating a deeper understanding of the realities faced by Chinese students and a commitment to maintaining and enhancing the quality of instruction (Yan, 2019).

Radar China (2022) reports that there are 55 higher education institutions offering Portuguese courses at some level (either an elective or free course, degree, discipline, minor or major, undergraduate or graduate, etc.), all of which focusing on Portuguese as a foreign language. Out of these 55, 22 are partners with Brazilian universities, with student exchange. The main Brazilian partners are the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, the Campinas State University and University of São Paulo. Among the private ones, the Armando Álvares Penteado Foundation (FAAP) stands out. The data also shows that there are 316 teachers of Portuguese in China, 36 of whom being Brazilian. Nonetheless, as expected, all figures of foreign teachers came down after the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, most teachers of Portuguese in China are Chinese, and have been trained at BISU, BFSU or SISU.

SISU, for instance, is among the three universities that pioneered Portuguese-teaching in China. SISU is one of few that offer a master's degree in Portuguese. China has only recently begun offering a doctorate in Portuguese language via the Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU), and, with time, Portuguese teaching has extended into other regions and provinces—for example, from the far north to Hubei province, where the Confucius Institute fosters much of the process. What the students acquire from these programs is instrumental competency, allowing them to eventually become translators and interpreters. They also obtain some knowledge on history and culture especially pertaining to Portugal and Brazil. At SISU, Portuguese is essentially offered to third- and fourth-year (20 to 21 years old) university students (Radar China, 2022).

The students' background generally comprises a solid foundation in Chinese politics and advanced English language skills. Upon graduation, many students find jobs in the private



sector, such as in the communication and marketing departments of companies like Huawei or Xiaomi, and some of these students would go on to gain experience in other markets, such as Brazil and Africa. Other graduates enter the public sector, securing positions in diplomacy or state-owned enterprises with projects abroad, as reported by Professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022).

Wang (2001) explains why, even since decades ago, the number of graduates of Portuguese hired in Beijing has been higher than in Shanghai: a number of those employed in Shanghai have had to subsequently leave the city because most jobs there are in the private sector. On the other hand, Portuguese speakers are more needed for governmental relations, and Beijing offers more of those opportunities. In diplomacy, for example, the Chinese government tends to give preference to those majoring in Portuguese for diplomatic positions in Portuguese-speaking countries. Also, a number of Chinese ministries have positions and opportunities for those who speak Portuguese. Moreover, the media offer jobs for Portuguese speakers. For example, Beijing Radio, China Radio International (CRI), China publications in foreign languages, and Xinhua News Agency. Academically, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences also benefits from Portuguese speakers.

Currently, across all regions of China—including Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau—there are more than 60 higher education institutions offering programs in Portuguese (Zhang et al., 2020). These institutions provide a range of academic qualifications, including bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctorates, and minors. Zhang et al. (2020) also identifies emerging trends in Portuguese language education in China, such as an increasing number of qualified teachers and a growing array of exchange opportunities. Notably, initiatives like the Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are highlighted as significant factors driving this trend. This indicates that China is making considerable efforts to facilitate cultural and educational exchange. However, this raises the question: what is Brazil's role in this dynamic? The following section will provide insights into Brazil's contributions and responses to these developments.

In fact, Portuguese is expanding in China, but Brazil's participation in it does not quite match its magnitude as the biggest Portuguese-speaking country in the world. This discrepancy is even more surprising considering that China has been Brazil's biggest trade partner since 2009. As Professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022) points out, historically, Portuguese teaching in China used teachers from Portugal as a point of reference. It is only recently that teachers from Brazil have become more prevalent. One of the reasons for this may be because of initiatives such as the lectureship program (Programa de Leitorado). At SISU, for example, Portuguese belongs to the Department of Latin American and European Studies, where Spanish, Greek, Italian and others languages are included. Chinese students often lack the background to distinguish them, and often do not consider Brazil as part of Latin America. The teachers from Latin America therefore have to make an effort to better introduce their part of the world to the students. For example, the Brazilian professors may present specific facets, such as post-colonial readings and history of their home country to offer a broader panorama of the Portuguese language to supplement an otherwise overly Eurocentric study. Nevertheless,



teaching materials from Brazil are still scarce, and while there are Chinese students who want to go to Brazil, such opportunities are limited, and the costs are high.

From the graduates' point of view, many of them want to find jobs in private companies, especially those in Shanghai. They will become executives/interlocutors for Brazilians in virtually all states of the South American country. In fact, the Chinese know less about African Portuguese-speaking countries and East Timor than they know about Portugal or Brazil. This is because Chinese students who choose the former countries as research topics are rare, causing them to only acquire cursory knowledge at best. For Professor Victoria Almeida, a significant amount of work still needs to be done in this regard (Radar China, 2022).

In spite of the above-mentioned exchanges with Brazilian universities (partnerships with USP, Unicamp, UFRS and UEL (Londrina State University, in Paraná State)), this is still only just a handful of the universities in Brazil. According to Almeida (Radar China, 2022), there are far more Chinese students returning from exchanges in Portugal, whose best universities offer exchanges with Chinese students. It is a long-term process, so it will take long before Brazil builds a teaching culture in China. As a case in point, the Portuguese Department at SISU is more than ten years old, but it was not until recently that it had its first Brazilian teacher. Therefore, their course about Brazil is also only a recent addition.

Brazil, however, has made some efforts to promote the dissemination of Brazilian Portuguese. Brazil has established a lectureship program (Programa de Leitorado) that sends its teachers abroad to teach Portuguese in universities in countries around the world. Back in 2010, 13 lecturers were selected, two of whom took up positions in China: one at BISU and the other at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. In fact, among all countries considered (the other being Argentina, Bolivia, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea Bissau, Lebanon, Paraguay, Peru, Ukraine and Vietnam), China was the only country with two spots. There were three canceled slots: Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba and another Peruvian university (Brazilian Government, 2010). In 2023, 19 Brazilian lecturers were selected in the program for a number of countries: the U.S., Peru, Greece, Bahamas, Mexico, Bolivia, Spain, South Africa, Russia, Czech Republic, France, Chile, Finland, Israel and Italy. The U.S., China and France each had two slots. For China, one opening was at BFSU and the other at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (Brazilian Government, 2023).

According to Professor Victoria Almeida (Radar China, 2022), Chinese students learning Portuguese at SISU generally know little about Brazil beyond football and music, with only a few students having some knowledge of social issues like corruption and racism. This limited understanding highlights the need to deepen cultural exchange and knowledge-sharing between the two countries. Some aficionados, in turn, appreciate bossa nova and telenovelas/soap operas. Almeida opines that Brazil should explore cultural diplomacy, translation of Brazilian literature as well as other initiatives. In fact, the most translated Brazilian authors into Chinese are Jorge Amado and Paulo Coelho, but beyond that this area is largely unexplored and has a great deal of growth potential. Machado de Assis also has some works translated into Chinese, but only a smattering of Brazilian course books or textbooks (on language, history or society) have been



translated. In contrast, Portugal has far more titles translated into Chinese, not to mention the fact that most Portuguese language textbooks in China are by authors from Portugal or by Chinese trained in Portugal.

In the 1980s, Brazilian audiovisual productions generated some appeal to Chinese audiences. For example, the soap opera *Slave Isaura* and the country music duo *Milionário* and *José Rico* obtained unexpected success and increased Brazil's soft power, which, for decades up to that juncture, had been mostly fueled by Brazilian football. In the 21st century, intensified relations between Brazil and China increased cultural exchange. For example, in 2004, the year of the presidential meeting between Presidents Lula and Hu Jintao, the Forbidden City in Beijing housed a special exhibit called *The Amazon*. In the 2010s, the Festival of Brazilian Cinema took place in Beijing and Shanghai to showcase Brazilian productions to the Chinese audiences. In 2012, a Chinese translation of the 1968 book *Meu pé de laranja lima* ("My sweet orange tree") by José Mauro de Vasconcelos was released, along with a movie adaptation of it shown on the big screen in Beijing, which piqued the curiosity of Chinese youth. A few years later, with the support of the Brazilian government and the University of Macau, a Chinese translation of *O homem que sabia javanês* ("The man who could speak Javanese"), a tale by Lima Barreto, was launched. Other Brazilian authors translated in Chinese include Cristóvão Tezza and Amílcar Bettega. Nevertheless, these are still incipient cases and really cannot be considered enough for promoting Brazil in China. Moreover, if we juxtapose this with the above-mentioned initiatives in Macau, where countless authors from Portugal are translated and divulged, it becomes even clearer: the process of cultural exchange needs the participation of non-state actors—including the media, literature and audiovisual productions—as much as it needs commitment from governments.

Compared to Brazil, Portugal has a greater framework in Portuguese teaching overseas. It offers lectureship programs and scholarships to Chinese students (master's and doctoral degrees) as well as a partnership with the Camões institute (Instituto Camões). Portugal also facilitates acquisition of titles, besides promoting the translation of Portuguese novels in China. In contrast, Brazil does not make such a structured effort.

As a result, at present most Chinese students of the Portuguese language tend to use European Portuguese as a basis or at least have it as reference. In Macau, the majority of Portuguese teachers are from Portugal (Pires, 2022). Founded in 1992, The Instituto Camões is a public Portuguese institute that promotes Portuguese language and culture worldwide, through cooperation and educational and cultural exchanges. This institute has several areas of activity, including language teaching, cultural promotion and academic cooperation. It operates Portuguese language and cultural centers in various countries, providing Portuguese language courses and supporting the teaching of Portuguese as a foreign language. The Institute ensures the dissemination, promotion and teaching of Portuguese language and culture in nearly 80 countries, in cooperation with 357 higher education institutions and organizations. The institute also organizes cultural events, such as exhibitions, concerts and literary festivals, to showcase Portuguese arts and heritage. Additionally, it facilitates academic exchanges and research collaborations between Portugal and other countries Camões (n.d.-a, b).



Pires (2023) conducted a comparative analysis of state policies and strategies promoting Portuguese and Spanish as foreign languages in China, viewing Portugal and Spain as 'exporters' and China as an 'importer' of these languages. The research highlights the global activities of institutions tasked with this mission, followed by an examination of their implementation within China. Notably, gaps in the strategy for exporting Portuguese to China were identified, despite a favorable context for its adoption. The author offers recommendations for more effective use of existing resources and points out areas with significant potential for growth. The study suggests that language teachers should act not only as instructors but also as ambassadors for Portuguese language and culture. Additionally, it argues that Camões, I.P. should transition from a system that primarily benefits partner universities to one that actively promotes Portuguese language and culture in China. In addition, it emphasizes the need to expand cultural outreach and course offerings to the general public in mainland China.

In terms of Chinese institutions, there have been a great deal of efforts to keep cultural exchange alive, and the Confucius Institutes play a decisive role in facilitating Portuguese learning in China. If cultural partnerships succeed, much of it will be owed to the Chinese's effort. In fact, all cooperation involving the Confucius Institutes since 2004, fostered by the Chinese government, have prompted Chinese universities to teach Portuguese, along with the languages of the other countries involved in the cooperation. In addition, university exchanges and the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Forum Macau), both motivated by investments in Portuguese-speaking countries, contribute to the diffusion of Portuguese. In some cases, like at Hubei University, the Portuguese course is a preparation for educators and volunteers before their teaching assignment at the Confucius Institutes in Brazil.

The year of 2024 is important because it marks not only the 50th anniversary of Sino-Brazilian diplomatic relations but also the 20th anniversary of the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission on Consultation and Cooperation. Moreover, China and Brazil have been strategic partners since 1993. In fact, Brazil is the first country with whom China established a strategic partnership. In 2012, the partnership became a global strategic partnership. Such an increase in level of cooperation can boost the role of Brazil in Portuguese teaching in China.

This is all in line with the "people-to-people connections" pillar of China's landmark Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) established in 2013. Although the BRI's flagship projects are related to infrastructure integration, beyond the economic and infrastructure aspects, the people-to-people connections pillar, one of five that the BRI is based on, reflects China's aim and commitment to deepening cultural exchange and mutual understanding through facilitating more human interactions. In July 2024, President Lula announced that the Brazilian government would be joining the BRI. What this signifies—if considered in conjunction the fact that of the more than 140 countries that have signed on to the BRI, only 20 of them are from the Latin American region—is that though there are existing Chinese investments in Brazil, it is possible that Brazil's joining the BRI would bring more opportunities of infrastructure integration and therefore more cultural exchanges.



Li (2015) notes that many Lusophone countries are located along the “Maritime Silk Road of the 21st Century.” The author emphasizes the historical significance of the Portuguese language in the ancient Maritime Silk Road, which primarily encompassed the Indian Ocean. Since the 15th century, following Vasco da Gama's voyages, Portuguese has wielded considerable influence throughout the region—and it continues to do so today. Consequently, Li (2015) argues that the Portuguese language is essential for the success of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In May 2024, Brazilian vice president Geraldo Alckmin visited China for the COSBAN meeting, during which he met with Chinese president Xi Jinping and together announced a number of agreements amounting to R\$ 24 billion (US\$ 4.49 billion) in investments, including a broadening of the market for Brazilian coffee and a possibility to establish a Brazil House in Shanghai. As 2024 is the year Brazil presides over the G20, the COSBAN meeting represents a momentous occasion for Sino-Brazilian bilateral relations. Among other agreements from the COSBAN meeting, such as enhancing satellite cooperation and fighting poverty and starvation, was an MoU involving Portuguese language teaching (TV GGN, 2024). In addition, result no. 4 of the meeting highlights bilateral cooperation in many—including cultural—areas (Brazilian Government, 2024, 2024a). In 2023, along with President Lula, the Minister of Culture of Brazil, Margareth Menezes, visited universities and other cultural spaces, paving the way for agreements such as one signed on audiovisual cooperation.

In November 2024, Brazil will host the highly anticipated G20 summit, an event that will prove especially significant for China-Brazil relations as both sides look forward to the next level of partnership: Will it involve deeper collaboration under initiatives like the Nova Indústria Brasil Program and the new PAC (Program for Growth Acceleration)? How will Brazil joining the BRI impact Sino-Brazilian partnership? We will be especially interested in the answers to these questions in the context of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As we have seen, the Portuguese language has shown growing importance in the global scenario demographically, economically and politically. This relevance is expected to continue to rise, especially given the immense development anticipated in Portuguese-speaking African countries. Brazil plays a unique role in promulgating Lusophone influence on the world, due to its large number of native Portuguese speakers and presence in several regional organizations.

The Portuguese language's potential for expansion is promising, especially with demographic growth and the advancement of digital technologies. For Brazil, although the promotion of Portuguese is seen as a tool for cultural diplomacy and for elevating its global image, the country has not seized every opportunity to stamp its presence, especially with regard to promoting itself in China despite strong bilateral economic partnership between the two countries. How can Brazil best leverage its role as a global Lusophone leader to promote the Portuguese language in China?



Mendes (2019) advocates for a more cooperative and transnational approach to the global promotion of the Portuguese language, highlighting the importance of Brazil's active and cooperative participation in multilateral policies aimed at the promotion and diffusion of Portuguese. This includes leveraging the involvement of international higher education institutions in Brazil. In line with this perspective, we believe Brazil can capitalize on the current context, which encompasses several favorable factors, to adopt a more collaborative approach to promoting the Portuguese language in China. This favorable context can be understood across global, national, and regional/local levels.

On the global level, the new Lula administration in Brazil has tried a rapprochement with China, and Brazil has already committed to joining the Belt and Road Initiative (CLBrief, 2024) and appointing a permanent representative at Forum Macau (TDM, 2024). This goes beyond the misgiving and reservation that Brazil has shown over the years in relation to Forum Macau (Mendes, 2013, pp. 288–289). The year 2024 marks two important anniversaries in the context of Sino-Brazilian relations: the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties and the 20th anniversary of the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission on Consultation and Cooperation. Since China established a strategic partnership in 1993—the first of its kind—with Brazil, relations between the two have evolved into a global strategic partnership (instated in 2012).

At the national level in China, Brazil could take advantage of what is happening with the teaching of Portuguese in mainland China. After years of rapid growth in the number of learners of Portuguese, we are now in a phase of investing in so-called area or regional studies. These studies refer to the interdisciplinary academic fields that focus on the study of a particular geographic region or cultural area of the world, and go beyond just the study of languages. Brazil's higher education and research institutions can contribute to strengthening China's area studies on Portuguese-speaking countries and Latin America by undertaking research and analysis of the social, economic, political and cultural dynamics of the target regions. Area studies can provide a deeper understanding of the needs, opportunities and challenges faced by partner countries. These studies play a vital role in facilitating China's engagement with the world, particularly within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

At the regional and local level, Brazil can take advantage of Macau's advantages and special status, namely the "one country, two systems" policy, the international free port, the autonomous customs zone, the simple and reduced tax regime, and Macau's role as a service platform for cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. The "Development Plan for Appropriate Economic Diversification of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2024-2028)" also offers opportunities with a focus on promoting the development of key industries such as traditional Chinese medicine, the modern financial industry, cutting-edge technology, and the MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) and culture and sports sectors (DSEPDR, 2024).

Indeed, it is time for Brazil to have a more significant presence in Macau, not only through diplomatic channels but also by stimulating the involvement of various non-state actors such as chambers of commerce and investment, professional associations, Brazilian cultural centers, media outlets, art and cultural foundations, among others. This



constellation of partners can help Brazil to leverage Macau's role as a generator of opportunities, something that Brazil has not fully taken advantage of yet. A strengthened presence in Macau would allow a consolidation of existing partnerships between Brazilian and mainland Chinese universities, by bringing Chinese students learning Portuguese closer to Brazilian companies, strengthening the connection between education and the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the Greater Bay Area, producing locally-adapted teaching materials for the Chinese context, ultimately bringing Brazil and China closer together through the unique environment that Macau offers.

This article has examined Brazil's pivotal role as the world's largest Lusophone country in the global promotion of Portuguese, a language that holds significant global importance with a very promising growth projection in the coming decades. As highlighted by the perspective of Cooper (1989), the promotion of languages abroad is often driven by political, economic and cultural interests, and requires coordinated policy initiatives. We have seen how Brazilian foreign policy has been actively promoting the Portuguese language in some geographies, but without drawing its attention towards China. By fostering Portuguese language education in China, Portuguese—despite its linguistic challenges for non-Romance language speakers—not only deepens cultural exchanges but also enhances mutual understanding. In the long run, the importance of cultural rapprochement between the two countries supports Chinese businesses and institutions, and enhances China's engagement with the broader Lusophone world, of which Brazil is the largest member. This engagement can help grant China access to vital resources and markets in Brazil and Africa, potentially contributing to China's domestic food safety and energy security, and supporting the broader movement in financial markets to internationalize the use of the Chinese *yuan*. Macau has been instrumental as a cultural conduit between China and the Portuguese-speaking world, serving historically as a meeting point. This role has been increasingly recognized and valued by the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, while there is political will and a favorable environment in Macau, more concerted efforts from Brazil will be required to materialize these opportunities.

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THE GENDER GAP REVERSAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF BRAZIL AND CHINA

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Abstract

This study investigated the reversal of gender disparity in enrollment in higher education in Brazil and China (both of whom members of BRICS) from having more male than female students in the past, to now having more female than male students. This reversal began for



Brazil in 1988, and for China in 2008. The paper examined factors that contributed to the reversal through employing a qualitative methodology, including an extensive review of literature, analysis of statistical data and official documents from the Brazilian and Chinese governments, the United Nations, as well as the World Bank, and a comparative analysis between Brazil and China, exploring such aspects as feminist movement, legal framework, economic development, expansion of higher education, and demographic factors. The study is significant as it illuminates the evolving landscape of higher education and gender dynamics in Brazil and China to offer valuable insights for other countries for reference. In particular, the case studies on Brazil and China can inform international efforts to address gender disparity and create more inclusive and equitable systems not only in education but also in other fields.

Keywords

Gender, Reversal, Higher Education, Brazil, China.

Resumo

O presente estudo tem como objetivo investigar a inversão da desigualdade de gênero nas matrículas no ensino superior no Brasil e na China, dois países membros do BRICS. Vários países vieram testemunhar uma transição da desigualdade de gênero no ensino superior, partindo de "mais estudantes do sexo masculino do que feminino" a "mais estudantes do sexo feminino do que estudantes do masculino", como o caso do Brasil e da China. A inversão da desigualdade de gênero no ensino superior aconteceu em 1988 e 2008 no Brasil e na China, respetivamente. Com base neste facto, este artigo pretende responder à seguinte questão: Quais são os fatores que contribuem para a inversão da desigualdade de gênero no ensino superior no Brasil e na China? Para o efeito, esta pesquisa adota uma abordagem qualitativa, incluindo uma análise de literatura, de dados estatísticos e documentos oficiais dos governos brasileiro e chinês, das Nações Unidas e do Banco Mundial, bem como uma análise comparativa sobre as semelhanças e diferenças entre o Brasil e a China no tocante à inversão da desigualdade de gênero. Neste sentido, através desta investigação, pretendemos identificar os fatores que contribuem para esta transição a partir de aspetos como movimentos feministas, quadro jurídico, desenvolvimento económico, expansão do ensino superior e fatores demográficos. A importância deste estudo reside em suas implicações para a compreensão da evolução panorâmica do ensino superior e da dinâmica de gênero a nível global. A análise da inversão da desigualdade de gênero no Brasil e na China pode servir de referência a outros países. As percepções derivadas deste estudo de caso podem chamar esforços globais para colmatar a questão de desigualdade de gênero e criar sistemas educativos de maior inclusão e equidade. Além disso, a abordagem na questão de gênero no ensino superior pode ajudar a despertar uma atenção crescente, para lidar com a desigualdade de gênero em outros domínios.

Palavras-chave

Gênero, Reversão, Ensino Superior, Brasil, China.



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THE GENDER GAP REVERSAL IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF BRAZIL AND CHINA¹

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1. Introduction

For many bygone decades, higher education was a luxury for women, and male had always outnumbered female students and graduates (UNESCO & IESALC, 2021, p. 11). However, with the rapid expansion of enrollment in education worldwide, more and more women have had the chance to access higher education. This trend has continued to a point that, now, a number of countries have witnessed a turnaround—i.e., there are now more female than male students in higher education—a phenomenon referred to as higher education’s “gender gap reversal”. Globally, this reversal commenced in 2002 (UNESCO & IESALC, 2021, p. 3), and, currently, female students are over-represented in higher education in 74% of the world’s countries (including both developed and developing countries) with available data (UNESCO, 2020, p.14). Brazil and China are two of these countries.

Gender parity is measured using the Gender Parity Index (GPI), which refers to the female-to-male ratio of a given indicator. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between the genders; a GPI below 1 indicates disparity in favour of males, and a GPI above 1 indicates disparity in favour of females. The further from 1 the parity index is, the greater the disparity between females and males (UNESCO, 2024). For Brazil, a gender imbalance in education (i.e., more men than women students) had been part of the reality for almost 450 years (Beltrão & Alves, 2009, p. 2) until the gap began to narrow in the 1980s. Available data from the World Bank show that the GPI for higher education enrollment in Brazil was 0.95 in 1979, 1.0 in 1983 and 1.05 in 1988 (data unavailable between 1984 and 1987), and has remained above 1.05 from then on (World Bank, 2024a), indicating that there was already gender parity in higher education in 1983, and, by 1988, the gender gap had already begun to reverse. As for China, the GPI for higher education

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enrollment was below 1.0 before 2007, at 1.0 in 2007 and above 1.0 from 2008 on, indicating gender parity in higher education in 2007, and gender gap reversal beginning in 2008, with the GPI holding steady at 1.04 thereafter (World Bank, 2024a).

The reversal of gender gap in higher education has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars all over the world. A number of studies have examined the phenomenon in developed countries—especially European countries and the U.S—while some explored the reversal's driving forces. Riphahn and Schwientek (2015) investigated mechanisms behind the reversal of gender gap in secondary and tertiary education in Germany, and found that neither individual/family background nor labour market characteristics appeared to be strongly associated with the gender gap in education, but the gap in tertiary education was correlated with the development of class sizes and social norms. Reijnders (2018) explains the gender gap reversal in higher education from the perspective of changes in the wage structure and expectations about marriage in America, and claims that the most important driving force for the reversal is the decline in marriage rate, as single women have a greater incentive to invest in education than single men. Goldin, Katz and Kuziemko (2006) explored the gender gap reversal in college attendance and graduation in America, and found that females' increasing expectation of economic returns from higher education contributed to their improved college preparation and performance. Bossavie and Kanninen (2018) developed a unified conceptual framework to formulate and test two main hypotheses, namely, tail hypothesis and mean hypothesis, to better understand the forces behind the reversal. Their results show that the lower variance in scholastic performance among females has been a driver for the reversal.

Gender gap reversal in education has also attracted attention from Chinese and Brazilian scholars. Li (2016) discusses the phenomenon of gender gap reversal in education in China and its challenges to society, including difficulties (e.g., discrimination) that women face when looking for good employment, wage gap between women and men with the same educational credentials, conflicts between work and family, among others. Wang, Wang and Hu (2022) explored the effects that gender gap reversal in education has on how men and women match up to get married, revealing that China now faces severe education-related marriage imbalance—the higher a woman's education level, the more difficult it is for her to find a husband; the reverse is also true, i.e., the less educated a man is, the more difficult it is for him to find someone to marry—and the problem will persist for a while. Liu and Zhang (2023) studied the gender gap reversal among China's undergraduates and postgraduates, but focusing mainly on data to prove the trend. Yan and Meng (2023) divided the factors contributing to the gender gap reversal in higher education into external (e.g., economic and social development and progress made in gender equality) and internal factors (e.g., higher return of higher education for women and women's competitiveness in education compared to men in terms of academic performance). There is also a smattering of studies on gender gap reversal in Brazil's education system. Beltrão and Alves (2009) analyzed the onset time of the reversal there by laying out the development of female education and claimed that universal public policies as well as cultural and behavioral changes were central factors during the process.



Nevertheless, most studies have focused on the situations in developed countries; few have focused on China and Brazil. As China and Brazil have the world's second and seventh largest populations, respectively, and both are members of BRICS as well as being two of the most important economies in the world, analysing the gender gap reversal in higher education in these two countries can offer valuable insights on gender issues for other countries not only regarding the realm of higher education but also in other fields. This paper therefore studies and compares the Brazilian and Chinese higher education systems from a gender perspective in an attempt to understand the factors that have contributed to their gender gap reversal.

2. Factors Leading to Gender Gap Reversal in Brazilian and Chinese Higher Education

Both Brazil and China have greatly improved gender equality in society, including in their education landscape; more and more women now have access to higher education, which gives them more opportunities to improve their lives and social statuses. The reversal of gender gap in higher education can be attributed to both external and internal factors: the external (i.e., environmental) factors make it possible for female students to receive higher education, while the internal factors (e.g., motivation) allow more and more female students to finish secondary education and enter higher education. Due to length limitations, this paper will focus its scope on the external factors that led to the gender gap reversal in higher education in Brazil and China. Specifically, we identify the most common and most important factors, and explore how they created a favorable environment to facilitate the reversal.

2.1 Feminist Movements

The term "feminism" was coined in 1837 by Charles Fourier (1772–1837), a French sociologist and a strong advocate for women's rights (Old Times, 2021). Feminism originated in the U.S. and Europe, then spread to Asia, Africa and Latin America, and the rest of the world (Mohajan, 2022: 2). Various definitions have been given on feminism, but a unified definition has remained elusive so far. Nevertheless, feminism has a universal goal: pursuing gender equality.

The world has witnessed four waves of feminist movement. The first one took place from the second half of the 19th century to the early 20th century, the main goals of which were to fight for women (especially married women)'s suffrage, education and employment, with the focus being on suffrage. The second wave began in the 1960s and lasted until the 1990s. This wave aimed to fight for equal education and employment opportunities, maternity leave, birth control and abortion rights (Mohajan, 2022, p. 1). The third wave, which began in the 1990s, embraced a spirit of rebellion in lieu of reform, and encouraged women to express their sexuality and individuality (Pruitt, 2022). The fourth wave of feminism began around 2012. It mainly relied on social media to improve gender equality in society (Mohajan, 2022, p. 4). These feminist movements have helped



to involve women in different fields of society, providing them with more opportunities to receive education, improving gender equality overall.

Brazil has experienced its own four waves of feminist movements. The focus of the first movement was also the right to vote. It was in 1932 that the New Brazilian Electoral Code was promulgated, which symbolizes the approval of women's right to vote (Zarbato & Martins, 2022: 1132). The second wave of feminist movement in Brazil began in the 1960s—a period of military dictatorship—with one of its goals being to increase solidarity among women and improve their self-esteem (Zarbato & Martins, 2022: 1133). Participants of the movement included exiled feminists, political activists, university students as well as academics (Perez & Ricoldi, 2023, p. 4). The third wave was driven by the increasingly important voice that global NGOs added to gender discussions, which included the Human Rights Conferences of the 1990s and the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 (Perez & Ricoldi, 2023, p. 4). Finally, the fourth wave in Brazil relates to the expanding use of the Internet (Perez & Ricoldi, 2023, p. 10). Overall, it can be said that the feminist movements in Brazil have almost always been aligned with feminist movements across the world.

On the other hand, China's feminist movements were different, because of a deep-rooted gendered hierarchy resulting from Confucian influences that dominated Chinese societies, which, for centuries had imposed a so-called "three obediences and four virtues" on women. The three "obediences" refer to the complete compliance of a girl to her father and older brothers before marriage, a wife to her husband, and a widow to her son. The four "virtues" refer to women assuming a submissive place in society and modulating their behavior accordingly, restraining themselves in speech, clothing themselves appropriately, and managing their households properly and cheerfully (Cheng, 2009, p. 2260). In addition, the centuries-old practice of foot-binding prevented women from participating in labour work and limited them to the domestic sphere, rendering them almost fully dependent on men, resulting in an extremely low status of women in society.

Feminist movements were introduced to China through the Chinese people's own fight against feudalism and imperialism, which in turn gave women hope to take back control of their own lives. Today we consider the May Fourth Movement the first feminist movement in China. The May Fourth Movement, which took place during the 1910s and 1920s, was mostly intellectuals protesting against not only the corruption and incompetence of the warlord government but also foreign invasions of China. More importantly, the movement represented an open, systematic challenge to the gender segregation in Chinese society. and opened the door towards gender equality in all spheres of life, ushering in equal education and employment opportunities for women (Li, 2000, p. 2). Some of the May Fourth feminists later assumed important roles in the Communist Party of China (CPC), which was formed in 1921. China's national women's organisation, the All-China Democratic Women's Federation (ACDWF), an official institution to unite women from all walks of life, was established in 1949. In 1957, the ACDWF became the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), enabling feminists to carry out various reforms nationwide.



Moreover, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, feminists in CPC have been able to materialise their feminist objectives. In the early years of the PRC, great achievements were made in such areas as women's literacy, equal employment and equal pay, political participation, reproductive health, and new public facilities to reduce working women's burden of childcare and housework (Wang, 2018, p. 160). However, during the Cultural Revolution, which lasted for 10 years from 1966 to 1976, the ACWF was forced to suspend itself, and women's issues were completely ignored (Li, 2000, p. 33). Since the economic reform which started in late 1978, great achievements have been made in the development of women's movement in China, and women's study programmes and research centres have been thriving. China can therefore be regarded as a late bloomer in feminist movement; in turn, the movement itself was characterised by social movements and reforms aligned with the development of the CPC. Today, feminists in China are still devoted to improving gender equality in the society, and people's consciousness of gender equality is increasing.

Thanks to the influence of these feminist movements (and others worldwide), more and more importance has been attached to women's rights, and various actions have been taken by different countries to improve gender equality on a global scale.

2.2 Legal Framework

Like many other countries in the world, Brazil and China had patriarchal societies that prioritised men over women. Women have long been associated with being only daughters and mothers responsible for housework and childcare (i.e., homemakers), while men are breadwinners for the whole family. For Brazil, its patriarchy-induced gender inequality was influenced by Iberian culture brought over from Portugal during colonial times. Throughout most of Brazil's history, labour was divided along women's reproductive and men's productive roles, setting men and women into the public and private spheres, respectively, and women were seen as not having any need to learn to read or write (Beltrão & Alves, 2009, pp. 3, 7). In China, its patrilineal clan societies had long valued sons over daughters, but the situation worsened during feudal times, when Confucianism became a core ideology that dominated China for the next two millennia. Women, considered subordinated to men, had very low status in both the family and society; boys were given priority to receive education, while girls were confined at home.

Thanks to influence from feminist movements worldwide as well as in Brazil and China mentioned above, a series of laws have been enacted to improve gender equality. In Brazil, the imperial decree that provided women with the right to enroll in a university course dates from 1881 (Beltrão & Alves, 2009, p. 4). The constitution of 1824 defined basic education as a right of every citizen and an obligation of the state. The 1934 constitution guaranteed women's right to vote. Brazil became one of the signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Moraes, 2020, p. 7), Article 2 of which claims that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in [the] Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (UN, 1948). The Guidelines and Bases of Brazilian Education Law (LDB) made it possible for



women who were receiving teacher's training to take part in university entry exams in 1961 (Beltrão & Alves, 2009, p. 6). The constitution of 1988 established compulsory and free basic education for citizens aged four to seventeen (Brazil, 1988). This not only played a significant role in increasing the number of female students, but more importantly established an obligatory qualifying exam system for the public to fill civil service positions. Such a system tends to favour women with university degrees to become lawyers, economists and other professions that used to be dominated by men (Beltrão & Alves, 2009, p. 11), in turn providing greater motivation for women to pursue higher education. The 1998 Brazilian Federal Constitution determines that education is a right of all and that the state and the family have a duty to provide it (UNESCO, 2021). Furthermore, two programmes which aimed to reduce poverty in the country, namely, Bolsa Família (introduced in 2002) and Fome Zero (FZ) (introduced in 2003), have increased school attendance and lowered inequality, including gender inequality, in Brazil (Villiers, 2023: 327).

In China, equality between men and women was stipulated in the constitution of the People's Republic of China, which was established in 1949. Subsequently, with the implementation of the "reform and opening up" policy, a series of laws and regulations were promulgated to promote gender equality. Moreover, after the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, equality between men and women was established as a basic state policy of China, symbolising that gender equality was to be guaranteed through implementing laws and policies. Meanwhile, the Chinese government also increased support, including enacting the Education Law in 1995, the Vocational Education Law in 1996, a revised constitution in 2004, and a revised Compulsory Education Law in 2006, to ensure that women have the same right, opportunities and access to education as men (Wang & Gui, 2020, p. 81). It is clearly pointed out in Article 36 of the Education Law that "Schools and administrative departments concerned shall, in accordance with relevant regulations of the State, ensure that females enjoy equal rights with males in enrollment, admission to schools of a higher level, employment, conferment of academic degrees, dispatch [sic] for study abroad, etc." (People's Republic of China, 2001).

In the 1996 version of the Vocational Law, it is claimed in Article 7 that the state would "take measures to help women receive vocational education" (People's Republic of China, 1996), and Article 10 of the latest (2022) version reiterates that the state "guarantees women's equal right to receiv[ing] vocational education" (People's Republic of China, 2022). It is stated in Article 96 of the first version of the constitution (1954) and in Article 48 of 2004's revised constitution that "Women in the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects in political, economic, cultural, social and family life" (People's Government of Guangdong Province, 1954; National People's Congress, 2004). Finally, the Compulsory Education Law also gives girls the same right and obligation as boys to receive compulsory education.

All of these on one hand spread the concept of gender equality and on the other enforce the implementation of gender equality policies, which in practical ways have helped to change people's gender ideology, thus reducing and removing barriers between women and education. Consequently, education, which used to be a privilege reserved for men



can now be accessed by women. This in turn has helped to increase the number of female students, especially in higher education.

2.3 Economic Development

Economic development and education investment produce greatly positive impact on higher education (Li, Gao & Chen, 2022). Economic development is the foundation for higher education development, and higher education development helps to increase women's access to higher education. According to data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2021), the GDP per capita in Brazil was 1,200 US dollars in 1980, increasing to 2,240 US dollars in 1988 and 8,270 in 2021, with some fluctuations in between. Particularly notable was its steady, rapid increase from 2002 to 2011, peaking at 13,630 US dollars in 2011. In China, the GDP per capita saw a massive general growth trend from 89.5 US dollars in 1960 to 12,720.2 US dollars in 2022, with particularly dramatic growth from the year 2001 onwards (World Bank, 2024b).

Such economic development has enabled the governments to implement compulsory education both in Brazil and China, allowing more and more families to send their children, both boys and girls, to pursue higher education. This has increased women's possibility to get education and then higher education. Meanwhile, along with the economic development, significant achievements have also been made in poverty reduction in both Brazil and China. With the international poverty line of \$2.15 as reference, Brazil's poverty rate decreased from 23.95% in 1981 to 12.27% in 1986 and 3.51% in 2022. Even more prominent achievements have been made in China: the poverty rate decreased rapidly from 71.96% in 1990 to 48.14% in 1996 and 0.11% in 2020 (World Bank, 2022). Poverty reduction has further helped to reduce families' economic burden, which has partly resulted in the increasing attention paid to children's education. As higher education is linked to women's socioeconomic status and their societal role and position (Moore, 1988, p. 103), women are more motivated to seek opportunities for education once the economic conditions allow. Moreover, women tend not to spare any effort to stand out academically.

2.4 Expansion of Higher Education

Higher education develops in response to the need of economic development, which in turn provides the basis for the expansion of higher education. Such expansion renders higher education no longer a luxury, but something available to an increasing number of people, both men and women. According to Martin Trow, higher education is developed over three phases, namely, elite, mass and universal higher education, which are marked by gross enrollment rates of less than 15%, between 15%–50%, and over 50%, respectively (Marginson, 2017, p. 1). As higher education transitions from the "elite" to the "universal" phase, the number of female students tends to increase rapidly and exceed the number of male students.



Brazil and China have both experienced an expansion of their higher education, though the expansion happened much earlier for Brazil than China. In Brazil, as early as in the 1960s, the development of state bureaucracies and large companies opened a new job market, and the higher education diploma constituted a guarantee of access to this market (Sampaio, 2020, p. 14). After the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, the constitution of the Republic decentralised higher education and allowed the creation of private institutions, which led to the immediate expansion of the higher education system (Sampaio, 2020: 7). In China, it was not until 1977 (after the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976) that China resumed administering college entrance examinations. After China introduced the reform and opening up policy, the demand for higher education has increased rapidly, and to satisfy both individuals' and society's need for higher education, a higher education expansion policy was introduced in 1999. This has rapidly boosted the number of students—particularly female—enrolled in higher education.

Table 1 below shows the expansion of enrollment and the increase of female students in Brazilian and Chinese higher education. In China, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in 1979 was only 1%, ten per cent lower than that of Brazil; it increased to 14% in 2003 after the higher education expansion policy of 1999, and to 17% in 2004, which indicates that China entered the mass higher education phase in 2004. Additionally, the GPI of enrollment in Table 1 indicates that the gender gap reversal began in 2008, with the gross enrollment rate at that point being 22% and GPI reaching 1.04. In Brazil, the gross enrollment rate of higher education in 1979 was 11%, much higher than that of China at the time, and it increased to 15% in 1999, which indicates that Brazil entered the phase of mass higher education in 1999. However, Brazil's GPI of enrollment indicates that the gender gap reversal happened in Brazilian higher education in 1988, when the gross enrollment rate was 11%.

Table 1 Higher Education in Brazil and China

Higher Education in China		Higher Education in Brazil		
Year	Gross Enrollment	GPI of	Gross Enrollment	GPI of Enrollment
1979	1%	0.33	11%	0.95
1983	Not Available	Not Available	11%	1
1988	3%	Not Available	11%	1.05
1994	4%	0.53	11%	1.12
1998	6%	Not Available	13%	1.19
1999	7%	Not Available	15%	1.21
2003	14%	0.83	Not Available	Not Available
2004	17%	0.89	Not Available	Not Available



2007	21%	1	Not Available	Not Available
2008	22%	1.04	Not Available	Not Available
2009	23%	1.06	Not Available	Not Available
2014	44%	1.15	47%	1.26
2019	57%	1.2	53%	1.27
2022	72%	1.15	60%	1.32

Source: World Bank, 2024a; World Bank, 2024c.

Therefore, things are a bit different between China and Brazil in that the gender gap reversal happened in China after it entered the mass higher education phase, while it happened in Brazil before it entered the mass phase. Nevertheless, they have both witnessed rapid higher education expansion, as well as dramatic increases in the number of female students.

2.5 Demographic Factors

Data from the World Bank show a decline in fertility rate not only for Brazil and China but across the world (Table 2). Between 1970 and 2022, Brazil's fertility rate decreased from 5.0 to 1.6 children per woman, while China's decreased from 6.1 to 1.2, both now falling below the global average. Compared with Brazil, China saw a much more dramatic drop in fertility rate between 1970 and 1980, due to the implementation of the family planning (i.e., one-child) policy in the 1970s.

Table 2 Fertility Rate, Total (Births per Woman)						
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2022
World	4.8	3.7	3.3	2.7	2.6	2.3
Brazil	5.0	4.0	2.9	2.3	1.8	1.6
China	6.1	2.7	2.5	1.6	1.7	1.2

Source: World Bank, 2024d

According to the Resource Dilution theory, parents only have finite access to resources such as time, energy and money, and as the number of children increases, the amount of resources available to each child decreases, which will have negative impact on their educational outcomes (Downey, 1995, p. 746). Moreover, girls will receive much less resources (especially education, including higher education) than boys due to the



aforementioned patriarchal traditions. Having fewer children will enable parents to give more—not to mention, equal—attention and resources (including education) to each child, and the result of this has been significant increase in girls' access to higher education. Furthermore, according to Becker's Human Capital Investment theory, people make human capital investment decisions based on returns on the investment; those with higher returns will receive more human capital investment (Wang, 2021, p. 8). When girls outperform boys academically, parents become more willing to invest in their daughters to receive higher education.

3. Conclusion

Gender gap reversal in higher education has been an ongoing global phenomenon, but, for Brazil and China, it has already been well underway since 1988 and 2008, respectively. The main external factors contributing to the reversal include: (1) feminist movement, which has not only brought people's attention to gender equality, helped create an environment and more opportunities for women to receive higher education, but also laid a foundation for the formulation and enforcement of laws to promote gender equality; (2) legal framework, which ensures the implementation of gender equality policies in reality and guarantees women's right to education; (3) economic development, which helps to reduce families' economic burden and increase women's opportunities to receive higher education; (4) higher education expansion, which makes higher education accessible to women and leads to tremendous increase of women students; and (5) demographic factors, which allows women equal education resources as men. It is worth mentioning that these factors do not work separately. Instead, the gender gap reversal in higher education has been the combined result of all of these factors at play.

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GLOBAL HEALTH DIPLOMACY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOFT POWER IN BRAZIL-CHINA RELATIONS

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Abstract

As a result of significant economic growth, driven by increased international trade and the densification of urban populations – leading to a faster global transmission of diseases – health has been a top priority in global governance in recent decades. The coordination between national public policies and international cooperation efforts to address public health challenges has become crucial and acknowledged by the majority of the states in the international system (Ibanez et. al., 2022 Ibanez, 2020). This acknowledgment – together with the awareness of the “globalization of disease” (Fidler, 2004) – conduces to the use of Global Health Diplomacy (GHD) as an instrument of foreign policy and soft power. Due to its ever-growing role in the international arena, China has made efforts to play a more relevant role in health governance, especially in the Global South. In turn, as Brazil has a long tradition and experience in GHD, and being both Brazil and China countries that are commercial partners and integrate the BRICS, it is quite relevant to understand the evolution of their relationship in the sphere of GHD and governance across time. In this paper, by means of a literature review of scientific papers relevant in the field, we use a perspective based on



bilateralism to i) outline both China's and Brazil's positioning towards health diplomacy between 2013 and 2023, and ii) analyse their articulation in this realm within the context of the BRICS. The evolution of such relationship with health diplomacy at the core has been turbulent depending on political leaderships and their respective political programs; however, this study enables us to identify the challenges and point out best practices and potential reinforcing partnerships for the achievement of better health for all and sustainable development.

Keywords

Global Health Governance, Health Diplomacy, China-Brazil Relationship, BRICS.

Resumo

Em resultado de um crescimento económico significativo, impulsionado pelo aumento do comércio internacional e pela densificação das populações urbanas – que conduz a uma transmissão mais rápida de doenças à escala global – a saúde tem sido uma das principais prioridades da governança mundial nas últimas décadas. A coordenação entre as políticas públicas nacionais e os esforços de cooperação internacional para enfrentar os desafios da saúde pública tornou-se crucial e reconhecida pela maioria dos Estados do sistema internacional (Ibanez et. al., 2022 Ibanez, 2020;). Este reconhecimento – combinado com a consciência da “globalização da doença” (Fidler, 2004) – conduz à utilização da Diplomacia da Saúde Global como um instrumento de política externa e de soft power. Devido ao seu papel cada vez maior na arena internacional, a China tem feito esforços para desempenhar um papel mais relevante na governança global da saúde, especialmente no Sul Global. Por sua vez, como o Brasil tem uma longa tradição e experiência em Diplomacia da Saúde Global, e sendo tanto o Brasil como a China países parceiros comerciais e integrantes dos BRICS, é bastante relevante compreender a evolução da sua relação nessa esfera e na esfera da governança ao longo do tempo. Neste artigo, por meio de uma revisão de literatura de artigos científicos relevantes na área, utilizamos uma perspectiva baseada no bilateralismo para i) delinear o posicionamento da China e do Brasil em relação à diplomacia da saúde entre 2013 e 2023, e ii) analisar sua articulação nesse âmbito no contexto dos BRICS. A evolução dessa relação, com a diplomacia da saúde no centro, tem sido turbulenta, dependendo das lideranças políticas e dos seus respetivos programas políticos; no entanto, este estudo permite-nos identificar os desafios e apontar as melhores práticas e potenciais parcerias de reforço para a consecução de uma melhor saúde para todos e do desenvolvimento sustentável.

Palavras-chave

Governança Global da Saúde, Diplomacia da Saúde, Relação China-Brasil, BRICS.

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GLOBAL HEALTH DIPLOMACY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SOFT POWER IN BRAZIL-CHINA RELATIONS

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Introduction

Health diplomacy has emerged as critical component of international relations, especially in the context of globalization and increasing interdependence among nations. The rapid economic growth and urbanization observed globally have facilitated the swift transmission of diseases across borders, making health a priority in global governance (Fidler, 1997; Fidler, 2004; Almeida, 2020). The coordination between national public policies and international cooperation is essential to address public health challenges effectively. This coordination is widely acknowledged by the majority of states within the international system (Ibanez et al., 2022; Ibanez, 2020; Lee and Gomez, 2011).

Global health diplomacy has been defined in the literature in various fields of knowledge according to different historical and geographic perceptions as well. For the purpose of this paper, we assume the definition given in Global Health Centre Report (2021:39): "Global health diplomacy refers to the multi-level and multi-actor negotiation processes that shape and manage the global policy environment for health, in health and non-health fora". In this sense, GHD integrates the disciplines of public health, international affairs, management, law, and economics, among others, to address global health issues and improve relations among countries (Katz et al., 2011). Moreover, the increasing globalization of diseases – illustrated by outbreaks such as SARS, Ebola, and COVID-19 – has underscored the importance of robust international health policies (Fidler, 2004). Besides globalization itself, also the expansion of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in international health, the globalization of science and pharmaceutical research, as well as the use of militarized languages of biosecurity impact global health (Adams, Novotny and Leslie, 2008).

In sequence, due to several factors – namely their economic relevance and wide know-how in health governance and diplomacy – Brazil and China are two key players in international order whose relationship is important to be understood. Brazil and China have established a robust partnership over the years, marked by significant trade relations and cooperation in various sectors (Herrero & Tussie, 2015). Both nations are



integral members of the BRICS group, which emphasizes collaboration among emerging economies from the Global South. The partnership between Brazil and China extends into the realm of health diplomacy, which serve as an instrument of soft power and foreign policy (Herrero & Tussie, 2015). Understanding the evolution of their relationship in GHD is crucial, given their influential roles in the Global South. The diplomatic relationship between Brazil and China has seen various phases, with an increasing focus on cooperation in science and technology, public health, and sustainable development. This relationship is further strengthened by the creation of new institutional framework to reform global governance structures and promote a multipolar world order, namely financing institutions, such as the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (Santiago & Rodrigues, 2023).

Indeed, health diplomacy can be perceived as a tool of soft power as previously stated. Soft power, a concept popularized by Joseph Nye (1990, 2004, 2008), refers to the ability of a country to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or payment. Health diplomacy is then a vital tool of soft power, enabling nations to foster goodwill, build alliances, and promote their values and interests on the global stage. As defined by Fidler (2001), GHD encompasses the policymaking processes through which both state and non-state actors address global health challenges, extending their efforts beyond the health sector. Similarly, Kickbusch et al., in a 2021 report by the Global Health Centre, described GHD as involving “multi-level and multi-actor negotiation processes that shape and manage the global policy environment for health, in health and non-health fora” (Global Health Centre, 2021:39). This perspective underscores the complex and collaborative nature of GHD, highlighting its role in coordinating a wide array of stakeholders and forums to effectively tackle health issues on a global scale.

Since the end of World War II, GHD has become an essential part of foreign policy agendas. It now plays a pivotal role in discussions related to national security, international trade, and diplomatic relations (Almeida, 2020; Ruckert et. al., 2022; Almeida, 2010). This development highlights the growing recognition that global health issues are closely linked to broader geopolitical and economic stability. This connection became particularly evident in the 1980s and 1990s during the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in the developing world (Mahani et. al., 2018). The widespread impact of such health crises led to the integration of health concerns into foreign policy and international diplomacy, establishing GHD as a distinct field (Labonté and Gagnon, 2010). As a result, nations have increasingly recognized the importance of health diplomacy not only for safeguarding their own citizens, but also for enhancing global health security and fostering international goodwill (Gauttam et. al., 2020). The role of GHD, especially through the World Health Organization (WHO), in uniting countries towards the common goal of improving global health, has been consistently demonstrated during public health crises, most recently during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kickbusch and Liu, 2022). This ongoing emphasis underscores the crucial function of GHD in addressing contemporary health challenges and promoting international cooperation for a healthier world.

By using a perspective based on their bilateral relations, we can better understand the collaborative efforts and joint initiatives undertaken by Brazil and China in the fields of health diplomacy, by assessing how bilateral cooperation enhances their soft power and



contributes to global health governance. This approach allows us to identify the challenges and opportunities in their relationship and explore the potential for reinforcing partnerships to achieve better health outcomes.

Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach, using a literature review to explore the role of health diplomacy in the context of Brazil-China relations within the BRICS framework from 2013 to 2023. The research is grounded in bilateralism, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts and joint initiatives between Brazil and China to address global health and scientific challenges. The literature review involved a comprehensive set of relevant scientific literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, reports from international organizations and book chapters focusing on GHD and international, bilateral relations between Brazil and China. The literature search was conducted using several academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus and Google Scholar, filtered by some criteria such as articles either in English, Spanish or Portuguese, that after the abstract reading revealed to be relevant in one or more of the key topics of the study (global health governance, global health diplomacy, soft power, BRICS, China-Brazil cooperation, Chinese foreign policy, Brazilian foreign policy). Some grey literature, namely new in media, was used to complement the scientific literature. The resulting analysis that composes this paper is grounded in a total of 76 references and aims to make a contribution to the *status quo* of health diplomacy as an instrument of soft power in Brazil-China Relations.

Brazil's Positioning Towards Health Diplomacy (2013-2023)

Brazil has a long-standing tradition in health diplomacy, particularly through its involvement with international health organizations and its leadership in global health initiatives (Ibanez et. al., 2022). The country's Unified Health System (*Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS*) has been recognized as a model for public health, emphasizing universal health coverage and equitable access to healthcare services (Paim et al., 2011). Indeed, Brazil was the first developing nation to successfully integrate trade and public health by effectively challenging and renegotiating the barriers to medicine access within the framework of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). This initiative culminated in Brazil offering free antiretroviral treatment to HIV/AIDS patients, leading to a significant decrease in AIDS-related morbidity and mortality (Mahani et. al., 2018). In the international health arena, Brazil has been particularly proactive, pioneering several health measures that have been adopted by other health systems and endorsed by the WHO. Prominent examples include the provision of universal primary care services, the strategic training and deployment of healthcare personnel, and efforts to address the social determinants of health (Almeida et al., 2023), as well as the role of Brazil in the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) that offers valuable insights into the country's efforts to foster global health cooperation and achieve broader foreign policy goals (Lee, Chagas and Novotny, 2010). Indeed, in 1999, the Inter-Ministerial National Commission on the Control of Tobacco Use



was established. Supported by top government officials, this commission served as an advisory group to shape the government's stance on FCTC negotiations. Notably, the commission included representatives from nine ministries, such as Inland Revenue, Trade and Development, and Agriculture. By involving all relevant stakeholders (not only direct health-related ones), the commission ensured that tobacco control was integrated into consistent policies across the entire government, rather than being solely a concern of the health ministry (Lee, Chagas and Novotny, 2010).

During the 2013-2023 period, Brazil's health policies continued to prioritize these principles, even as the country faced economic and political challenges. Brazil has challenged the traditional model of aid, development assistance, and the typical donor-recipient relationships by promoting 'South-South' or 'horizontal cooperation'. This alternative framework emphasizes reciprocal learning and exchange between countries. Unlike the conventional model, where external health aid packages are imposed, this demand-driven approach enables recipient countries to request health aid tailored to their specific needs (Mahani et al., 2018; Almeida et al., 2010). By fostering this model of cooperation, Brazil not only enhances the effectiveness of health interventions, but also empowers partner countries to take an active role in their own health development, thereby promoting sustainable and contextually relevant health solutions.

The country has been a vocal advocate for health equity and the right to health in international forums. Its health policies have emphasized the importance of social determinants of health and the need for comprehensive primary healthcare (Buss and Ferreira, 2010; Almeida, 2023). The country's commitment to these principles has been evident in its active participation in global health initiatives and its efforts to strengthen health systems in developing countries. Going back to the early 2000s, to further contextualize our current period of analysis, by that time diplomacy and health in Brazil were highly connected, with a shift in the discussion on global health towards the priorities of foreign policy. The Lula's government emphasized multilateralism and integration with developing and emerging countries – particularly highlighted through the coordination with BRICS and South America (Ibanez et al., 2022) – aiming for a policy of international cooperation for development. In this context, within the health sector, there was a consolidation of a universalist discourse, according to Pinheiro (2020), with Brazil's participation in the creation of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative (FPGH), which aimed to position health as an essential and strategic issue on the foreign policy agenda. Furthermore, there was a significant regional presence with the establishment of the South American Health Council within the Union of South American Nations (UNASUL) in 2008. This council sought to collectively combat the H1N1 and dengue epidemics, which were intensifying at the time, and to plan a response to the potential arrival of Ebola on the continent (Ibanez et. al., 2022). During Dilma's government, there was a continuation of this stance of participation in international initiatives (Lima, 2017). However, political instability and economic constraints have sometimes hindered the continuity and expansion of these initiatives. From 2019 until 2022, Jair Bolsonaro's tenure represented a significant shift in Brazil's health diplomacy approach. His administration's policies were marked by a strong nationalist stance and conservative ideology, which often resulted in a reduced emphasis on international health cooperation. Bolsonaro's government faced intense criticism for its management of the



COVID-19 pandemic, both within Brazil and from the global community (Trivellato and Ventura, 2022; Vieira de Jesus, 2022). This criticism, combined with Bolsonaro's skepticism towards multilateral organizations like the WHO, led to a decline in proactive health diplomacy. Effectively, Jair Bolsonaro's administration exhibited a strong anti-globalist stance, marked by a rejection of liberal multilateral institutions and international treaties (Ventura and Bueno, 2021). Bolsonaro threatened to exit key agreements such as the Paris Climate Accords and the WHO and actually withdrew from the UN Global Compact for Migration. His government distanced itself from the Global South and showed indifference towards South-South cooperation forums like BRICS (Trivellato and Ventura, 2022). Overall, engagement in health diplomacy was diminished (Buss and Tobar, 2020). Not only because of Brazil or China – but as a whole group – the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the BRICS' internal divisions and shortcomings in their collective policymaking and implementation, highlighting their constrained influence within the WHO (Moore, 2022).

With his return to the presidency in 2023, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva had to deal with many issues domestically. As far as health is concerned, rebuilding the SUS after significant setbacks stands as a top priority and a monumental challenge for Lula's administration. Upon taking office, President Lula was faced with a dire situation marked by severe deterioration in health indicators (Ortega and Pele, 2023). Various stakeholders have identified the key challenges for his administration, which include: (i) outlining a progressive plan to increase public funding for SUS from the current 4% to 6%-7% of the GDP, while also improving the efficiency of resource allocation; (ii) addressing regional health disparities by implementing new governance mechanisms; (iii) reestablishing and enhancing primary health care to function as a comprehensive, effective, community-based model within the regionalized SUS network; (iv) managing health market regulations to prevent costly treatments from being accessed through the judicial system; (v) restructuring the training, placement, and provision of health workers, introducing policies to prevent precarious working conditions, and addressing the shortage and uneven distribution of doctors; (vi) developing a national health data policy to support the management and digital transformation of SUS (Ortega and Pele, 2023).

Besides the domestic health issues, Lula also has made revitalizing Brazil's health diplomacy a key priority. Lula's administration seeks to reassert Brazil's leadership role in global health initiatives, focusing on principles of South-South cooperation and solidarity (Ventura, 2023). Efforts are being made to rebuild relationships with international health organizations and enhance Brazil's participation in global health forums. In subsequent sub-sections of this paper, we focus on the health cooperation between Brazil and China under their respective health diplomacy approach.

China's Positioning Towards Health Diplomacy (2013-2023)

China's health policies have evolved significantly over the past decade, reflecting its growing influence in global affairs. The country has made substantial investments in health infrastructure and scientific research, aiming to enhance its soft power through health diplomacy (Hu et. al., 2017). China's Health Silk Road initiative, part of the larger

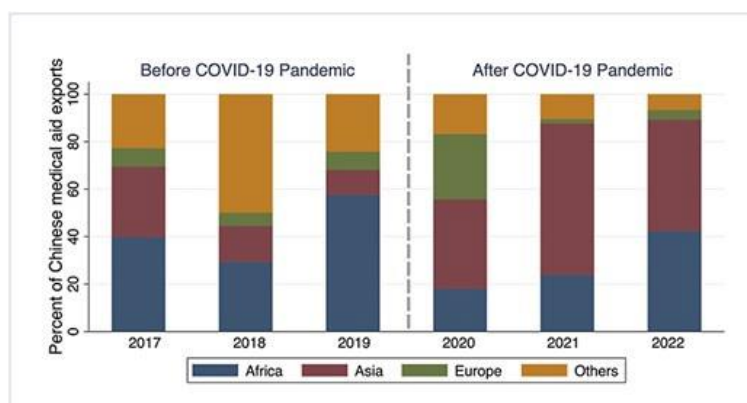


Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), exemplifies its commitment to improving global health through international cooperation (Cao, 2020).

Domestically, China's health policies have focused on expanding healthcare access, improving healthcare quality, and enhancing the country's capacity to respond to public health emergencies (Meng et al., 2019). The country has also emphasized the importance of innovation and technological advancement in its health strategies, investing heavily in research and development, also as part of its "Made in China 2025" strategic plan. Abroad, indeed, China's Health Silk Road has been a cornerstone of its health diplomacy strategy, involving projects to build hospitals, provide medical training, and supply medical equipment to countries along the BRI routes (Yuan, 2023; Chow-Bing, 2020). This initiative aims to enhance healthcare infrastructure and improve health outcomes in partner countries, while also strengthening China's influence in these regions (Gauttam et al., 2020; Shajalal et al., 2017), a factor which is sometimes associated to the conception of "aid with strings attached" (Tritto et al., 2024) or "old wines in new bottles" (Alden, 2006) when compared with traditional donors' aid. This strategy offers several potential benefits for China. It may facilitate access to Africa's rich natural resources, which are vital for China's expanding economy, and it fosters a sense of gratitude and dependence towards China. Indeed, by enhancing healthcare infrastructure and addressing public health challenges, China can generate goodwill and create a sense of obligation among the recipient nations, both economically and politically (Yuan, 2023).

With or without strings attached, the fact is that the Chinese government has been proactively engaging in health diplomacy, particularly with developing countries and notably with the African continent, as part of its wider South-South cooperation strategy. This commitment was evident, not only before, but also during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Killeen et. al., 2018; Cabestan, 2022). However, as illustrated in figure 1, the high volume of Chinese medical aid exports post-COVID-19 was primarily directed towards Asian countries. This shift is seen by many scholars as part of China's "neighbors' diplomacy" strategy, aiming to solidify relationships and enhance influence within the Asian region (Guo et. al., 2024; Aria et. al., 2023).

Figure 1: Distribution of Chinese medical aid exports across regions by quarter from January 2017 to September 2022, measured by the amount in current US\$



Source: Guo et al., 2024



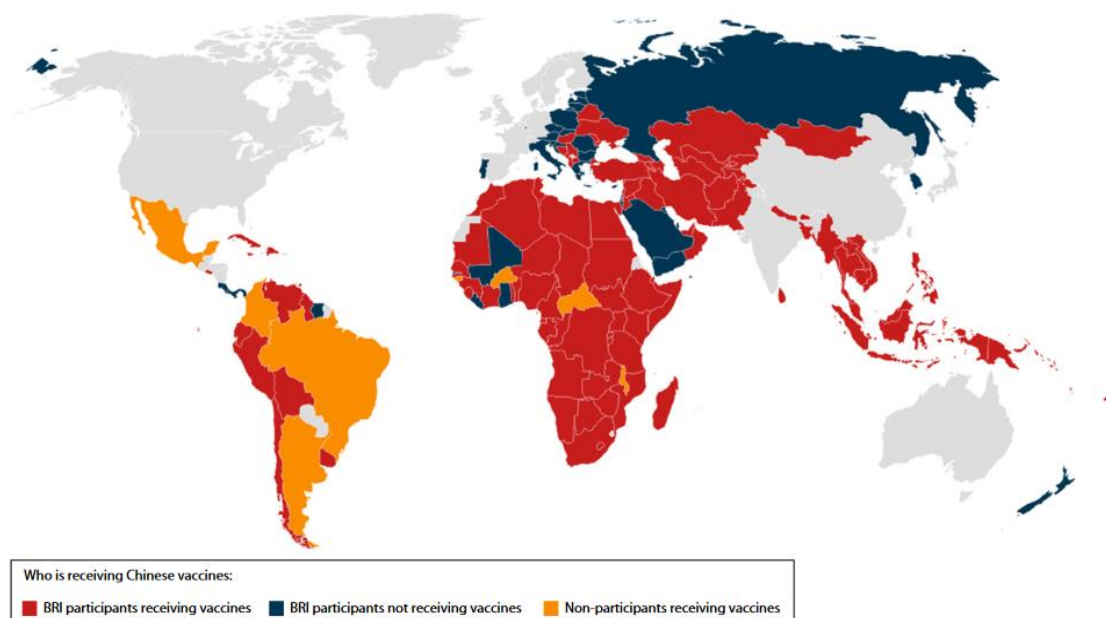
Through its multifaceted engagements, China's health diplomacy highlights the core principles of South-South cooperation, focusing on mutual benefit, solidarity, and shared developmental goals. Countries classified as 'emerging' or 'non-traditional' donors, which have only recently increased their contributions to development finance, are reshaping and expanding the boundaries of conventional health aid practices (McDade and Mao, 2020). This strategic approach fosters the creation of a more interconnected and cooperative global community, where developing nations support each other in tackling common challenges and achieving sustainable development in a more "horizontal" manner. This stands in contrast to the traditional "vertical" model of cooperation seen in North-South international aid (Almeida, 2010). Such horizontal cooperation not only emphasizes development assistance but also promotes equitable partnerships and shared growth.

In the sequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, China was said to be using what we know as "mask diplomacy" and "vaccine diplomacy" as tools of soft power, to provide an image of responsible power, ensuring equitable vaccine distribution, and fostering strategic partnerships. Partly to mitigate negative perceptions following the initial outbreak in Wuhan, China aimed to shift its image from a source of the virus to a global health leader (Wu & Gelineau, 2021; Lee 2023). China's COVID-19 aid during the first wave of the pandemic – the phase of mask diplomacy – was largely reactionary and driven by recipient countries' needs, reflecting traditional norms of non-interference rather than a coherent strategic plan. The fragmented nature of aid implementation highlights the challenges China faces in leveraging foreign aid for strategic purposes (Sun and Yu, 2023).

As for vaccine diplomacy, China began with vaccine trials in Brazil in July 2020, expanding to donations and sales across Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Lee, 2023). In early 2021, China appeared to gain an advantage with its swift delivery of medical masks and vaccines, as Western nations lagged behind (Nolte 2023; De Luce, 2021); indeed, early vaccine deliveries created a perception of Chinese diplomatic success compared to the U.S. and Europe (von der Burchard, 2021; Stuenkel, 2020). By March 2021, China had provided millions of vaccine doses to 69 countries and exported to 28 others (Huang, 2021; Lee 2023), as per figure 2. By June 2021, China had participated in COVAX to support global vaccine distribution (MFA, 2021; Huang, 2021; Kobierecka, 2022).



Figure 2: The Belt and Road Initiative and China's Vaccine Diplomacy



Source: Huang, 2021

The effectiveness of China's efforts in improving its international standing remains debated, with mixed perceptions from global audiences (Silver et al. 2023; Kobierecka, 2022; Silver et al., 2020). As for the case of Latin America, and Brazil in particular, the pandemic did not dramatically alter the economic and geopolitical landscape. China remained a major economic partner, but its vaccine diplomacy did not lead to substantial geopolitical shifts (Nolte, 2023). China's influence in Latin America was constrained by the effective vaccine diplomacy of the U.S. and Europe in the latter half of 2021 (Nolte, 2023).

All in all, either mask and vaccine diplomacy are part of China's health diplomacy that, besides the real effects in the global health landscape, serve as a tool for image repairing and nation branding (Lee, 2023). In next section, the relation between Brazil and China in terms of health cooperation will be further discussed within the BRICS context.

Brazil-China Articulation in Health and Science Diplomacies within BRICS

Crises in general, and health crises in particular, usually prompted discussions about open science and innovation, emphasizing the need for widespread experimentation and international collaboration (Chesbrough, 2020; Roehrl et al., 2020). We analysed the case of Brazil and China's health cooperation in the contemporary period.

Brazil and China's health cooperation is rooted in the complementary strengths each country brings to the partnership: essentially, China provides advanced technological and medical resources, including manufacturing capabilities for medical equipment and



vaccines; while Brazil, on the other hand, contributes with its deep expertise in global health, particularly in managing infectious diseases, thanks to its well-established health institutions, such as the *Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz)* (Santiago and Rodrigues, 2023).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China's ability to rapidly produce and supply medical equipment and vaccines was crucial for Brazil. This included the provision of Sinovac's CoronaVac vaccine, which played a significant role in Brazil's vaccination campaign (Santiago and Rodrigues, 2023). The partnership exemplifies how technological and resource-sharing can enhance public health responses in times of crisis. Despite political tensions during Bolsonaro's administration, the health cooperation between Brazil and China remained strong, mainly deriving from local authorities' efforts. The steady flow of medical supplies from China to Brazil during the pandemic underscores the strategic importance of maintaining robust health partnerships irrespective of political changes (McBride et al., 2023). However, although Brazil has historically played a leading role in multilateral forums advocating for the health interests of the Global South (Ventura et al., 2020), as well as promoted innovative forms of health cooperation (Almeida et al., 2010), its stance from the pandemic period until very recently changed:

Brazil stands out from almost all other countries for the lack of legislation seeking to regulate and give an effective response to Covid-19 on the federal level. In fact, there has been a systematic obstruction from the Executive branch of government to contain the pandemic, coming from other actors, such as the National Congress and local governments (Ventura and Martins, 2020, p. 68).

Here, paradiplomacy plays a crucial role in finding federal and local alternatives. The shift in relationship with China occurred during Bolsonaro's administration led to tensions and difficulties, especially in a pandemic context as China being the foremost producer of masks and health equipment (Hoirisch, 2020) and also Brazil's largest trading partner (Alvarenga et al., 2020). Despite these strains, the already referred notable paradiplomatic efforts between Brazilian regional entities, particularly in the Northeast, and their Chinese counterparts had a mitigating effect. For instance, the province of Sichuan donated health supplies to Pernambuco (Alvarenga et al., 2020; Pozatti and Farias, 2022). The current research agenda on international cooperation needs to broaden its scope to include these emerging forms of collaboration and their effects on national and multilateral institutions and alliances. This is particularly pertinent given that in March 2021, Fiocruz obtained definitive approval from the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) for the COVID-19 Fiocruz vaccine, which is produced using Chinese Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) (Valverde, 2021). The large-scale production of this vaccine influenced the trajectory of the pandemic in Brazil and across Latin America (Xing et al., 2023), provided that Brazil enhances its performance in the region and continues Fiocruz's strong tradition of international cooperation (Pozatti and Farias, 2022).

Another example which is representative of the paradiplomacy efforts and also of a return to previous stage of relations between Brazil and China is the signature of a Memorandum



of Understanding between Fiocruz and CAS-TWAS Center of Excellence for Emerging Infectious Diseases (CEEID), to establish the Sino-Brazilian Center for Research and Prevention of Infectious Diseases (IDRPC). The agreement aims to strengthen cooperation in health-related science and technology, particularly in preventing and controlling pandemics and epidemics such as Covid-19, influenza, Zika, dengue, yellow fever, and tuberculosis, among others. This initiative includes developing global public health goods like rapid diagnostic tests, therapies, vaccines, and medications. The IDRPC will have headquarters in both Beijing, at the Institute of Microbiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), and at the Fiocruz campus in Manguinhos, Rio de Janeiro. The Rio facilities are expected to be completed by the end of 2024 and operational by 2025 (Azevedo, 2023/ Agência Notícias Fiocruz).

The partnership was initiated before the pandemic but faced delays due to health emergencies and political factors. However, with President Lula's recent visit to China and the subsequent signing ceremony, the agreement has gained renewed momentum, highlighting the deepening health cooperation between Brazil and China. The signing ceremony emphasized the importance of this high-level and bilateral partnership, underscoring joint research efforts, exchange of expertise, and enhanced epidemiological surveillance capabilities.

The IDRPC will facilitate joint research projects, training programs at various levels, technology and material exchange, seminars, conferences, and collaborative efforts in tropical medicine. It represents a significant shift towards permanent scientific collaboration by establishing physical centers where Brazilian and Chinese researchers can work together extensively. This bilateral partnership aims to advance global health systems and reduce vulnerability to emerging health crises through sustained scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange (Pereira, 2023/ Exame).

Final Considerations

In this paper, we have explored the roles of health diplomacy as an instrument of soft power in the context of Brazil-China relations within the BRICS framework. The evolution of their relationship from 2013 to 2023 demonstrates the dynamic nature of health diplomacy in shaping international relations and addressing global health challenges. Health diplomacy has emerged as a crucial tool for enhancing soft power. Both Brazil and China have leveraged it to strengthen their global influence. Brazil's long-standing tradition in health diplomacy, exemplified by its universal health coverage model and proactive stance in international health forums, showcases its commitment to health equity, public health and cooperation. China's Health Silk Road initiative, as part of the BRI, underscores its strategic use of health diplomacy to enhance global health infrastructure and foster international goodwill.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the importance of GHD. Brazil and China's collaboration in vaccine development and distribution illustrated how health diplomacy could serve immediate public health needs while reinforcing diplomatic ties. China's mask and vaccine diplomacies, despite criticisms, managed to position it as a key player in global health leadership.



The BRICS platform provides an essential context for these collaborations, promoting collective action and mutual support among emerging economies. However, the BRICS management of the Covid-19 pandemic revealed divisions and limitations in their collective ability to formulate and act upon policies, with limited agency within the WHO (Moore, 2022). This paper examines BRICS' global health diplomacy also during the Covid-19 pandemic and finds that multiple dimensions of power are significant in global health leadership.

Despite the successes, the relationship between Brazil and China in health diplomacy faces challenges, including political shifts and economic constraints. The period under Jair Bolsonaro's administration, marked by a nationalist stance and reduced international cooperation, posed significant hurdles (Trivellato & Ventura, 2022). However, the resilience of regional and local efforts, as well as the renewed focus under President Lula's administration, highlights the potential for overcoming these challenges. A signal of this is the establishment of the Sino-Brazilian Center for Research and Prevention of Infectious Diseases which represents a significant milestone in China and Brazil's collaboration. This center symbolizes a shift towards sustained scientific cooperation, aiming to develop global public health goods and improve epidemiological surveillance capabilities. It is a testament to the potential of multilateral efforts in addressing global health challenges effectively.

Moving forward, Brazil and China must continue to prioritize health diplomacy within their foreign policy agendas. Strengthening their collaboration through multilateral platforms like BRICS can enhance their soft power and contribute to global health governance. By fostering innovative and equitable health partnerships, they can address transnational health issues more effectively and promote global sustainable development.

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THE ZONE OF PEACE AND COOPERATION OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC: A CONTRIBUTION TO MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

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Abstract

The Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS) was established in 1986 by the countries on the east coast of South America and the west coast of Africa to promote regional cooperation and the maintenance of peace and security in the region. The Gulf of Guinea (GoG) is a part of Brazil's strategic neighbourhood, but the threats that have plagued it in this century, particularly piracy and armed robbery at sea, jeopardise freedom of navigation and international trade in the region. The irregular activity of ZOPACAS since its inception has not allowed it to develop specific measures to combat insecurity in the GoG. However, there has been a shift in Brazil's foreign policy since January 2023 as the country seeks to increase its influence on the international arena, and particularly with countries in the Global South. In this sense, ZOPACAS appears to be an opportunity for Brazil to take on a growing role in the GoG. It is understood that the academic importance of this article is centred on the evolution of ZOPACAS since its launch and its potential to become an important regional organisation in the pursuit of maritime security in the GoG region. In these circumstances, this study aimed at analysing ZOPACAS as an initiative capable of positively influencing maritime security in the GoG region, using an interpretivist epistemological framework, inductive reasoning and a qualitative research strategy, with a case study as the research design. For that purpose, it was defined the following research question: how can the ZOPACAS contribute to improve maritime security in the region of the GoG? The findings show that ZOPACAS has indeed the potential to play an important role in combating the main maritime threats in the GoG.

Keywords

ZOPACAS, GoG region, Maritime security, East coast of South America, West coast of Africa.

Resumo

O lançamento da Zona de Paz e Cooperação do Atlântico Sul (ZOPACAS), em 1986, teve como propósito promover a cooperação regional e garantir a manutenção da paz e da segurança



dos países da costa oriental da América do Sul e da costa ocidental de África. O Golfo da Guiné (GdG) faz parte do “entorno estratégico” do Brasil, mas tem sido fustigado ao longo deste século por ameaças diversas, em particular a pirataria e o assalto armado no mar, que podem colocar em causa a liberdade de navegação e o comércio internacional naquela região. O funcionamento intermitente da ZOPACAS ao longo dos anos não permitiu o desenvolvimento concreto de medidas para combater a insegurança sentida no GdG. Todavia, tem-se assistido a uma mudança na política externa brasileira desde janeiro de 2023, procurando alcançar maior relevância internacional, em particular junto de países do Sul Global. Neste sentido, a ZOPACAS surge como uma oportunidade para o Brasil reassumir protagonismo crescente no GdG. Entende-se que a importância académica deste artigo se centra na evolução da ZOPACAS desde o seu lançamento e no seu potencial para se tornar uma organização regional importante na prossecução da segurança marítima na região do GdG. Nestas circunstâncias, este estudo teve como objetivo analisar a ZOPACAS como uma iniciativa capaz de influenciar positivamente a segurança marítima na região do GdG, utilizando um quadro epistemológico interpretativista, um raciocínio indutivo e uma estratégia de investigação qualitativa, tendo como desenho de investigação um estudo de caso. Para o efeito, foi definida a seguinte questão de investigação: como pode a ZOPACAS contribuir para melhorar a segurança marítima na região do GdG? Os resultados mostram que a ZOPACAS tem, de facto, potencial para desempenhar um papel importante no combate às principais ameaças marítimas no GdG.

Palavras-chave

ZOPACAS, Golfo da Guiné, Segurança marítima, Costa oriental da América do Sul, Costa ocidental de África.

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THE ZONE OF PEACE AND COOPERATION OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC: A CONTRIBUTION TO MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

ANTÓNIO GONÇALVES ALEXANDRE

1. Introduction

On 27 October 1986, on Brazil's initiative – with the support of Argentina –, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) approved resolution 41/11, which established ZOPACAS with the goal of strengthening international peace and security (Governo do Brasil, 2023a). In this resolution, the General Assembly called upon all South Atlantic states¹ to promote regional cooperation for social and economic development, the protection of the environment, the conservation of living resources and the peace and security of the whole region (UNGA, 1986). ZOPACAS has 24 member countries from South America and West Africa². Since then, and until 2023, it has held eight meetings between national officials from the signatory countries. However, only three of those meetings took place in the 21st century – in 2007, 2013 and 2023 (figure 1).

Figure 1 – Ministerial Meetings of Zopacas Member Countries

1988	1990	1994	1996	1998	2007	2013	2023
Rio de Janeiro	Abuja	Brasília	Sommerset West	Buenos Aires	Luanda	Montevideu	Mindelo

Source: Adapted from (Marinha do Brasil, 2023a)

Nevertheless, ZOPACAS has been addressed in Brazil's defence framework documents. It is set out in Brazil's National Defence Policy issued in 2020 that one of the pillars of

¹ The waters between Africa and South America (United Nations General Assembly, 1986, p. 21).

² South Africa, Angola, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Uruguay (Governo do Brasil, 2023a).

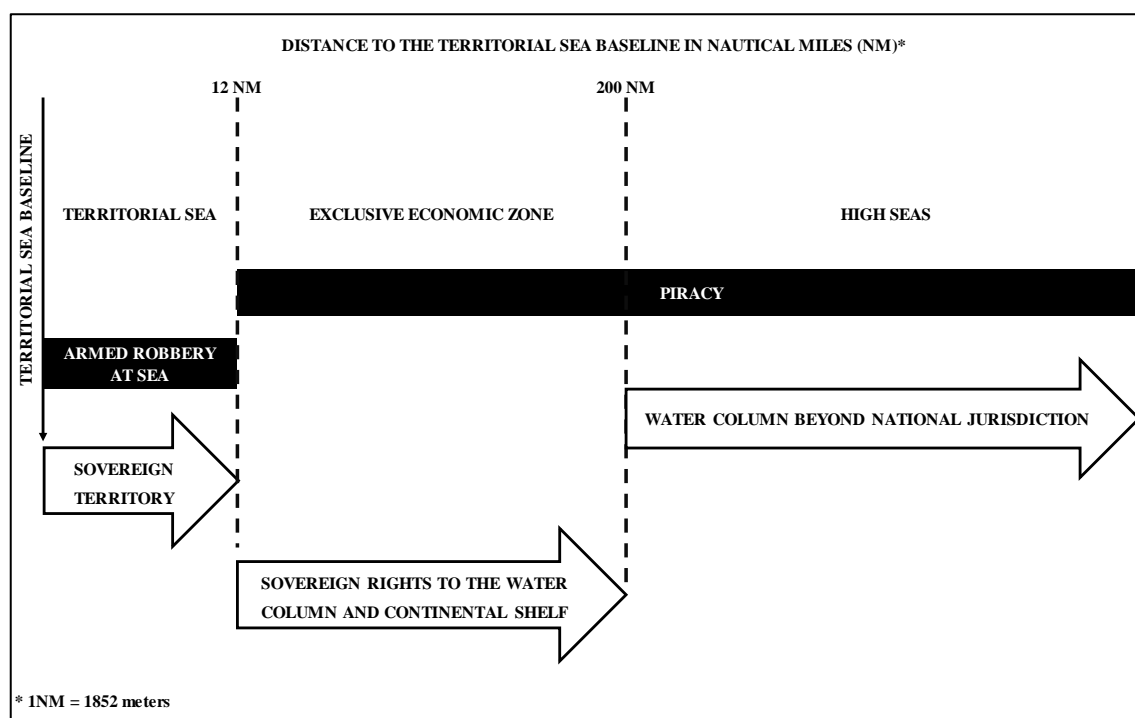


the national defence concept should be “to maintain the South Atlantic as a zone of peace and cooperation” (Governo do Brasil, 2020, p. 21). The Strategy also states that:

Strengthening the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic – Zopacas will help affirm Brazil as a relevant regional actor, increasing its influence over its strategic environment and reducing the possibility of military interference by extra-regional powers in the South Atlantic (Governo do Brasil, 2020, p. 33).

ZOPACAS’ irregular calendar of activities, especially during the 21st century, coincided with the surge of the two most relevant maritime security threats in the GoG³: piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships. According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO)⁴, the main difference between these threats is where the act is perpetrated. Figure 2 shows the areas – territorial sea, high seas and exclusive economic zone – where these crimes are carried out.

Figure 2 – Areas Where Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea Occur



Source: Adapted from (UNCLOS, 1982) and (IMO, 2009)

Armed robbery at sea against ships occurs in the sovereign territory of states, that is, in internal waters, in the territorial sea (up to 12 nautical miles) or in the archipelagic waters of an archipelagic state; piracy occurs on the high seas (beyond 200 nautical miles), but

³ The GoG includes the region’s 17 coastal countries, from Senegal in the north to Angola in the south, and the two island states of Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe (Council of the European Union, 2014).

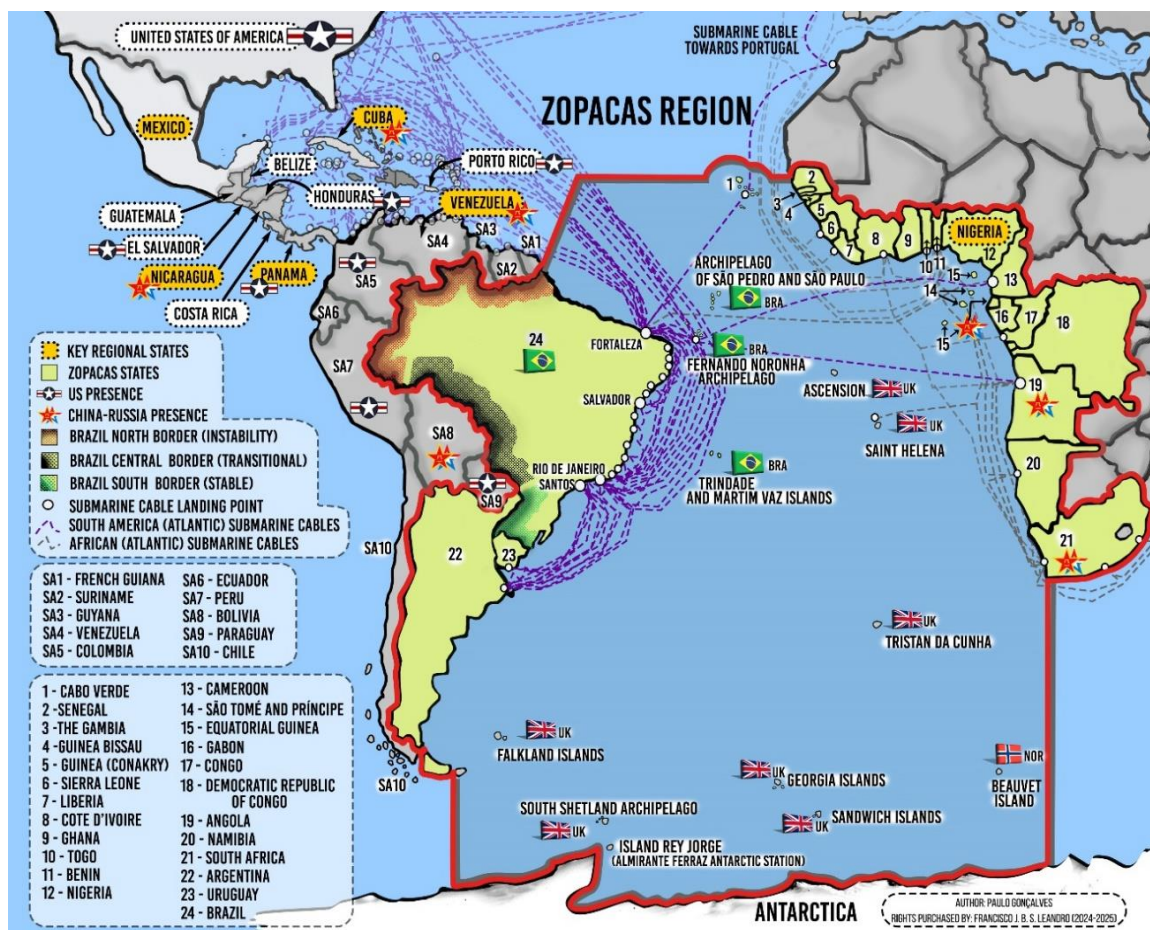
⁴ Specialised United Nations agency that deals exclusively with maritime issues.



this area can be extended to include the exclusive economic zones of coastal states (in practice, it concerns incidents that occur beyond 12 nautical miles).

However, one of Brazil's priorities must be to maintain the security of a large maritime space with the geo-economical and geo-strategic importance of the GoG, especially because it is a part of Brazil's strategic environment⁵, which matches the ZOPCAS region, as it can be seen in the figure 3.

Figure 3 – Zopacas Region



Source: Paulo Gonçalves (2024) (Rights granted by Francisco Leandro in written)

This is the motivation behind Brazil's efforts to revitalise ZOPACAS since President Lula da Silva was inaugurated on 1 January 2023. On 17 and 18 April 2023, after ten years during which the initiative was essentially ignored, ZOPACAS held its 8th ministerial meeting in Cape Verde, in Mindelo. The meeting was attended by sixteen of the 24 member states. In his opening speech, the Prime Minister of Cape Verde Ulisses Correia

⁵ This strategic environment consists of the priority areas of interest for Brazil: the South Atlantic and the countries of the west coast of Africa (Marinha do Brasil, 2023b).



e Silva highlighted the need to “strengthen our commitment to fight transnational organised crime – drug trafficking, human trafficking, piracy – illegal fishing, terrorism and cybercrime. This is vital for countries’ economic development, social peace and stability” (Governo de Cabo Verde, 2023). During the meeting, the Brazilian Foreign Minister said that “the time has come to unleash the potential of ZOPACAS” and proposed “three main lines of action [...]: cooperation, institutionalisation and engagement” (Governo do Brasil, 2023c).

The Action Plan of Mindelo (2023d) established at the ministerial meeting listed several actions that should be taken to address some of the main maritime security threats in the South Atlantic: “[...] deterring, preventing and combating IUU fishing [...]” (2023d, p. 7); and “[...] strengthening cooperation in the prevention and repression of piracy and armed robbery [at sea] against ships [...]” (2023d, p. 12).

Therefore, given the recent changes to Brazil’s foreign policy, which intends to be more proactive in the international arena, it is relevant to analyse ZOPACAS’ short-term potential to become a relevant initiative capable of implementing concrete lines of action that contribute to increase maritime security in the GoG.

The following research question was defined to guide the investigation: how can the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic contribute to improve maritime security in the region of the GoG?

This study used an interpretivist epistemological framework, inductive reasoning and a qualitative research strategy, with a case study as the research design. With regards to the temporal, geographical and content delimitations, the study covers the period from 2013-2023 (during which the two most recent ministerial meetings of ZOPACAS member countries took place), focuses on the GoG region, and analyses how ZOPACAS can contribute to the maritime security of that region.

The chapter is divided into three subchapters, an introduction and a conclusion section: the first subchapter discusses the most relevant frameworks for analysing maritime security; the second addresses the securitisation of piracy in the GoG and the role that ZOPACAS could play in the process; the third analyses the security practices that have been implemented in the GoG and identifies how ZOPACAS could contribute to further develop them. The findings show that ZOPACAS could play a relevant role in maintaining maritime security in the GoG.

2. Analysis

2.1 Maritime security: frameworks of analysis

2.1.1 The concept of maritime security

This subchapter addresses maritime security and describes the most common frameworks for analysing this concept – the semiotic approach, securitisation theory, security practice theory and the good order at sea approach. However, in this study, only the securitisation and security practice theories will be used to analyse the research question.



Maritime security is a relatively recent term⁶ – it emerged and was added to the conceptual edifice of international relations at the end of the 20th century – but it quickly became widespread, making it a complex, perhaps ambiguous, disputed and even somewhat contentious concept which can be interpreted through different approaches.

One approach which has been adopted by several theorists who have dedicated themselves to its study⁷ links maritime security to threats in the maritime domain – such as maritime disputes between states, maritime terrorism, piracy, trafficking of drugs, arms, people and illicit goods, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, environmental crimes, and maritime accidents and disasters. Their main argument, according to Bueger (2015), is that “maritime security should be defined as the absence of these threats” (p. 159). However, this approach has been criticised as insufficient, because “it does neither prioritize issues, nor provides clues of how these issues are interlinked, nor outlines of how these threats can be addressed”. It also creates enduring puzzles over which threats should be included” (p. 159). Bueger (2015) also refers to a different conceptualisation, which he calls ‘positive’, and which projects a desired “end state”, “in contrast to the ‘negative’ definition of maritime security”. Some proponents of this view see maritime security as a “good” or “stable” order at sea⁸ (p. 159).

Given the lack of international consensus on the concept of maritime security, which is reflected in the fact that it can have a multitude of meanings and is often motivated by political interests and different interpretations of the law, Bueger identified three frameworks of analysis that he used to explain the similarities and differences of the various approaches to this concept:

(1) ‘semiotics’ which intends to map different meanings by exploring the relations between maritime security and other concepts, (2) the ‘securitization’ framework which provides the means to understand how different threats are included in maritime security, and (3) security practice theory which aims at understanding what actions are undertaken in the name of maritime security (Bueger, 2015, p. 160).

2.1.1.1 The semiotic approach

One of the frameworks of analysis proposed by Bueger (2015) is the semiotic approach, which focuses on the relationships between concepts. This approach is based on the idea that the meaning of a term can be discovered by exploring how it relates to other terms. That is, concepts take on relational meaning through their similarities and differences.

⁶ According to Germond (2015), “Before the end of the Cold War it was rarely used and primarily in reference to sea control over maritime areas in the context of the superpower confrontation, that is to say in a naval context” (p. 138).

⁷ Such as Klein (2011), who believes that maritime security includes the protection of a territory’s infrastructure, economy, environment and society from illegal acts that occur at sea, or Feldt et al. (2013), for whom maritime security is “the combination of preventive and responsive measures to protect the maritime domain against threats and intentional unlawful acts” (p. 2).

⁸ Including Till (2009), who argues that “The importance of this ‘good order’, and the corresponding threats of disorder, are such that navies around the world are focusing much more on their role in helping to preserve it” (p. 286), and Kraska and Pedrozo (2013), who see maritime security as “a stable order of the oceans subject to the rule of law at sea” (p. 1).



To explore the concept of maritime security, Bueger (2015) created a matrix with four concepts – seapower⁹, marine safety, resilience and blue economy –, each pointing to a different dimension of maritime security (national security, the marine environment, human security and economic development). The semiotic approach implies that, to understand the meaning that the different actors ascribe to maritime security, one must analyse the relationships between the four concepts.

2.1.1.2 The securitisation approach

The second framework of analysis is securitisation, a theory proposed by Buzan et al. (1998), who defined it as “the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics” (p. 23). In a spectrum that represents the degree to which the state is involved in resolving public issues, the issues at one end of the spectrum are non-politicised, that is, they are not a part of public debate, and the state does not make decisions about them (it simply does not deal with them). Issues can also be politicised, which means that the government analyses them, makes decisions about them and allocates resources to address them. At the other end of the spectrum are securitised issues, that is, issues that are presented as existential threats which require emergency measures and justify actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure (Buzan et al., 1998).

2.1.1.3 The security practice theory approach

The third framework of analysis focuses on the concrete actions of the actors involved in maritime security. That is, what type of activities are involved when actors say they are producing maritime security? Bueger (2015) called it an “understanding of security politics in which practice, understood as organised patterns of doing and sayings, is the central unit of analysis” (p. 162). This approach is similar to the securitisation approach inasmuch as it deals with the implementation of measures that can result from the securitisation of issues that have been deemed existential. There is a broad range of practices involved in maritime security, more specifically in what has become known as maritime situational awareness¹⁰. Security practices include a wide range of tasks that are carried out at sea, such as maritime patrolling, area interdictions, searches of vessels

⁹ In the words of Mahan (1890), who coined this concept in the 19th century, “The history of Sea Power is largely, though by no means solely, a narrative of contests between nations, of mutual rivalries, of violence frequently culminating in war” (p. 1). However, the concept has evolved significantly during the 20th century. Till (1984) listed the sources and elements of a state’s sea power. The sources are: its maritime community; its resources; its style of government; and its geography. The elements are: merchant shipping; logistical bases, and; the military instrument (p. 13). In 2009, Till introduced a new approach to the concept, in which seapower (now a single word) was something that maritime powers possessed and that should be seen as both an input and an output. The input included navies, coastguards and the shipbuilding and ship repair industries. The output referred to the ability to influence the behaviour of others through their actions at sea (or from the sea) (p. 21).

¹⁰ The term is based on the fact that knowing exactly what activities are taking place at sea is vital for maritime security. It involves a broad range of surveillance and information-sharing capabilities, including intelligence-gathering systems – such as the Automatic Identification System – to monitor ship movements and active surveillance through naval patrolling, aerial reconnaissance, satellite imagery and coastal radar systems (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017, p. 1303).



when there are strong suspicions of illicit practices, naval exercises and law enforcement activities at sea – such as arrests, the transfer of suspects, prosecution, trials and convictions. Finally, this includes coordination activities at different levels (Bueger, 2015).

2.1.1.4 The good order at sea approach

The last framework of analysis focuses on good order at sea as a requirement for the maritime security of a given area. According to Vreÿ (2010) “The approach of good order at sea highlights the importance and utility of safe and secure access to what the oceans offer countries and the global community at large” (p. 122). For Till (2009), good order at sea consists of a series of attributes – which include the good order that must exist on land and the sea as a source of resources, as a means of transport and as an area of domination – as well as a broad range of threats. And the sea has such relevance that the responsibilities of the authorities and security organisations must include its protection.

2.2 The securitisation of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea

This subchapter analyses the ongoing process to securitise piracy in the GoG – the most relevant threat to maritime security in those waters in the 21st century – and explores the role that ZOPACAS may play in this process.

2.2.1 Securitisation theory

The discussion that took place after the Cold War regarding the content and priorities of security and defence policies led to the recognition that there was a need to analyse the process by which threats were constructed and issues were added to the security agenda (Bueger, 2015). During this period, new frameworks of analysis emerged in the field of security studies, which had, until then, focused almost exclusively on the military instrument and on states. Buzan et al. (1998) – the main proponents of the Copenhagen School¹¹ –, created a new framework to analyse the character of security dynamics across five different sectors: military, political, economic, environmental and societal. This framework rejected the traditional approach, in which security was only applicable to one of those sectors, and argued that security was a particular type of politics applicable to a wide range of issues. Furthermore, it provided a constructivist operational method of distinguishing the process of securitisation from politicisation to understand who could securitise what and under what conditions (Buzan et al., 1998).

¹¹ Mcsweeney (1996) described the publication of Barry Buzan’s book *People, States and Fears* in 1983 as marking the beginning of a new field of security studies. Not long after, in 1985, the establishment of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research in Copenhagen triggered a period of intense exploration of the problem of security, and several works on the subject were published that were sufficiently interrelated to be dubbed “the ‘Copenhagen school’ of security studies” (Mcsweeney, 1996, p. 81). The work produced by the Copenhagen School put innovative concepts and ideas into practice, including that of “securitisation” (Huysmans, 1998, p. 480).



Thus, the first step is to define what makes an event a security issue in international relations. Buzan et al. (1998, p. 21) argue that “The answer to what makes something an international security issue can be found in the traditional military-political understanding of security. In this context, security is about survival”. And that happens “when an issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designated referent object”. Therefore, “The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them” (p. 21). As for what distinguishes securitisation from politicisation, these theorists assert that “Securitization can [...] be seen as a more extreme version of politicization” (in the latter, the issue is part of public policy and requires a decision by the government and the allocation of resources (p. 23). But the fact that politicisation and securitisation are related does not imply that securitisation is always carried out by the state, as it can be done through other forums. According to Buzan et al. (1998, p. 24), “other social entities [may] raise an issue to the level of general consideration or even to the status of sanctioned urgency among themselves”. That is, when a securitising agent (which may or may not be the state) describes a threat as existential, removing the issue from the sphere of normal politics, we are dealing with a case of securitisation. Therefore, the most salient feature of securitisation is “a specific rhetorical structure (survival, priority of action “because if the problem is not dealt with now it will be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure”)” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). The key concepts of this theory are “the securitising actor” (who frames an issue as a threat through a securitising move), “the referent subject” (the entity posing the threat), “the referent object” (the entity being threatened), “the audience” (who must agree to confer an intersubjective status to the threat), “the context and the adoption of distinctive policies” (which may or may not be exceptional) (Balzacq et al., 2016, p. 495).

2.2.2 The process of securitising piracy in the GoG

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has always asserted that piracy (and armed robbery at sea against ships) was a regional issue that should be dealt with by coastal states and by the African regional organisations of the GoG. This would require an integrated response by states which involved the creation of laws and regulations to criminalise piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships; and the development of a regional framework for combating these threats, including information-sharing and coordination mechanisms in the region (UNSC, 2011). The following year, the UNSC reiterated that the GoG states had the primary responsibility to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships in the region (UNSC, 2012).

On the other hand, both threats have been on the IMO’s agenda since the 1980s. The IMO currently has 88 international non-governmental organisations with consultative member status, including major international maritime transport and trade associations and organisations¹² (IMO, 2019). It would be only natural that these important entities would influence the policies adopted by the IMO. However, almost all the resolutions issued by this organisation during the 21st century have either served to implement

¹² Such as the Baltic and International Maritime Council, the International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners or the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners, among many other organisations.



general codes of conduct or were only approved for the Horn of Africa region. Therefore, the IMO's contribution to the securitising of piracy in the GoG has fallen short of expectations, especially when compared to its decisive role in securitising piracy in the Horn of Africa.

On the other hand, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB)¹³ has been an important securitising agent in combating the threat of piracy in the GoG by highlighting the attacks that occur in those spaces and publishing reports on how the phenomenon is evolving.

Thus, it can be inferred that political decision makers do not see the problem of piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships in the GoG as an existential threat, and as such have not felt the need to implement any emergency measures, including the use of the military in operations to contain these threats.

2.2.3 The role of ZOPACAS

As shown in the previous subchapters, various securitising agents have endeavoured to securitise piracy in the GoG during the 21st century. What is still lacking is a discourse that clearly presents piracy in the region as an existential threat to important referent objects, including international shipping, freedom of navigation, the safety of the crews of merchant ships travelling through the region and all those who use the sea lawfully, especially fishers. According to Buzan et al. (1998):

A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization—this is a securitizing move, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such (p. 25).

In this sense, audiences have not been receptive to the arguments presented by securitising actors. Furthermore, ZOPACAS is not even included in the range of actors that have made the most significant efforts to present the problem of piracy in the GoG in the 21st century as more important than other issues, and as such should be given absolute priority. First, because in the first 23 years of this century there were only three ministerial meetings of its member states, which is itself an indication of their lack of commitment to the goals of this multinational partnership. On the other hand, the fact that piracy in the GoG poses a threat to the maritime security of the entire region was not addressed in all meetings. In fact, in the sixth ministerial summit of ZOPACAS member states – the first in the 21st century –, maritime security issues in the South Atlantic were barely mentioned, and the final declaration and action plan focused on the need to revitalise the organisation and called for a reform of the UNSC to “give more representation to developing countries” (Caldas, 2013, p. 14). Paragraph 108 of the declaration of the 7th ministerial meeting (UNGA, 2013) held in January 2013 in

¹³ A specialised division of the International Chamber of Commerce established in 1981 to act as a focal point in the fight against all types of maritime crime. One of the IMB's main areas of activity is the repression of piracy.



Montevideo, Uruguay, states that the ZOPACAS signatory states: “Express concern at the threat that piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea pose to the international navigation, maritime security and economic development of States in the region, and recognize the leadership role that the States in the Zone should play in this regard and the need for a regional coordination of efforts to counter activities of piracy and armed robbery at sea” (p. 15).

On the other hand, paragraph 110 of the declaration (2013) reads: “Urge international partners to assist States and organizations in the region to enhance their capabilities to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, including their capacity to conduct regional patrols, to establish and maintain joint coordination centres and joint information-sharing centres, and in the effective implementation of the regional strategy, once adopted, as mandated in United Nations Security Council resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012)” (p. 15).

However, after this, there was another long period without ministerial meetings, and it was only in 2021 that a new effort to revitalise the multinational partnership was spearheaded by Brazil at the United Nations (Governo do Brasil, 2023a). As a result of this initiative, the United Nations General Assembly issued resolution A/RES/75/312 on 5 August 2021, which highlighted the role of ZOPACAS as a forum of interaction, coordination and cooperation between its members and encouraged them to hold ministerial meetings every two years, as well as to create a follow-up mechanism (UNGA, 2021). At the 8th ministerial meeting held in Mindelo, Cape Verde, in April 2023, the member states “reaffirmed [their] determination [...] to prevent and eliminate piracy, in particular [...] in the states located on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, in compliance with international law” (Governo do Brasil, 2023b, p. 9). The action plan outlined at the Mindelo ministerial meeting includes a critical task related to maritime security cooperation, which consists of “strengthening cooperation efforts to prevent and repress piracy, armed robbery against ships and illegal maritime activities and to protect critical [maritime] infrastructure” (Governo do Brasil, 2023d, p. 12).

This shows that, for several years during this century, ZOPACAS played a limited role in the process of securitising piracy in the GoG region. However, the visible efforts to revitalise the organisation (led by Brazil) since 2021 – which led the organisation to hold its eighth ministerial meeting in Mindelo in 2023 – and Brazil’s offer to host the ninth meeting means that the organisation could be more committed to address the maritime security issues in the GoG and to contribute to the securitisation of piracy in that region.

2.1 Security practices in the Gulf of Guinea

This subchapter addresses the most relevant (maritime) security practices that have been implemented in the GoG in the 21st century, and explores ZOPACAS’ role as a maritime security community with the capacity to become a key agent in containing the threat of piracy in the region.



2.3.1 Security practice theory

Security practice theory definitely entered the international relations lexicon after the Cold War, as the most advanced theories about practice as a concept were developed in the early 1990s with the introduction of constructivist ideas. In general terms, this theory is based on the idea that an actor (in international relations) observes the practices of other actors regarding a particular social phenomenon, speaks and reflects (about them) and is able to participate in them. The aim is not only to provide an abstract explanation of social phenomena, but to understand how the world works through these practices (Bueger & Gadinger, 2014).

In addition, after the Cold War, Booth (1994) asserted that "Security is concerned with how people live" (p. 19). For Booth, both theory and practice were politically relevant. He argued that security studies could benefit from a variety of approaches, as long as the focus was on people and the problems they faced on a daily basis. In essence, in Booth's words, "thinking about thinking is important, but so is thinking about doing" (Booth, 1994, p. 19).

Therefore, security practice theory – now applied to the maritime domain – aims to understand "What kind of activities are conducted when actors say that they are doing maritime security" (Bueger, 2015, p. 162). This theory is also related to the framework of analysis discussed in the previous chapter – securitisation –, as some of the (emergency) measures that were implemented may stem from the process of securitising a specific threat to a given referent object in a concrete space. According to Bueger and Stockbruegger (2013, p. 102): "A successful securitization is organized by three elements: an issue which is accepted as threat, a collective whose survival is threatened by the issue, and a script for action followed by the actors of the collective or those representing it".

Considering the emphasis that is usually given to the representation of threats and the use of language, the theory has focused on understanding the processes by which issues are framed and accepted as threats and on the identity of the communities that are built when something is presented as a threat – both of which are related to the first two elements listed by Bueger and Stockbruegger. As a result, there is less (academic) interest in analysing issues related to the activities that actors engage in when following the scripts involved in successful securitisation processes (which constitute the third element presented by Bueger and Stockbruegger). However, these authors argue that the gap is being filled by academics who follow "practice theory". This approach "takes patterns of actions (practice) as the basic unit of analysis and sees questions of threat construction and identity formation (representation) as a secondary aspect of practice" (Bueger & Stockbruegger, 2013, p. 103). Briefly, securitisation deals with how security "is constructed" and security practice theory examines how security "is practised" (Krause & Williams, 2007, p. 137).



2.3.2 Security practices implemented in the GoG

Several actors have implemented maritime security practices in the GoG in this century. The role of the European Union (EU) – perhaps one of the most relevant regional organisations involved in this process in the region – has been particularly important. It has launched several programmes to develop the legislation, promote information sharing, provide training and support capability building. Some of the most relevant are the Critical Maritime Routes Monitoring, Support and Evaluation Mechanism, which provides information, monitoring, policy analysis and expert recommendations for projects covered by this general programme; the Gulf of Guinea Inter-Regional Network, which supports the creation and development of the regional information-sharing network known as the Yaoundé Architecture¹⁴; the Support to West Africa Integrated Maritime Security, which aims to support the implementation of the Integrated Maritime Strategy of The Economic Community of West African States and improve law enforcement in GoG; the Support Programme to the Maritime Security Strategy in Central Africa, which aims to strengthen the institutional, legal and operational framework for cross-border maritime cooperation in Central Africa; the Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa, which aims to enhance the regional contribution to the sustainable use and management of fisheries resources; and the West and Central Africa Port Security, which aims to improve port security in West and Central African countries (European External Action Service [EEAS], 2021). Other important programmes include the Coordinated Maritime Presences project implemented in January 2021, which aims to strengthen the coordination of the EU's activities in the GoG, and specifically to improve maritime situational awareness¹⁵ and cooperation at sea through the naval capabilities of EU member states in the region (EEAS, 2024).

On the other hand, several programmes to support maritime capability building have been implemented and are ongoing in the GoG, involving multilateral exercises and information sharing. Obangame Express¹⁶, an annual naval aviation exercise sponsored by the US Africa Command, is one of the most important. It is designed to improve regional cooperation in support of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and provide maritime domain awareness, information sharing between the maritime operations centres in the GoG and maritime interdiction, as well as increase capabilities to counter crimes at sea in order to strengthen safety and security in the GoG (Defense Visual Information Distribution Service, 2024). Grand African NEMO is another large-scale exercise conducted by the French navy since 2018 in the waters of the GoG. The fourth edition took place in 2022 and its aim was to share knowledge and improve the operational skills of participants in the fight against illegal fishing, piracy, maritime pollution, illegal

¹⁴ Intra-regional commitment to combat maritime crime in the GoG region signed by the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission during the Yaoundé Summit of Heads of State in June 2013 (European External Action Service, 2021).

¹⁵ Which consists of the fusion of data required to produce a robust depiction of maritime areas and provide relevant intelligence to identify trends in threats, as well as areas of concern for all those who use the sea lawfully (Alexandre, 2022).

¹⁶ The largest multinational maritime exercise in West and Central Africa (United States Africa Command, 2023). The 12th edition was held in 2023 and 19 of the 29 participating nations were also members of ZOPACAS.



trafficking and rescue at sea. About forty naval units and five aircraft were used in Grand African NEMO 2022 (Naval News, 2022). Seventeen of the 19 GoG countries and Brazil as a guest nation (a total of 18 ZOPACAS member countries) participated in the exercise. In October 2023, the French Navy organised Grand African NEMO 2023, under the auspices of the Yaoundé Architecture. Eighteen GoG nations and 10 partner nations participated in the exercise, which covered a vast area of the ocean from Senegal to Angola (Ministère des Armées, 2023). Once again, a significant number of ZOPACAS member states were present at this edition.

2.3.3 ZOPACAS' efforts to improve security practices in the GoG

As shown above, ZOPACAS has been mostly absent from the initiatives to strengthen security in those areas of the ocean developed by various actors – both from the GoG region and others. Most African states that are members of the organisation (such as Brazil) have been involved in different maritime security practices over the last years, both autonomously and integrated in partnerships, showing that these states are greatly concerned about security in the GoG. However, they have not done so through the organisation to which they belong – ZOPACAS –, which was set up to maintain the security of the entire South Atlantic (which includes the GoG).

This suggests that ZOPACAS member states are convinced that they will be better equipped to respond to the maritime security challenges posed by threats such as piracy and armed robbery at sea against ships if they do so outside the organisation. This has been largely due to the irregular manner in which ZOPACAS has been operating.

To identify what role ZOPACAS could actually play in terms of implementing maritime security practices in the GoG region, two decisive factors should be considered: the collective identity of its member states – which is linked to their colonial legacy; and a common ideal – the maintenance of peace in the vast maritime space (the South Atlantic) that unites them. However, this project will require an unequivocal leader. And, in this regard, Brazil – which spearheaded the creation of ZOPACAS – is a key player for the very survival of the organisation. Therefore, ZOPACAS must be revitalised, as Brazil will obtain (other) important benefits from it, such as the opportunity to affirm itself as a relevant regional actor and to increase its influence in a maritime space where extra-regional actors are increasingly present – China being the most recent (Edwards, 2021). The boost that President Lula da Silva has sought to lend the organisation during his current term of office reflects Brazil's renewed interest in revitalising ZOPACAS, and could even change the status quo by making it the main forum of cooperation in the field of security between the South American countries and West African coastal countries.

However, other member states such as South Africa and Argentina (which are fellow G20 members and have well-equipped armed forces) or Nigeria and Angola (African regional powers with large oil and natural gas reserves) and Uruguay (which makes a significant contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations) also play a relevant role (Edwards, 2021). Some of the maritime security practices that ZOPACAS could implement in the near future in the GoG region will not be possible without the support



of these states. Those practices include the commitment of military naval capabilities to surveillance missions in the waters of the GoG and the collection, fusion and sharing of maritime information, and supporting the law enforcement agencies of the coastal states of the GoG in building their maritime capabilities.

Conclusion

After years during which it was practically absent from Brazil's foreign policy, ZOPACAS has been given a much higher priority since early 2023 – influenced by President Lula da Silva –, and is poised to become a key initiative in strengthening Brazil's foreign policy by making the country a key actor in South Atlantic geopolitics.

The security of an area of the ocean can be studied using different frameworks of analysis that approach it from different perspectives: from semiotics (in which the meaning of a concept can be derived by exploring its relationships with other concepts) to good order at sea (which focuses on the importance of the sea as a source of resources, a means of transport and an area of domination), securitisation theories (in which threats to the security of a referent object are presented as existential and require exceptional measures by decision makers) and security practice theory (which focuses on the specific activities of the actors involved in the maritime security of a region).

This article examined ZOPACAS' role in increasing maritime security in the GoG using two of the analysis frameworks presented above: the securitisation of the threats in that region of the South Atlantic (piracy in particular); and the security practices that have been implemented there.

During most of the 21st century, ZOPACAS has not played an active role in the securitisation of piracy in the GoG. However, it could be considerably more involved in the short term, not only because the process to securitise piracy in the GoG is far from consolidated, but also due to Brazil's ongoing efforts to revitalise the organisation. But for this to happen, ZOPACAS must adopt a discourse that presents piracy as an existential threat to all those who use the GoG waters lawfully, as this will allow it to contribute to a securitising movement that brings the issue to the audiences that must accept it for it to become securitised.

Brazil also plays an instrumental role in the security practices that ZOPACAS could implement in the GoG, as most of the organisation's African member states, with a few exceptions (such as Nigeria and South Africa), generally lack naval capabilities to deploy in maritime security operations to combat the threats in the GoG. This means that not only must Brazil be able to deploy naval capabilities in the GoG more often (and over longer periods), it must persuade its African partners (especially Nigeria and South Africa) to create a multinational task force capable of addressing the security challenges in the region through maritime surveillance missions and the collection, fusion and sharing of relevant operational information and by supporting the law enforcement agencies of African coastal states in building their maritime capabilities.

The study's research question has thus been answered: ZOPACAS can play a relevant role in improving maritime security in the GoG by contributing to the securitisation of the



most important threat in those waters (piracy) and by adopting concrete security practices to address the challenges currently facing the region.

In terms of limitations to this research, some difficulty was identified in accessing information from certain ZOPACAS member states, particularly African states, in order to better understand their future commitment to the organisation.

Due to the fact that in this article only the securitisation and security practice theories were used to analyse the research question, it seems appropriate to propose approaching this issue using different frameworks of analysis, namely the building of good order at sea in the Gulf of Guinea region.

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BRAZILIAN TiVA UNDER US-CHINA STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND IMPACT ON EXPORT-RELATED JOBS (2000-2015)

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Abstract

Domestic discussion in Brazil about its most suitable commercial partners to promote economic development, through deeper and broader integration onto the Global Value Chain (GVC), is a subject with divergent political narratives. Therefore, empirical evidence is crucial to complement those political considerations with a comprehensive scientific approach on the available sets of optimal choices for Brazil under great power strategic competition between China and US. Even though increasing volumes of Trade-in-Value-Added (TiVA) can boost both exports and GDP growth rates, long-term effects on labor market conditions in Brazil are linked to variables such as industrial value-added, domestic production, vertical integration, technological transfers and capital-labor ratios (K/L). Within the period 2000-2015, Brazilian TiVA exchanges with China did grow at a much faster rate than those of US, thus becoming the world second largest partner for Brazil. Through this chapter, therefore, we will measure overall effects of TiVA exchanges with both China and US on Brazilian labor market. And will also determine which countries/industries might become the most optimal choice for Brazil in terms of TiVA.

Keywords

Trade in Value Added, GVC, Brazil, Great Power Politics, China, US.



Resumo

A discussão interna no Brasil sobre os seus parceiros comerciais mais adequados para promover o desenvolvimento económico, através de uma integração mais profunda e ampla na Cadeia Global de Valor (CGV), é um assunto com narrativas políticas divergentes. Por conseguinte, a evidência empírica é crucial para complementar estas considerações políticas com uma abordagem científica abrangente sobre os conjuntos disponíveis de escolhas ótimas para o Brasil sob competição estratégica de grandes potências entre a China e os EUA. Embora o volume crescente de comércio de valor acrescentado (TiVA) possa impulsionar as exportações e as taxas de crescimento do PIB, os efeitos a longo prazo nas condições do mercado de trabalho no Brasil estão ligados a variáveis como o valor acrescentado industrial, a produção interna, integração vertical, transferências tecnológicas e relações capital-trabalho (K/L). No período 2000-2015, as trocas brasileiras de TiVA com a China cresceram a um ritmo muito mais rápido do que as dos EUA, tornando-se assim o segundo maior parceiro mundial do Brasil. Neste capítulo, iremos, portanto, medir os efeitos globais das trocas de TiVA com a China e os EUA no mercado de trabalho brasileiro. Para além disso, este artigo também determinará quais os países/indústrias que se podem tornar a escolha ideal para o Brasil em termos de TiVA.

Palavras-chave

Comércio de valor acrescentado, Cadeia Global de Valor, Brasil, Política de Grandes Potências, China, EUA.

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BRAZILIAN TIVA UNDER US-CHINA STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND IMPACT ON EXPORT-RELATED JOBS (2000-2015)

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1. Introduction

This paper will estimate Brazilian TiVA exchanges with both US and China, within the GVC, to measure their overall impact on Brazilian export-related jobs. We aim at theorizing whether Brazil should further deepen its commercial ties with either China, US or both; under conditions of great power politics (Mearsheimer, 2001). Bilateral TiVA exchanges and their impact on export-related jobs, therefore, will be determinant to assess potential optimal choices for commercial policies in Brazil when considering the period 2000-2015.

Section 2 in this chapter will introduce a theoretical framework about optimal choices for Brazilian commercial policies under conditions of aforementioned great power politics or strategic competition between China and US. Several US scholars and politicians have noted that Chinese economic engagement with the Western Hemisphere has significant national security implications for their country (Ellis, 2005). It can be inferred, therefore, that US has strong incentives to undermine Chinese commercial ties in Latin America (including Brazil). However, an effective vertical integration with China has strengthened the fundamentals for industrial development and long-term economic growth in countries like Brazil, despite such "Chinese threat" to geostrategic interests of US. This creates a dilemma in peripheral countries that must choose between maximizing their own economic interests or those of US (Farrell & Newman, 2019; Vogelmann, 2020).

Section 3 will just introduce the data and related empirical evidence. Relevant variables, from export-related jobs to TiVA magnitudes (such as Foreign Value Added -FVA- and Indirect Value Added or DVX), will be estimated using standard input-output computation. Interpretation of those numbers, i.e. how export-related jobs are correlated to TiVA exchanges, will be shared in section 4. And a brief conclusion has also been drafted in section 5.



2. Theoretical framework of constraints for optimal choice in trade and commercial policies under great power politics between China and US

The political economy of optimal choices in foreign trade policies can be analyzed from two complementary perspectives. Academic discussion on how states interact within a given international order, from either realist or liberal theoretical approaches, can provide some basic understanding of policy making and strategic choices. This paper will assume that specific economic considerations based on rational choices might pose conflicts with hegemonic interests under conditions of great power politics between China and US.

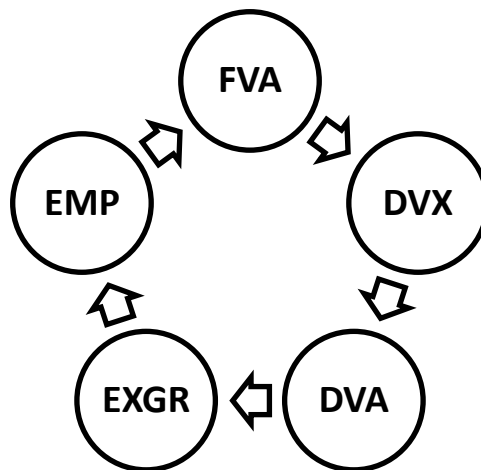
Both realists and liberals do attach importance to the influence of great powers over a given international order (Keohane & Nye, 1977). Even though realists have refused to rule out international cooperation as a feasible option, it would never take place if actual distribution of power is challenged (Grieco, 1990; Jervis, 1999; Mearsheimer, 2001; Snidal, 1991; Taliaferro, 2011). This is a reasonable assumption irrespective of recurrent discussions about underlying reasons and different dimensions related to strategic decision-making within countries (Buzan, 1995; Singer, 1961). Autonomy of a given country within the international system will depend on geographical position, relative power, resources endowment, foreign investments and technology transfers dependence, among other variables (Lee & Thompson, 2022; Krasner, 1978). Therefore, it can be deduced that not every country is free to pursue the materialization of its own optimal choices, given external pressure and influence exerted from a superpower such as US. In a nutshell, great powers can exert influence over other countries' choices, subordinating core interests of the latter to theirs (Beckley, 2018; Karen & William, 1994; Taliaferro, 2004).

From an economic perspective, however, agents are expected to make optimal choices based on rational considerations such as profit maximization. States are not an exception and, among other spheres of action, will seek to remain competitive within the GVC. The boom in international trade resulting from globalization has generated a gradual geographic fragmentation of production processes. The GVC is based on "trade in tasks" (Inomata, 2017; Xing & Detert, 2011; Xing, 2021). Since fragmentation of production favors a drastic reduction in overall costs, increasing competitiveness has contributed to greater trade volumes and economic growth rates (Baldwin & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2015, Feenstra, 1998; Kwok, 2018). Several authors have also established a direct relationship between domestic participation in the GVC and industrial development (Baldwin & Lopez-Gonzalez, 2015; Gereffi & Fernandez-Stark, 2011; Vrh, 2017). Main logic behind this assertion is that further integration onto the GVC, either through forward (DVX) or backward linkages (FVA), contributes to increase overall productivity (Dauth et al., 2014; Donoso et al, 2015; Iodice & Tomasi, 2016; Lurweg & Westermeier.A., 2010; Kreutzer & Berger, 2018). Choi et al. (2019), for instance, have provided empirical evidence that innovation enables certain countries to improve their position within the GVC. So industrial upgrading, which stems from sustained increases in productivity, can boost both domestic value added and export-related jobs (Montalbano et al., 2018; Shimbov et al., 2019).



Main assumption of this paper, consistent with aforementioned literature and empirical evidence, is that greater vertical integration onto the GVC can contribute to economic development and create additional jobs in non-industrialized countries such as Brazil. A virtuous circle of industrial development would require from backward linkages (FVA) to promote a forward integration (DVX) onto the GVC. Then both variables would also result in a positive impact on Brazilian domestic value added (DVA), overall gross exports (EXGR) and export-related jobs (EMP).

Graph 1: Vertical integration, through backward and forward linkages, has a positive impact on export-related jobs.



Source: Authors

Then should countries such as Brazil abandon their optimal choices in commercial policies, interrupt its value chain integration with China and subordinate to the core interests of hegemonic powers like US? Realists would answer in the affirmative. For them, US-China strategic competition can be described as a battlefield which is not on the sphere of direct confrontation but in other actors' soil (Gill-Tiney, 2023; Treistman, 2017). Realist theorists, like John Mearsheimer (1994), warned almost three decades ago that a wealthier China could increase its military capabilities and challenge the US-led international order. According to realist theories like "Power Transition" or "Hegemonic Stability", a declining hegemon becomes more assertive as ascending powers reduces their power gap (Feng, 2013; Gilpin, 1988). This will happen whenever emerging powers, like China, were perceived as a threat against an international order primarily conceived to benefit the hegemonic power (Mearsheimer, 2019; Nye, 2011). Hence, US-China strategic competition can be depicted as a sole hegemonic power (US) that has become more assertive against its main emerging rival (China), to prevent other peripheral countries (Brazil) from being neutral or even deepening ties with the latter. Such political restrictions, however, would come at the expense of efficient optimal choices for commercial and trade policies in peripheral countries like Brazil.



The present paper, nonetheless, aims at offering some empirical evidence on potential costs of subordinating national interests to foreign ones when pursuing non-optimal choices in trade and commercial policies. A clear correlation between TiVA flows with export-related jobs can help to determine some optimal choices for commercial policies in Brazil which should not be dependent of hegemonic interests imposed from US.

3. Data and methodology

Correlations between Brazilian export-related jobs and TiVA flows have been derived from standard Input-Output Tables (IOT). IOT are configured using Transactions (T), Value-Added (VA) and Final Demand (FD) sets of matrixes from Eora26 MRIOT (Lenzen et al., 2013)¹. Here gross output (X) will be equal to the sum of intermediate consumption (T) plus final demand (FD). Using matrix algebra notation this can be expressed as:

$$X = T + FD \quad (1)$$

Rearranging:

$$\begin{aligned} X &= AX + FD \\ X &= (I-A)^{-1} FD \\ X &= L FD \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Whereas X is the gross output matrix. FD is the matrix of goods that are used for final demand (also noted as Y). A is the matrix of input-output coefficients obtained after dividing T between X (T = AX). Thus (I-A)⁻¹ will result in an inverse Leontief matrix expressing the total output required both directly and indirectly to produce a unit of goods for final demand (L).

¹ The Eora26 MRIO database is available under license at www.worldmrio.com.



Table 1: Basic scheme of a standard Multi-Regional Input Output Table (MRIOT)

Source: Authors

T MATRIX		RoW	BRAZIL	CHINA	USA	FD MATRIX		RoW	BRAZIL	CHINA	USA	OUTPUT X	EXPORTS EXP
		INDUSTRIES	INDUSTRIES	INDUSTRIES	INDUSTRIES			FD AGG	FD AGG	FD AGG	FD AGG		
RoW	INDUSTRIES	AX(20x20)	Intermediate use by Brazil of exports from RoW	AX(20x20)	AX(20x20)	RoW	INDUSTRIES	FD (20x6)	Final use by Brazil of exports from RoW	FD (20x6)	FD (20x6)	X = AX + Y	Exports are calculated by subtracting intermediate and final use of domestic output to X
BRAZIL	INDUSTRIES	Intermediate use by RoW of exports from Brazil	Intermediate use of domestic output X	Intermediate use by China of exports from Brazil	Intermediate use by USA of exports from Brazil	BRAZIL	INDUSTRIES	Final use by RoW of exports from Brazil	Final use of domestic output X	Final use by China of exports from Brazil	Final use by USA of exports from Brazil		
CHINA	INDUSTRIES	AX(20x20)	Intermediate use by Brazil of exports from China	AX(20x20)	AX(20x20)	CHINA	INDUSTRIES	FD (20x6)	Final use by Brazil of exports from China	FD (20x6)	FD (20x6)		
USA	INDUSTRIES	AX(20x20)	Intermediate use by Brazil of exports from USA	AX(20x20)	AX(20x20)	USA	INDUSTRIES	FD (20x6)	Final use by Brazil of exports from USA	FD (20x6)	FD (20x6)		
VA MATRIX		RoW	BRAZIL	CHINA	USA								
PRIMARY INPUTS		VA RoW	VA BRA	VA CHN	VA USA								
OUTPUT		X = AX + VA											

For a correct classification of industries, Brazilian IOT and EORA-26 have been harmonized as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Classification of industries in Brazilian IOT and EORA26.

BRA IOT (Source: IBGE)	EORA26 (Source: EORA)
Agriculture and Forestry	Agriculture
Grazing and Fishing	Fishing
Crude Oil and Natural Gas Iron Ore Other Minerals and Ores	Mining and Quarrying
Food and Beverages Tobacco Products	Food & Beverages
Textiles Clothing Leather and Footwear	Textiles and Wearing Apparel
Wood Products Except Furniture Cellulose and Paper Products Newspapers, Magazines and Electronic Publishing	Wood and Paper
Petroleum Refining and Coke Products Alcohol Chemical Products Resins and Elastomers Pharmaceutical Products Pesticides	Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products



Soaps and Detergents Inks, Varnishes, Enamels, Lacquers Other Chemical Products Rubber and Plastic Products Cement and Other Non-Metallic Mineral Products	
Manufacturing of Steel and Steel Alloys Non-Ferrous Metals Fabricated Metal Products Except Machines and Equipment	Metal Products
Machines and Equipment (including maintenance)	Electrical and Machinery
Household Appliances	
Office Equipment Electric Machines and Materials Electronic and Communication Equipment Medical and Optical Equipment	
Passenger and Light Utility Vehicles, Trucks and Buses Vehicle Parts Other Transport Equipment	Transport Equipment
Furniture and Other Manufacturing	Other Manufacturing and Recycling
Electricity, Gas, Water, Sewerage and Drainage Services	Electricity, Gas and Water
Construction	Construction
Wholesale and Retail Trade	Wholesale and Retail Trade
Transport and Postal Services Information Services	Transport, Post and Telecommunications
Finance and Insurance Property Services and Hiring Business Services	Financial Intermediation and Business Activities
Maintenance and Repair	Maintenance and Repair
Hotels and Restaurants	Hotels and Restaurants
Private Education Private Health Services Other Services	Education, Health and Other Services
Public Education Public Health Services Public Administration and Social Security	Public Administration

EORA26 items have also been reduced from 26 to 20 following the standard classification of IBGE for overall jobs in Brazil².

² As "Other Manufacturing", "Recycling", "Wholesale Trade", "Retail Trade", "Post and Telecommunications", "Transport", "Education, Health and Other Services", "Private Households" and "Others" have been



3.1 Brazilian export-related jobs by industry/country

First, as in Duran & Banacloche (2022), we have estimated overall employment associated with Brazilian exports by industry/country of destination. Vector N^* of Brazilian workers by industry has been sourced from standard Supply-Use tables (SUT) which are available at Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE)³.

The employment coefficient vector matrix is calculated as follows:

$$EC = N^*X^{-1} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{N_1^*}{x_1} & \frac{N_2^*}{x_2} & \frac{N_3^*}{x_3} & \dots & \frac{N_n^*}{x_n} \end{bmatrix} \quad (3)$$

Where N^* is the labor factor of sector N . And X_n is the gross value of production of sector N . Equation 4 plots the multiplier of EC :

$$MEC = \widehat{EC} (I - A)^{-1} = \begin{bmatrix} EC_1l_{11} & EC_1l_{12} & EC_1l_{13} & \dots & EC_1l_{1n} \\ EC_2l_{21} & EC_2l_{22} & EC_2l_{23} & \dots & EC_2l_{2n} \\ EC_3l_{31} & EC_3l_{32} & EC_3l_{33} & \dots & EC_3l_{3n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ EC_nl_{n1} & EC_nl_{n2} & EC_nl_{n3} & \dots & EC_nl_{nn} \end{bmatrix} \quad (4)$$

Whereas l_{ij} comes from the Leontief inverse matrix or $(I - A)^{-1}$. The matrix of technical coefficients, which results from dividing transactions of intermediate inputs (T_{ij}) between the diagonalized and inverted gross value of production (x_n), is labelled as the $N \times N$ matrix of domestic technical coefficients A :

$$A = T\hat{x}^{-1}$$

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} T_{11} & T_{12} & T_{13} & \dots & T_{1n} \\ T_{21} & T_{22} & T_{23} & \dots & T_{2n} \\ T_{31} & T_{32} & T_{33} & \dots & T_{3n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ T_{n1} & T_{n2} & T_{n3} & \dots & T_{nn} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1/x_1 & 0 & 0 & \dots & 0 \\ 0 & 1/x_2 & 0 & \dots & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1/x_3 & \dots & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \dots & 1/x_n \end{bmatrix}$$

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} T_{11}/x_1 & T_{12}/x_2 & T_{13}/x_3 & \dots & T_{1n}/x_n \\ T_{21}/x_1 & T_{22}/x_2 & T_{23}/x_3 & \dots & T_{2n}/x_n \\ T_{31}/x_1 & T_{32}/x_2 & T_{33}/x_3 & \dots & T_{3n}/x_n \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ T_{n1}/x_1 & T_{n2}/x_2 & T_{n3}/x_3 & \dots & T_{nn}/x_n \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & a_{12} & a_{13} & \dots & a_{1n} \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & a_{23} & \dots & a_{2n} \\ a_{31} & a_{32} & a_{33} & \dots & a_{3n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{n1} & a_{n2} & a_{n3} & \dots & a_{nn} \end{bmatrix} \quad (5)$$

simplified to "Other Manufacturing and Recycling", "Wholesale and Retail Trade" and "Education, Health and Other Services"; while "Re-exports" are not considered for labor market comparisons, original EORA26 IOT items were reduced to 20.

³ Available at <https://www.ibge.gov.br/>



The inverse Leontief matrix, therefore, has been derived from (5):

$$L = (I - A)^{-1}$$

$$L = \begin{bmatrix} l_{11} & l_{12} & l_{13} & \dots & l_{1n} \\ l_{21} & l_{22} & l_{23} & \dots & l_{2n} \\ l_{31} & l_{32} & l_{33} & \dots & l_{3n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ l_{n1} & l_{n2} & l_{n3} & \dots & l_{nn} \end{bmatrix}$$

(6)

Where I is the NxN identity matrix. Export-related jobs, then, will result from multiplying corresponding Brazilian diagonalized exports by the MEC:

$$EMP_{exp} = MEC \hat{e}$$

$$EMP_{exp} = \begin{bmatrix} EC_1 l_{11} e_1 & EC_1 l_{12} e_2 & EC_1 l_{13} e_3 & \dots & EC_1 l_{1n} e_n \\ EC_2 l_{21} e_1 & EC_2 l_{22} e_2 & EC_2 l_{23} e_3 & \dots & EC_2 l_{2n} e_n \\ EC_3 l_{31} e_1 & EC_3 l_{32} e_2 & EC_3 l_{33} e_3 & \dots & EC_3 l_{3n} e_n \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ EC_n l_{n1} e_1 & EC_n l_{n2} e_2 & EC_n l_{n3} e_3 & \dots & EC_n l_{nn} e_n \end{bmatrix}$$

(7)

A row sum results in the number of workers required from industry i to satisfy final demand for exports by country (region).

Table 3: Export-related jobs by industries/countries (regions)

Unit: ' 000	2000					2015				
	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA	RoW	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA	RoW
Agriculture	14.905	8.301	0.174	110.263	428.772	38.544	15.058	0.327	115.071	656.553
Fishing	0.836	20.544	0.058	425.326	170.078	3.094	15.436	0.053	259.168	147.476
Mining and Quarrying	7.137	0.394	0.001	8.684	23.698	42.012	0.744	0.004	14.237	60.124
Food & Beverages	1.054	2.869	0.065	20.273	81.911	8.881	7.472	0.168	29.541	190.647
Textiles and Wearing Apparel	2.506	2.524	0.023	227.049	188.034	13.302	4.663	0.045	200.327	290.803
Wood and Paper	2.396	1.302	0.007	77.287	108.096	11.514	1.902	0.012	79.222	153.370
Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products	2.978	0.737	0.008	58.406	97.763	22.714	1.743	0.022	67.970	229.411
Metal Products	2.582	0.617	0.004	42.131	111.326	19.183	1.122	0.009	57.286	235.411
Electrical and Machinery	2.354	0.783	0.007	42.337	89.573	20.101	1.405	0.013	60.494	233.340
Transport Equipment	1.344	0.076	0.001	28.190	73.598	8.117	0.144	0.002	34.261	156.103
Other Manufacturing and recycling	0.424	0.056	0.001	36.682	41.683	2.195	0.082	0.002	32.588	64.181
Electricity, Gas and Water	0.919	0.183	0.002	8.624	19.757	6.997	0.387	0.005	11.702	44.410
Construction	2.131	1.010	0.002	8.202	31.989	15.519	1.982	0.005	8.139	63.674
Maintenance and Repair	0.994	0.952	0.008	28.076	51.530	6.303	1.950	0.018	29.492	101.804
Wholesale and Retail Trade	32.562	31.186	0.262	919.453	1687.537	178.112	55.092	0.508	833.398	2876.794
Hotels and Restaurants	1.690	0.320	0.012	7.499	111.052	15.134	0.763	0.041	12.222	266.710
Transport, Post and Telecommunications	12.332	2.119	0.031	97.881	271.836	101.779	4.911	0.087	144.664	719.580
Financial Intermediation and Business Activities	7.915	1.394	0.018	60.736	183.837	76.312	3.644	0.058	99.966	521.602
Public Administration	0.016	0.114	0.001	0.020	4.662	0.132	0.169	0.001	0.019	8.535
Education, Health, Private Households and Other Services	5.212	1.025	0.016	31.283	130.882	32.910	1.868	0.039	34.106	277.334
Total	102.290	76.509	0.700	2238.402	3907.614	622.856	120.537	1.420	2123.875	7297.860

Source: Authors's calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT



Table 3 shows that Brazilian total export-related jobs by industry/country (region) have almost doubled between 2000 and 2015.

3.2 Vertical integration “in” and “from” Brazil

Vertical integration has emerged as standard indicator for trade in value added (Duran & Banacloche, 2022; Koopman et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2013). Vertical integration can be estimated from TiVA data that has been derived in aforementioned EORA26 MRIO tables (Aslam & Rodrigues-Bastos, 2017; Casella et al., 2019). Vertical integration “in” Brazil will be defined as the Foreign Value Added (FVA) content of its exports generated by other countries. Conversely, vertical integration “from” Brazil refers to Brazilian indirect value added embodied in exports of other countries or DVX. Both variables shall be considered to further measure Brazilian integration onto the Global Value Chain (using an index labelled as GVC).

To estimate both FVA and DVX figures, alongside Brazilian DVA embodied in its own exports, we calculate a matrix of value-added flows (F):

$$F = \begin{bmatrix} F_{11} & F_{12} & F_{13} & \cdots & F_{1n} \\ F_{21} & F_{22} & F_{23} & \cdots & F_{2n} \\ F_{31} & F_{32} & F_{33} & \cdots & F_{3n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ F_{n1} & F_{n2} & F_{n3} & \cdots & F_{nn} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$F = \hat{V} L \hat{e}$$

$$F = \begin{pmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_1 & 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & v_2 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & v_3 & \cdots & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \cdots & v_n \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} l_{11} & l_{12} & l_{13} & \cdots & l_{1n} \\ l_{21} & l_{22} & l_{23} & \cdots & l_{2n} \\ l_{31} & l_{32} & l_{33} & \cdots & l_{3n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ l_{n1} & l_{n2} & l_{n3} & \cdots & l_{nn} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} e_1 & 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & e_2 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e_3 & \cdots & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \cdots & e_n \end{bmatrix} \end{pmatrix} \quad (8)$$

Whereas \hat{V} is the value-added coefficients matrix. \hat{V} can be obtained by summing each column of the full technical coefficient’s matrix A, putting these elements on the diagonal of a square matrix and subtracting it from an identity matrix of the same size. L is the full inverse Leontief matrix. And \hat{e} is the diagonalized export vector. Their product results in the value-added flows matrix F. This, henceforth, describes how value added contained in the exports of each industry/country (region) is generated and distributed across countries (see Table 4).



Table 4 : Brazilian GVC matrix (F)

F MATRIX		RoW				BRAZIL				CHINA				USA			
		SEC 1	SEC 2	...	SEC 20	SEC 1	SEC 2	...	SEC 20	SEC 1	SEC 2	...	SEC 20	SEC 1	SEC 2	...	SEC 20
RoW	SEC 1					FVA FROM RoW EMBODIED IN BRAZILIAN EXPORTS											
	SEC 2																
	...																
	SEC 20																
BRAZIL	SEC 1	DVX OF BRAZIL EMBODIED IN RoW EXPORTS				DVA EMBODIED IN BRAZILIAN EXPORTS				DVX OF BRAZIL EMBODIED IN CHINA EXPORTS				DVX OF BRAZIL EMBODIED IN USA EXPORTS			
	SEC 2																
	...																
	SEC 20																
CHINA	SEC 1					FVA FROM CHINA EMBODIED IN BRAZILIAN EXPORTS											
	SEC 2																
	...																
	SEC 20																
USA	SEC 1					FVA FROM RoW EMBODIED IN BRAZILIAN EXPORTS											
	SEC 2																
	...																
	SEC 20																

Source: Authors

The results for Brazil are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: FVA and DVX values for Brazil by industry / country (region) in 2000-2015

BRAZILIAN FVA IN EXPTOT TO THE WORLD PER ORIGIN (UNIT = '000)	2000					2015				
	ROW	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA	ROW	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA
Agriculture	58257.0	1680.7	166.6	1.2	18774.3	320319.3	25024.6	744.1	12.3	71482.4
Fishing	2127.3	52.9	6.1	0.0	542.1	7531.1	493.7	16.1	0.3	1359.2
Mining and Quarrying	192396.6	6814.0	1405.4	5.3	59860.4	1512714.5	144918.9	9231.3	69.9	318835.7
Food & Beverages	234797.9	5300.8	690.2	4.3	51590.6	1236092.9	72397.8	2642.3	41.3	192144.9
Textiles and Wearing Apparel	227047.5	12811.7	2958.9	15.1	66862.0	822652.8	123793.9	6391.1	116.5	167415.5
Wood and Paper	231722.9	7318.8	1010.7	6.4	88166.8	960513.6	75806.2	3122.9	49.7	238236.3
Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products	834631.2	29856.8	2646.5	17.3	320513.3	3038020.4	293488.7	8411.7	119.0	740527.4
Metal Products	329093.4	16986.6	1431.9	7.0	124013.1	1352669.4	166903.5	4751.0	56.9	366579.6
Electrical and Machinery	823228.7	59216.1	17305.8	29.5	342274.5	3762461.6	779757.3	69518.2	276.9	845691.6
Transport Equipment	1091335.6	39645.6	5738.1	26.0	363477.9	4902829.9	471094.5	19000.4	224.8	1073490.5
Other Manufacturing and recycling	66750.7	3622.3	712.5	4.7	24860.5	280965.8	40252.0	2294.7	34.8	70627.1
Electricity, Gas and Water	3620.0	145.8	28.3	0.1	1519.4	1937.6	210.4	11.1	0.1	600.2
Construction	6718.7	291.0	46.8	0.2	2370.4	45886.9	5229.6	250.2	2.2	10302.3
Maintenance and Repair	439.5	15.3	2.6	0.0	155.4	2446.9	209.5	10.0	0.1	667.2
Wholesale and Retail Trade	18264.4	634.7	108.9	0.5	6456.7	101682.6	8706.5	414.5	5.4	27727.0
Hotels and Restaurants	17911.5	469.7	66.9	0.4	4327.3	111096.1	7274.8	296.9	4.7	18953.0
Transport, Post and Telecommunications	153868.1	5254.3	1041.4	4.4	48963.3	942650.2	81057.8	4564.9	51.1	202728.9
Financial Intermediation and Business Activities	71911.2	3022.6	639.9	2.7	28117.6	369253.5	38861.1	2353.7	26.9	94008.8
Public Administration	1153.4	42.2	7.8	0.0	409.2	5618.5	514.2	27.6	0.3	1426.4
Education, Health, Private Households and Other Services	18714.8	713.5	111.4	0.6	6339.7	103937.0	10145.9	443.6	6.0	23233.0
FVATOT	4383990.6	193895.3	36126.9	125.9	1559594.5	19881280.6	2346141.1	134496.2	1099.2	4466037.1
BRAZILIAN DVX TO THE WORLD PER DESTINATION (UNIT = '000)	2000					2015				
	ROW	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA	ROW	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA
Agriculture	103189.4	17997.0	4568.4	144.0	32768.7	446219.9	85167.2	30441.1	888.2	121717.4
Fishing	392.2	22.3	89.1	0.9	1239.2	1198.4	186.4	341.5	3.1	3668.6
Mining and Quarrying	306091.4	228153.1	19077.1	117.2	119039.6	1344465.7	1867944.6	125916.8	826.0	377887.7
Food & Beverages	39465.5	2862.5	3095.3	134.9	12346.1	170347.8	30266.9	21972.7	755.2	43697.3
Textiles and Wearing Apparel	71641.0	5418.0	2474.0	25.5	24519.2	256626.4	51755.8	11179.4	136.9	71865.3
Wood and Paper	148348.7	12768.0	6830.9	45.6	115323.9	632067.8	136746.6	40408.0	287.3	407628.8
Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products	342378.6	35653.0	10521.2	94.4	164539.9	1445063.8	388654.3	60914.5	565.2	508945.5
Metal Products	334981.4	24762.2	9641.6	53.8	165352.4	1442675.1	280230.6	50387.1	316.6	485576.6
Electrical and Machinery	202593.4	21656.1	8361.8	49.3	113507.4	858786.2	234146.2	42471.9	285.5	337498.2
Transport Equipment	171513.9	5982.8	1403.7	11.5	44909.2	590014.7	58135.4	8111.1	73.9	161664.7
Other Manufacturing and recycling	11463.8	898.4	235.2	2.3	5997.5	45983.3	10717.3	1396.3	14.5	22861.2
Electricity, Gas and Water	88352.3	14417.3	3094.3	26.5	39223.3	379274.6	164452.5	19461.0	164.4	126393.2
Construction	12630.4	3153.9	944.1	4.7	4206.4	40732.7	25641.6	6074.4	24.7	9925.6
Maintenance and Repair	4636.5	385.6	235.1	1.9	2010.9	16841.0	3454.6	1290.1	10.1	5271.7
Wholesale and Retail Trade	192671.4	16023.6	9771.4	80.1	83563.1	699836.7	143556.4	53611.0	419.3	219070.3
Hotels and Restaurants	16505.8	2281.4	507.2	4.7	3128.2	7904.4	30012.2	3711.0	33.4	12228.2
Transport, Post and Telecommunications	261498.9	50844.5	9290.2	96.6	91513.1	1267042.5	611030.5	66757.9	680.8	326362.2
Financial Intermediation and Business Activities	445205.3	73989.6	14658.0	153.8	148260.5	2160012.9	948673.1	107649.2	1123.5	546887.2
Public Administration	430.7	13.2	8.1	0.6	33.4	1781.0	131.4	37.0	3.0	102.3
Education, Health, Private Households and Other Services	58785.6	9589.4	1933.1	25.7	16708.7	288990.9	117497.2	13944.4	196.8	59577.2
DVXTOT	2812776.2	526817.7	106739.7	1074.0	1188190.7	12167003.6	5188401.0	666076.4	6808.6	3848829.1

Source: Authors' calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT



Finally, in order to measure Brazilian backward linkages within the GVC by partner/industry, the $\frac{FVA_{ij}^{S-BRA}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ ratio is calculated (whereas forward linkages will be noted as $\frac{DVX_{ij}^{BRA-S}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$). Adding both $\frac{FVA_{ij}^{S-BRA}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ and $\frac{DVX_{ij}^{BRA-S}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ we will also estimate the Global Value Chain index for Brazil (GVC_{BRA-S}).

4. Correlation between export-related jobs and TiVA in Brazil

Brazil reveals a relatively low integration onto the GVC. Its overall GVC index ranks 32th in the world marking a value of just 0.462%⁴. China, however, is the world second largest nation when considering both FVA and DVX flows within GVC, also ahead of US. China and US then should be considered as “core” countries which could help other “peripheral” commercial partners like Brazil to further integrate onto the GVC.

Table 6: Brazil position in the GVC (2015)

RANK	COUNTRY	GVC INDEX
1	Germany	6.211%
2	China	4.402%
3	USA	4.030%
4	Netherlands	2.943%
5	France	2.812%
6	UK	2.484%
7	Japan	2.417%
8	Belgium	2.404%
9	Italy	2.297%
10	South Korea	1.794%
11	Canada	1.474%
12	Singapore	1.389%
13	Spain	1.321%
14	Russia	1.079%
15	Switzerland	1.076%
...
32	Brazil	0.462%

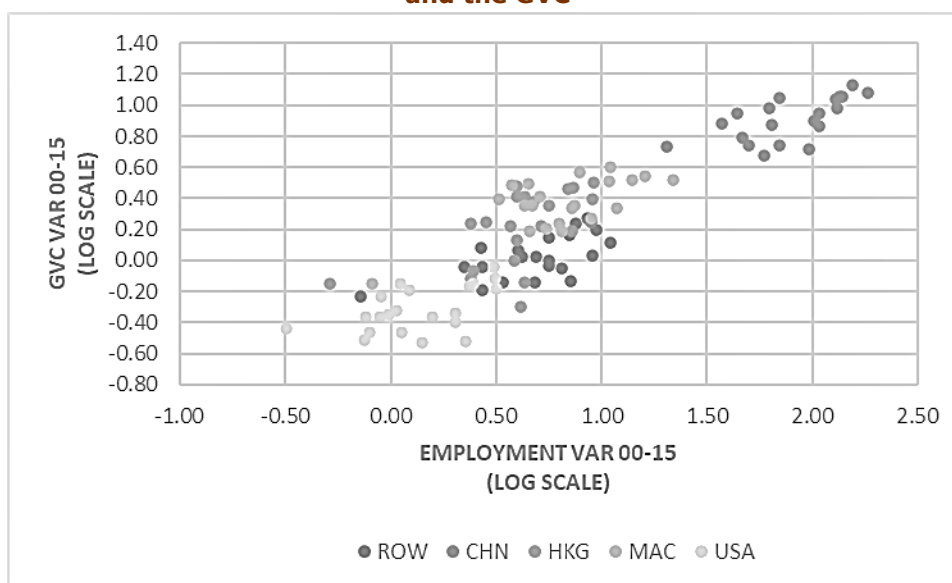
Source: Author's calculations from UNCTAD-EORA GVC Database

⁴ $GVC_{BRA-WLD} = (DVX_{BRA-WLD} + FVA_{WLD-BRA}) / EXGR_{WLD}$.



When calculating Brazilian GVC indexes by country, as $GVC_{BRA-S} = \frac{DVX_{ij}^{BRA-S} + FVA_{ij}^{S-BRA}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$, empirical evidence shows a decoupling between Brazil and US alongside overall job losses within the period 2000-2015. Yet, on the other hand, a sustained growth of Brazil-China TiVA flows, or $GVC_{BRA-CHN}$, has nonetheless contributed to substantial increases in Brazilian exports-related jobs (508.9%)⁵.

Graph 2: There is a positive correlation between variation rates of export-related jobs and the GVC



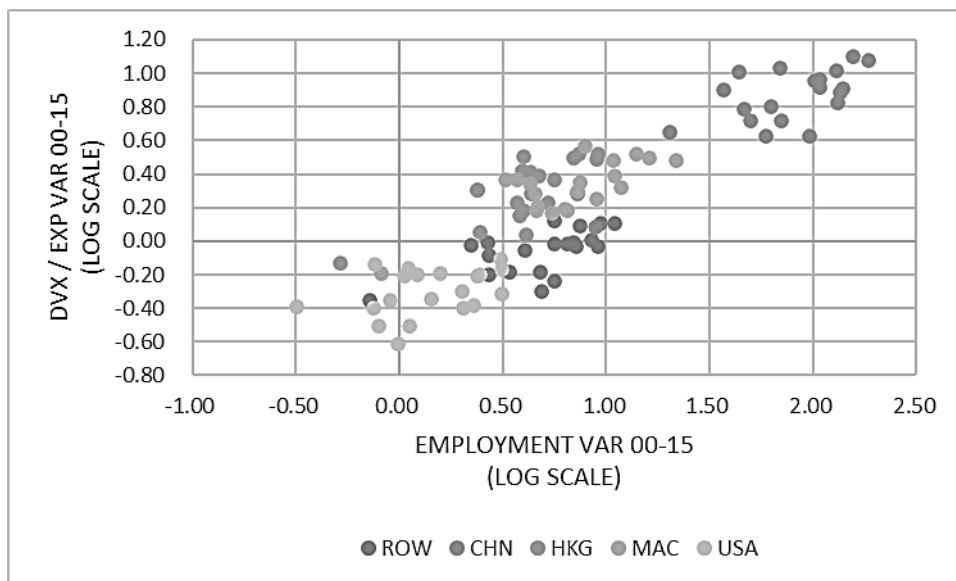
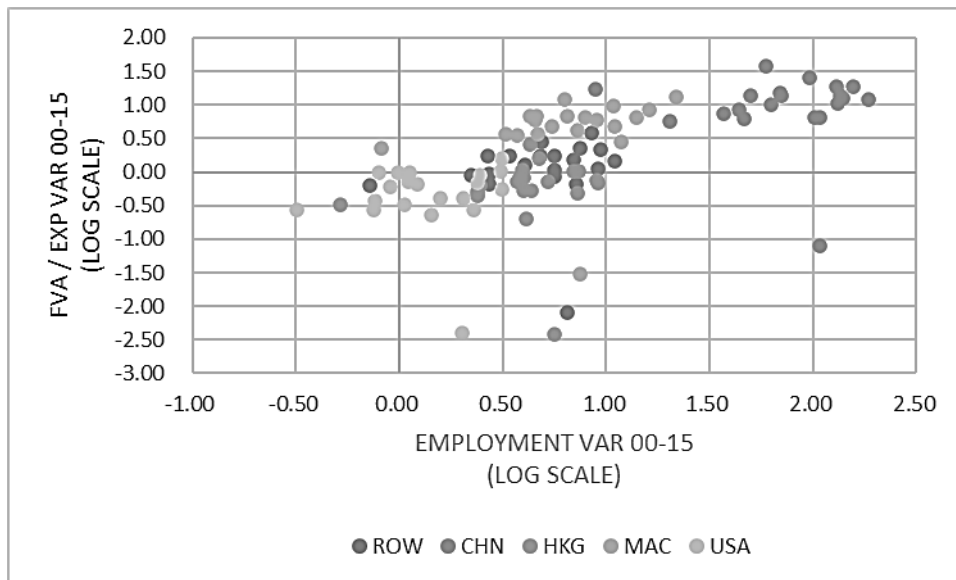
Source: Authors' calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT

Empirical evidence also suggests a direct and stronger impact of DVX over employment growth rates when compared to FVA. Then it could be theorized that backward linkages incentivize variables such as DVX, thus boosting both exports and overall jobs, which facilitate a continuous integration of Brazil onto the GVC.

⁵ Excluding both Macau SAR and Hong Kong SAR.



Graph 3: DVX is more strongly correlated to export-related jobs than FVA



Source: Author's calculations from UNCTAD-EORA GVC Database

Then, corresponding increases/decreases in GVC indexes are consistent with the main assumption outlined throughout this chapter which is that TiVA exchanges have a direct correlation to growth rates of export-related jobs. For instance, while $GVC_{BRA-USA}$ in "Wholesale and Retail Trade" did register a sharp decrease, Brazilian export-related jobs to US were also cut by -9.4%. Yet high growing rates in $GVC_{BRA-CHN}$ have contributed to increase Brazilian export-related jobs in "Wholesale and Retail Trade" more than five times (447%). This is significant since "Wholesale and Retail Trade" was also the largest single source for Brazilian export-related jobs in 2015 (38,7%).



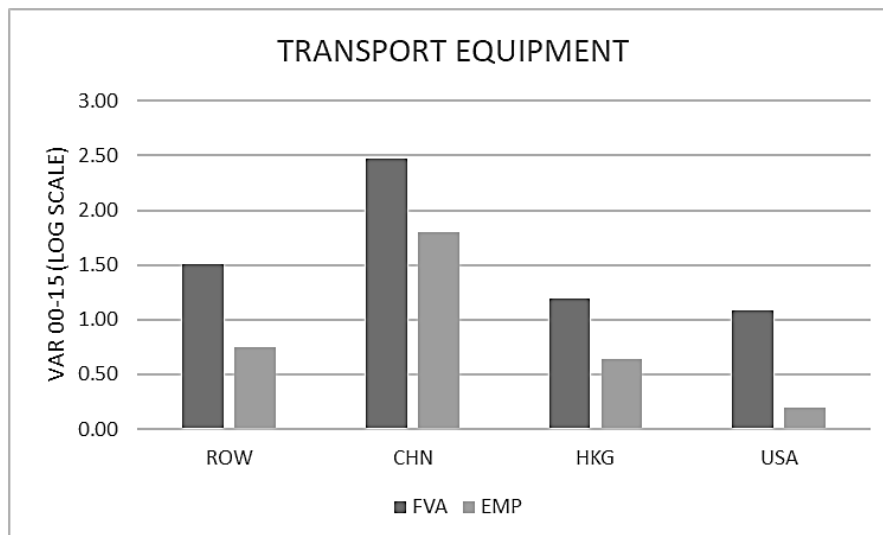
Table 7: Variation rates of GVC indexes and export-related jobs in Brazilian “Wholesale and Retail Trade”

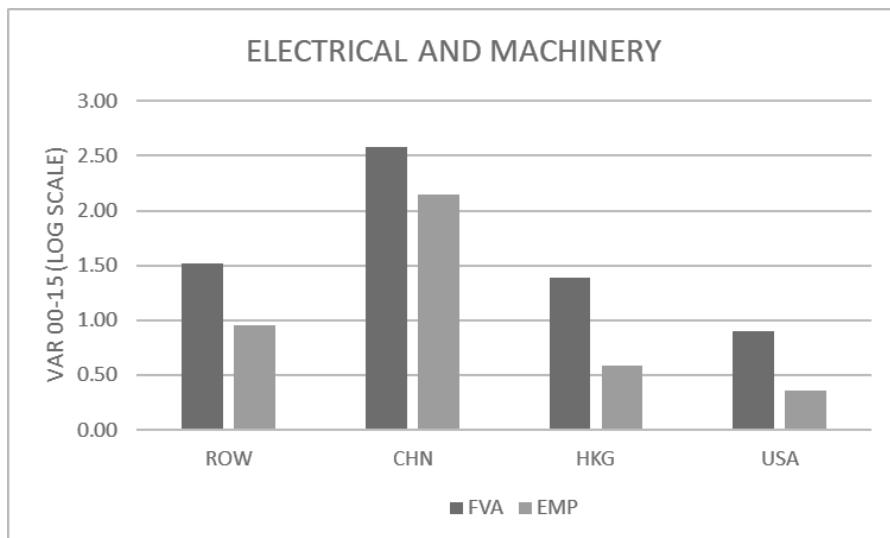
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE (2000-2015)				
VAR 00-15 (LOG SCALE)	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA
GVC	0.74	0.23	0.19	-0.47
EMPLOYMENT	1.70	0.57	0.66	-0.10

Source: Authors’ calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT

Both “Electrical and Machinery” and “Transport Equipment” have been the largest receptors of FVA in Brazil. This implies that foreign multinational corporations did invest in Brazil, for export purposes, while importing intermediate inputs from other countries within the GVC. Total share of Chinese FVA embodied in Brazilian “Electrical and Machinery” exports grew from 4.76% to 14.29%, while it decreased when considering US (from 27.5% to 15.5%). And a similar pattern can also be seen in other industries, such as “Transport Equipment”, where $FVA_{CHN-BRA}$ over the total grew from 2,6% to 7,2%. Meanwhile, US value added share embodied in Brazilian “Transport Equipment” exports was reduced, from 24,2% to 16,6%. Therefore, even although these two industries account for a small share of export-related jobs, growing $FVA_{CHN-BRA}$ flows have also contributed to increase Brazilian labor through Chinese vertical integration “in” Brazil.

Graph 4: Vertical integration in Brazil and impact on export-related jobs

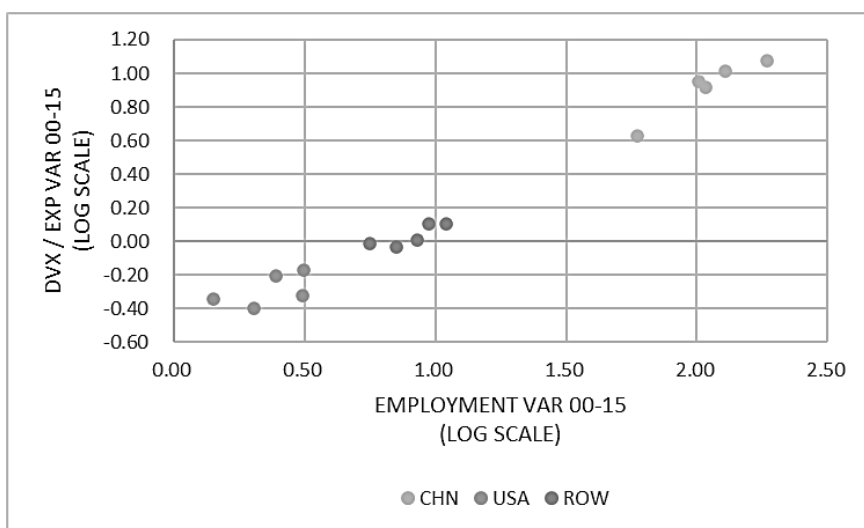




Source: Authors' calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT

Nonetheless, as aforementioned, correlation between vertical integration and export-related jobs is stronger when considering forward linkages or DVX. Brazilian largest DVX shares over the total are concentrated in industries such as "Financial Intermediation and Business Activities" (17.2%), "Mining and Quarrying" (17%), "Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products" (11%), "Transport, Post and Telecommunications" (10.4%) and "Metal Products" (10.3%). Data shows that variation rates of export-related jobs in those industries had a direct correlation to $\frac{DVX_{ij}^{BRA-S}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ increases / decreases for the period 2000-2015 (see Graph 5).

Graph 5: Correlation between forward linkages and export-related jobs



Source: Authors' calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT



In addition to this, while “Financial Intermediation and Business Activities”, “Mining and Quarrying”, “Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products”, “Transport, Post and Telecommunications” and “Metal Products” accounted for 65.9% of overall DVX in Brazil, export-related jobs derived from those industries just totaled 23.8%. US industries such as “Financial Intermediation and Business Activities”, “Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products”, “Metal Products”, “Wood and Paper” and “Mining and Quarrying” accounted for 10.64% of overall Brazilian DVX exports to the world but just 3.13% in total export-related jobs. In China, while “Mining and Quarrying”, “Financial Intermediation and Business Activities”, “Transport, Post and Telecommunications”, “Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products” and “Metal Products” accounted for 18.73% of overall Brazilian DVX exports to the world, total export related jobs in those industries were 2.57%. This just indicates that Brazilian vertical integration “onto” China does demand less export-related jobs compared to US.

Table 8: DVX and export-related jobs over the total for selected countries / industries (2015)

USA	DVX	EMP	CHN	DVX	EMP
Financial Intermediation and Business Activities	2.5%	0.98%	Mining and Quarrying	8.54%	0.41%
Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products	2.33%	0.67%	Financial Intermediation and Business Activities	4.34%	0.75%
Metal Products	2.22%	0.56%	Transport, Post and Telecommunications	2.79%	1%
Wood and Paper	1.86%	0.78%	Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products	1.78%	0.22%
Mining and Quarrying	1.73%	0.14%	Metal Products	1.28%	0.19%
Total	10.6%	3.13%	Total	18.73%	2.57%

Source: Authors’ calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT

Biggest shares of Brazilian export-related jobs to China, over the world total by industry, were concentrated in “Mining and Quarrying” (35.87%), “Construction” (17.38%), “Electricity, Gas and Water” (11.02%), “Financial Intermediation and Business Activities” (10.88%) and “Transport, Post and Telecommunications” (10.48%). Yet all those industries put together just represented a 2.4% share over total Brazilian export-related jobs. US five largest industries, on the other hand, had an overall share of 13.5% (“Fishing”, “Textiles and Wearing Apparel”, “Other Manufacturing and Recycling”, “Wood and Paper” and “Wholesale and Retail Trade”). Therefore, in absolute terms, US remains dominant when considering Brazilian export-related jobs (accounting for 20.9% of the total).

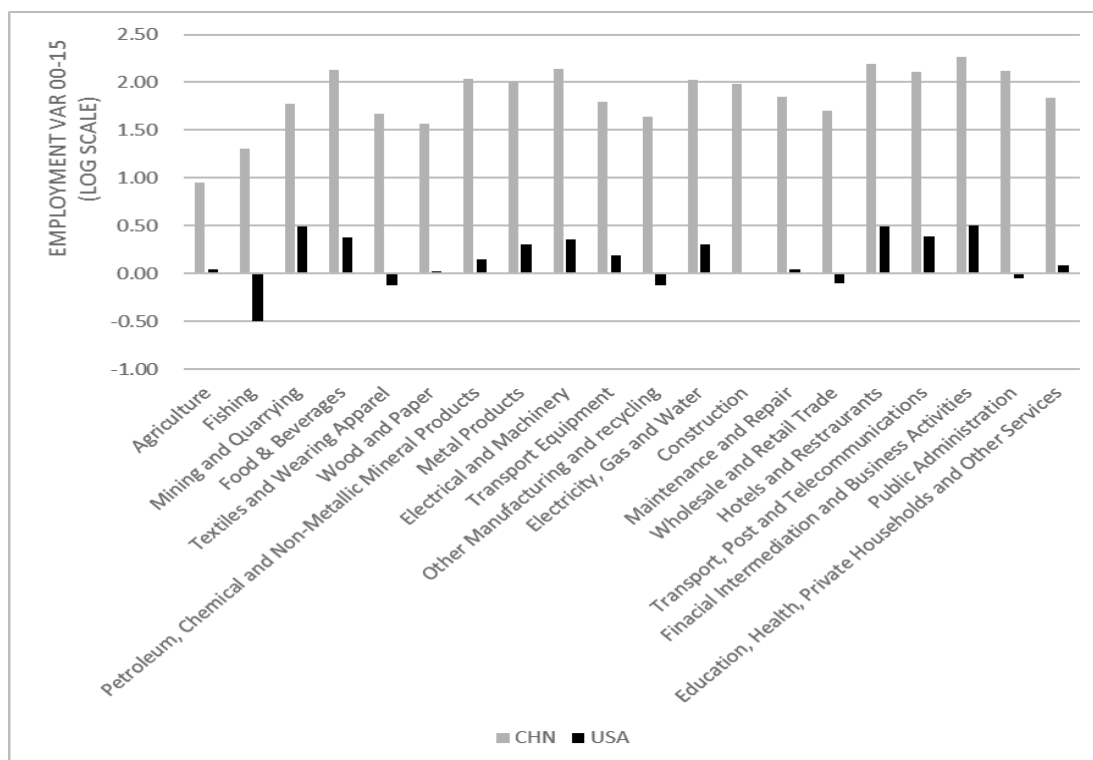


Table 9: Brazilian export-related jobs shares over world total (2015)

BRAZILIAN EXPORT-RELATED EMPLOYMENT (% TOTAL)	2015				
	ROW	CHN	HKG	MAC	USA
Agriculture	79.53%	4.67%	1.82%	0.04%	13.94%
Fishing	34.68%	0.73%	3.63%	0.01%	60.95%
Mining and Quarrying	51.34%	35.87%	0.63%	0.00%	12.16%
Food & Beverages	80.54%	3.75%	3.16%	0.07%	12.48%
Textiles and Wearing Apparel	57.12%	2.61%	0.92%	0.01%	39.35%
Wood and Paper	62.34%	4.68%	0.77%	0.00%	32.20%
Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products	71.28%	7.06%	0.54%	0.01%	21.12%
Metal Products	75.21%	6.13%	0.36%	0.00%	18.30%
Electrical and Machinery	73.99%	6.37%	0.45%	0.00%	19.18%
Transport Equipment	78.59%	4.09%	0.07%	0.00%	17.25%
Other Manufacturing and recycling	64.80%	2.22%	0.08%	0.00%	32.90%
Electricity, Gas and Water	69.94%	11.02%	0.61%	0.01%	18.43%
Construction	71.29%	17.38%	2.22%	0.01%	9.11%
Maintenance and Repair	72.94%	4.52%	1.40%	0.01%	21.13%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	72.94%	4.52%	1.40%	0.01%	21.13%
Hotels and Restaurants	90.45%	5.13%	0.26%	0.01%	4.14%
Transport, Post and Telecommunications	74.11%	10.48%	0.51%	0.01%	14.90%
Financial Intermediation and Business Activities	74.35%	10.88%	0.52%	0.01%	14.25%
Public Administration	96.36%	1.49%	1.91%	0.01%	0.22%
Education, Health, Private Households and Other Services	80.09%	9.50%	0.54%	0.01%	9.85%
TOTAL EMPexp	71.8%	6.1%	1.2%	0.0140%	20.9%

Source: Authors' calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT

Graph 6: Variation rates of Brazilian export-related jobs with China and US (2000-2015)



Source: Authors' calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT



Nevertheless, despite US still represents a much larger share of Brazilian export-related jobs in absolute terms, growing TiVA exchanges with China has allowed Brazil to create new export-related job opportunities between 2000 and 2015. Brazilian export-related jobs grew from 2.84% to 7.33% out of the total when considering China, Hong Kong and Macau; but were reduced from 35.4% to 20.9% in the case of US. At the same time, Brazilian DVX to China reached a share of 23.72% in 2015, overtaking US (17.59%).

Table 10: Largest increases / decreases in Brazilian forward linkages and logarithmic variation rates of export-related jobs (2000-2015)

USA	DVX	EMP	CHN	DVX	EMP
Construction	-0.62	-0.01	Hotels and Restaurants	1.10	2.19
Wholesale and Retail Trade	-0.51	-0.10	Financial Intermediation and Business Activities	1.08	2.27
Maintenance and Repair	-0.51	0.05	Education, Health, Private Households and Other Services	1.03	1.84
Textiles and Wearing Apparel	-0.40	-0.13	Transport, Post and Telecommunications	1.01	2.11
Metal Products	-0.40	0.31	Other Manufacturing and recycling	1.01	1.64
Fishing	-0.39	-0.50	Electricity, Gas and Water	0.96	2.03

Source: Authors' calculation from EORA-26 MRIOT

As shown in Table 10, all Brazilian industries without exception have boosted their export-related jobs when increasing $\frac{DVX_{ij}^{BRA-CHN}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ with China. Yet, on the other hand, larger declines of $\frac{DVX_{ij}^{BRA-USA}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ correspond to either net losses or much smaller increases in export-related jobs when considering US.

5. Conclusion

Increasing TiVA exchanges between China and Brazil constitutes a source of job creation for the latter. But, on the other hand, a sustained decoupling with US has eliminated 114.520 export-related jobs in Brazil between 2000 and 2015. Yet export-related jobs linked to US were one-fifth of the total in 2015. And, in the case of China, such share was just a 6.1%.

Either considering total growth rates or overall shares of export-related jobs, China and US are relevant TiVA partners for Brazil. Therefore, from an economic perspective, optimal choice for Brazilian commercial policies would be maximizing TiVA exchanges with both China and US. Brazilian continuous integration with Chinese GVC would help the former to create more export-related jobs. And, on the other hand, a large number of export-related jobs can be preserved in labor-intensive industries such as "Wholesale and Retail Trade" or "Fishing" through continuous commercial exchanges with US. It might seem obvious, therefore, that great power politics is not in the best economic interest for Brazil.



Brazil should further promote forward-linkages with China in more labor-intensive industries such as “Wholesale and Retail Trade”, “Fishing”, “Textiles and Wearing Apparel” or “Transport, Post and Telecommunications”. Export-related jobs of aforementioned industries, for US, totaled 1,43 million, which is almost five-times when compared to China. Hence, given that a unit of $DVX_{BRA-CHN}$ requires much less export-related jobs compared to US, Brazil could deepen its TiVA ties in more labor-intensive activities with China.

As aforementioned, some Brazilian largest shares of DVX are still concentrated in extractive basic industries like “Mining and Quarrying”, “Petroleum, Chemical and Non-Metallic Mineral Products” or “Metal Products”. Yet more labor-intensive industries, such as “Transport Equipment” or “Electrical and Machinery”, have been increasing their $\frac{FVA_{ij}^{CHN-BRA}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ inflows from China, thus becoming the largest destinations of overall Chinese FVA embodied in Brazilian exports. Chinese vertical integration, in Brazil, is also coincidental with an increase of Brazilian DVX to China. And, in the case of US, both industries have registered a sharper decline of both $\frac{FVA_{ij}^{USA-BRA}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$ and $\frac{DVX_{ij}^{BRA-USA}}{EXPTOT_{BRA}}$. Therefore, export-related jobs have been increasing faster in those industries which shown a deepening vertical integration with China, as opposed to US.

US might consider Brazil as a relevant supplier of raw materials which contributes to strengthen China either through its final demand or processing trade within the GVC. And it could also see China as a competitor in Brazilian labor-intensive industries like “Transport Equipment” or “Electrical and Machinery”. However, despite great power politics between declining and emerging powers in Brazil, a strategic balance of TiVA exchanges with both US and China has contributed to increase Brazilian overall export-related jobs about 60.7% during the period 2000-2015.

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BRAZIL-CHINA RELATIONS SINCE 2003: CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the relations between Brazil and China since 2003 to identify major lines of continuity and changes. The specific objectives are to map the main lines of Brazilian Foreign Policy, the perspective on the importance of China in bilateral relations and the main differences and challenges presented. The central argument is that changes in Brazilian Foreign Policy, especially with how Brazil perceives its position in the world and its relationship with major powers, have conditioned relations with China since 2003, causing fluctuations in the political relationship despite their growing economic interaction. The methodology is based on bibliographic analysis and the examination of Brazilian public diplomatic documents.

Keywords

Brazil-China Relations, Brazilian Foreign Policy, Lula, Dilma, Bolsonaro.

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo geral analisar as relações Brasil-China desde 2003, identificando as grandes linhas de continuidade e de mudança. Como objetivos específicos mapear as grandes linhas da política externa brasileira, a visão sobre a importância da China nas relações bilaterais e as principais oscilações e desafios apresentados. A metodologia de análise está assentada em análise bibliográfica e de documentos públicos diplomáticos brasileiros. O argumento central é de que as alterações na política externa brasileira, em especial como o Brasil percebe sua posição no mundo e na relação com as grandes potências, condicionaram as relações com a China desde 2003, provocando oscilações no relacionamento político, a despeito de sua crescente interação econômica.

Palavras-chave

Relações Brasil-China, Política Externa Brasileira, Lula, Dilma, Bolsonaro.



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BRAZIL-CHINA RELATIONS SINCE 2003: CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES

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Introduction

The international system is facing a complex and transformative power transition, becoming more multipolar, in which the United States, as the hegemonic leader, considers China its main rival. China's rise, observed in recent decades, characterized by the shift in its growth model and rapid economic and technological development, has challenged the U.S. position in the global order, increasing tension between the two countries (Ross, 2020). However, the economies of China and the U.S are strongly linked and interdependent (Li & Bernal-Meza, 2021). According to Ross (2020) the power transition stimulates competition between Beijing and Washington but doesn't stop them from cooperating. However, this requires pragmatic leadership. Nonetheless, China has been expanding its economic and diplomatic ties, becoming one of the main economic partners for many countries.

China emerges as an alternative to the current world order, challenging the division of States into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral categories proposed by Wallerstein (2004), as well as the maintenance of the global status quo (Li, 2020). As a rising power, the Asian country seeks to promote multipolarity and reform international agreements to include the interests of developing countries. It is evident, therefore, that China's rise and the relative decline of the United States represent a shift in the global balance of power (Can & Chan, 2020).

In the early 21st century, Brazil emerged as a significant player on the international system, recognized as important by other powers. Brazil's place in the world is in constant redefinition. Whether designated as an emerging power, a middle power, or a regional power, the country's size does not allow it to play a minor role. It is within this context of systemic transformations that one of Brazil's central challenges lies: navigate these global changes while aiming for autonomy and internal development (Silva, 2023). To achieve this, Brazil has pursued strategic partnerships, South-South cooperation,



regional integration, and a multilateral approach (Silva, 2023). In this context, relations with China have been fundamental for Brazil's development.

In 1974, Brazil and China established political-diplomatic relations due to the convergence of their interests and agendas. In this context, the subsequent years were marked by the establishment of a "Strategic Partnership" between the two countries in 1993 and the creation of the China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN) in 2004. These relations had deepened to such an extent that in 2009 the Asian country became Brazil's main trading partner and the primary contributor to the surplus in Brazil's trade balance (Brasil, 2024). Meanwhile, the international scenario was characterized by China's economic rise and the weakening of the United States as a global power. Concurrently, a multipolar system is increasingly emerging, with the persistence of old and the rise of new powers, both in the Global North and the Global South.

This article has the main objective to analyze the relations between Brazil and China since 2003, identifying the continuity and changes up to the present day. The specific objectives are to map the main lines of Brazilian Foreign Policy, the view on the importance of China in bilateral relations and the main fluctuations and challenges presented. The methodology is based on bibliographic analysis and the examination of Brazilian diplomatic documents. The theoretical basis is in the interpretation that foreign policy is a public policy, influenced by internal and external factors, and conditioned by the country's capacities and constraints within the international system, as well as its internal power bloc, political leadership, and worldview (Silva, 2004; Silva, 2023). The central hypothesis is that changes in Brazilian Foreign Policy, particularly in how Brazil perceives its global position and its relationships with major powers, affect the speed and intensity of relations with China, despite the growing economic interaction.

Since the first Lula administration, which began in 2003, Brazil has increased its proximity to China both diplomatically and economically. Brazil and China have maintained a deep connection since the beginning of their relations, celebrating 50 years in 2024 (MRE, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand how Brazil-China relations developed from 2003 to 2010, the changes from 2011 to 2022, and the perspectives of Brazilian governments on China, including the current view, cooperation, and the limitations posed by internal and international policies.

The expansion of Brazil-China Relations since the turn of the millennium

The first Lula's government operated on a new base of Brazilian Foreign Policy, aiming to overcome the limitations of the 1990s and adapting Brazil to the transition in the international system. This approach focused on deepening regional integration in South America, reviving Brazil's multilateral tradition with a critical approach on international asymmetries and seeking strategic partnerships with similar countries worldwide (Cervo and Bueno, 2011; Silva, 2015). Additionally, coalition groups with variable geometry, such as IBSA, the G20 in the WTO, and BRICS, were formed. These new coalitions expanded the power of the participating countries, not only through an increased veto



capacity (collective obstruction) against dominant-country initiatives and proposing proactive solutions to global challenges (Silva, 2015).

During Lula's first two governments (2003-2010), relations with China were primarily guided by the principles of cooperation and mutual interests across various sectors including science, technology, agriculture, education, culture, trade, industry, infrastructure, development and multilateral affairs. During this period, Brazil tried to align itself with China aiming for mutual development through a "Strategic Partnership" (Silva & Frutuoso, 2011). Simultaneously, China was opening up to foreign investment and expanding its economic presence with a bilateral and multilateral commercial diplomacy in a quest to translate economic power into political gains (Dittmer, 2010).

With the end of the first two Lula governments, Brazil entered a new phase both domestically and in its foreign policy. During Dilma Rousseff's presidency (2011-2016), Brazil maintained a foreign policy similar to Lula's but faced internal crises, economic deterioration and a political support loss aggravated by the 2008 global financial crisis. Brazil's position in the international system remained largely unchanged. However, domestically, the country experienced economic decline, inflation, and recession. The government of Dilma Rousseff was marked by protests and a loss of support from business and political sectors, culminating in her impeachment in 2016 (Silva, 2021).

From 2010 to 2014, Brazil and China strengthened their relations as China expanded its global influence. Brazil's foreign policy focused on South-South cooperation, universalism, and enhancing its regional leadership. Consequently, both governments approved the Joint Action Plan (2010-2014), which aimed to promote equal cooperation, bilateral discussions on mutual interests to deepen relations with a focus on coordination, strategic vision, and exchange between the countries (MRE, 2010a; MRE, 2010b). This joint plan underscored the shared interests of both parties in forming a strategic partnership for the development of each country and their relations domestically and internationally (Leite, 2013). The strategic partnership has been upgraded to "comprehensive strategic partnership" in 2012 and a Global Strategic Dialogue between Ministers of Foreign Affairs along Ten-Year Cooperation Plan was established (2012-2021).

With Dilma's impeachment, Vice President Michel Temer assumed the presidency of Brazil from 2016 to 2019. During Temer's government, Brazil-China relations were not as close as in the two previous administrations (De Sousa, Abrão & Porto, 2023). The focus was primarily on internal crises, particularly economic challenges. The relationship with China continued based on economic interests, especially in agribusiness, as the Temer government has interests in economic benefits from the bilateral relationship with China (Moreira, 2020).

In this context of internal crisis and reorientation of Brazilian Foreign Policy, Jair Bolsonaro assumed the presidency from 2019 to 2022, proposing a shift that included distancing Brazil from China, now seen as a threat to Brazil and the West. However, as we will see next, this orientation was moderated by various factors. In 2023, Lula returned to the presidency, aiming to reclaim Brazil's lost ground in international relations. Under the slogan "Brazil is back," Lula's government adopted a foreign policy focused on defending multilateralism and multipolarity, reestablishing South-South



cooperation, and enhancing regional articulation in South America. In this context, it also meant revitalizing political-diplomatic cooperation within the BRICS group and expanding partnership with China (Silva, 2023).

Over the past 20 years, Brazil and the world have undergone various changes, especially in their relations with China, which have also adapted to the interests and objectives of the different Brazilian governments. From 2000 to 2010, the most recurrent themes in bilateral cooperation between China and Brazil were multipolarity, infrastructure, trade, science and technology, global governance, and cooperation in business, trade, and investments (MRE, 2004). With the transition to Dilma Rousseff's presidency, national interests shifted towards a series of internal conflicts spreading across the country (Silva, 2021). Additionally, cooperation with China continued to focus on multipolarity, international governance, science and technology, energy, mining, investments, infrastructure, and cultural exchanges between the countries and their national subunits (MRE, 2014).

Under Michel Temer's government, internal issues, especially economic ones, were predominant (Moreira, 2020). The relationship with China continued to be based on cooperation, international governance, multipolarity, investments, and free trade (MRE, 2017). During Bolsonaro's administration, relations with China were turbulent (Santoro, 2020), but they remained focused on trade, investments, agriculture, energy, science, technology, and commercial flows (MRE, 2019). Under Lula's new government, Brazil seeks to increase its role in the international system and strengthen ties with developing countries. Therefore, there is a renewed effort to enhance relations with China, aiming for cooperation in social development, technology, multilateralism, trade, environment, transportation, science, and technology (MRE, 2023).

Brazil-China Relations in the Bolsonaro Government (2019-2022)

In 2019, with Bolsonaro as president and Ernesto Araújo as Minister of Foreign Affairs, there was a shift in Brazilian Foreign Policy, with significant internal and international implications. From a bilateral perspective, the new foreign policy matrix prioritized closer ties with developed countries and distanced itself from developing countries, selecting ideologically aligned partnerships with the conservative right. There was also a rapprochement with Trump's United States (2017-2021), seen as a "defender of Western values." South-South cooperation was viewed with suspicion, while Brazil distanced itself from the Middle East and Africa and adopted a strong anti-China rhetoric (Silva, 2023).

This transformation in Brazilian Foreign Policy was also heavily influenced by the then Minister Ernesto Araújo's view that the West was experiencing a loss of its own identity and that only Donald Trump was capable of saving the West. Thus, the role of Brazil's foreign policy agenda, as a Western country, would be to fight against "globalism" and support the recovery of the West through alliances with Western nations, especially the United States, and the reaffirmation of the Judeo-Christian identity (Araújo, 2017). This perception led to the country becoming increasingly isolated on the international stage (Magalhães, 2022).



Regarding the relationship with China, even before his victory in the 2018 election, Bolsonaro faced strong criticism from the Chinese government for visiting Taiwan and for stating that China "does not buy in Brazil, it buys Brazil" (Marra et. al., 2021). The first years of his administration were characterized by a hostile stance (Bones, Pennaforte & Auler, 2023). When Eduardo Bolsonaro, then a Federal Deputy, made a statement on the social network X, formerly Twitter, blaming China for the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, he received a note from the Chinese Embassy in Brasília repudiating his words. Additionally, statements by the then Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub, caused friction in Sino-Brazilian relations by suggesting that the pandemic was a strategy for Chinese global domination. These declarations caused strains in diplomatic relations between China and Brazil, hindering Brazil's access to vaccine supplies and mechanical ventilators, for example (Magalhães, 2022).

Another issue that was a point of contention during Bolsonaro's government concerned the debate over Brazil's adoption of 5G technology standards. The Clean Network initiative, from Donald Trump's administration, received support from the Bolsonaro government at the end of 2020, ruling out the possibility of a partnership between Brazil and the Chinese company Huawei. At the time, Eduardo Bolsonaro stated that the alliance with the US would enable "secure 5G without Chinese espionage" (Schreiber, 2020). However, in 2021, after Trump left the White House, Brazil ceased to impose restrictions on the Chinese company regarding 5G.

Despite these recurring tensions in relations between Beijing and Brasília, a movement contrary to President Bolsonaro's position was also present during his government. This movement, primarily linked to economic sectors such as industry and agribusiness, recognized the need to maintain relations with China through a more pragmatic approach. Pressure from these sectors enabled a more moderate treatment of China by the government. For example, in June 2019, Vice President Hamilton Mourão visited the Asian country, resulting in the reactivation of COSBAN. In November of the same year, Chinese President Xi Jinping was received by Bolsonaro during the BRICS summit, with the statement that "China is increasingly becoming a part of Brazil's future" (Mazui, Barbiéri & Rodrigues; 2019).

Concerning economic and trade relations, starting with the so-called "Trade War" between China and the United States in 2018, Sino-Brazilian trade relations grew considerably, increasing the degree of interdependence between the two countries. These relations were consolidated through the sale of Brazilian primary products to the Chinese market and the purchase of manufactured goods from China by Brazil. Furthermore, the Asian country is the main destination for Brazilian exports and the primary source of its imports, also being the main contributor to Brazil's trade surplus (Bones, Pennaforte & Auler, 2023).

According to the Secretariat of Foreign Trade (2024), Brazil's exports to China were US\$67.8 billion in 2020 and US\$89.4 billion in 2022. As for Brazil's trade surplus with China, it amounted to US\$27.3 billion in 2019 and US\$40.2 billion in 2021 (Brazil, 2024). In contrast, Brazil had a trade deficit with the United States of US\$5.1 billion in 2019 and US\$8.3 billion in 2021 (AMCHAM, 2022). Despite the political and diplomatic strain in



Sino-Brazilian relations during Bolsonaro's administration, trade between China and Brazil reached record levels.

These indices demonstrate that Chinese pragmatism has prevailed, meaning Beijing has chosen to prioritize its economic and trade interests. It also shows China's importance as a consumer market, as well as Brazil's consequent dependence on the Asian country, which is greater than Brazil's dependence on the United States (Kalout & Martins da Costa, 2022). However, despite this strong interdependence between the two countries, China is seeking to diversify its food suppliers, such as soybeans, by purchasing more from countries like Uruguay, Argentina, and Canada, which could reduce long-term dependency on Brazil (Marra; et al., 2021).

In 2020, the U.S. was the second-largest source of foreign direct investment in Brazil, following the Netherlands (Brasil, 2021). In relation to Chinese investments in Brazil, their volume increased significantly from 2010 onwards, especially in the energy and manufacturing sectors. If Chinese direct investments in Brazil continue at the same pace in the coming years, this dependency relationship could be reversed (Kalout & Martins da Costa, 2022).

Brasil-China relations in the Third Lula's Government (2023-)

The proposal for the new Lula's government is to operate in a similar manner of international relations from his two previous governments. However, contextual changes and the learning of the last decade require adaptations to Brazilian Foreign Policy. The first year of government allows us to evaluate the priorities in Brazilian Foreign Policy which are the recovery of international credibility, the environmental agenda, the strengthening of BRICS, regional cooperation, South-South cooperation and the reinforcement of multilateralism (Silva, 2023).

Over the last two decades, Brazil and the international system passed through a lot of changes. With that it is necessary to comprehend how the internal and external influences affected Brazil and vice versa. For Putnam (2010), a country's internal and external politics are interconnected. The author highlights the existence of a two-level game: at the domestic level, actors pursue their interests and seek ways to adapt favorable policies to those interests. At an international level, national governments maximize their capabilities to satisfy pressures from domestic groups while minimizing the consequences of external actions (Putnam, 2010).

Having this in mind, the two-level game, Lula's new government aims to restore Brazil's international credibility in addition to maintaining a certain balance in the country's foreign policy. Lula returned to government with a Foreign Policy deeply affected by various diplomatic crises caused by his predecessor and the country's internal challenges that Brazil is facing. In addition to that, the international landscape is turbulent, marked by the Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine conflicts, the post-Covid-19 pandemic and environmental crises. Thus, under Lula's new government, Brazil is seeking to build a multipolar order, with less inequality and the ability to support the Global South, a different view from Bolsonaro's administration, which prioritized Christian values and an anti-globalist agenda (Júnior, 2023).



Lula's new government is in a difficult position, but re-establishing ties with China can be an opportunity for Brazil's government to build a more inclusive international order with active participation of emerging countries. There is also a return of concepts from Lula's first terms, such as prioritizing development and poverty reduction, strengthening South-South relations, focusing on coalitions like the BRICS, promoting economic growth with income distribution, multilateralism, and the reform of organizations like the UN (De Almeida, 2023). Therefore, relations with China are seen as an opportunity to achieve these objectives. Thus, with China's support, Lula's government seeks to revive bilateral opportunities for internal and global development goals, projecting Brazilian interests and its international protagonism (Lopes, Almeida & De Souza, 2023).

With these new opportunities, Lula performed a State visit to China in 2023. During the meeting, issues regarding bilateral cooperations, regional and international topics of common interest were discussed. Both countries signed a series of agreements of understanding in areas such as poverty and hunger reduction, food security, science, technology, innovation, space cooperation, communication, investments, finances, digital economy, trade facilitation and media. In terms of economy, both parties discussed the diversification and facilitation of trade and the increase in agricultural exchange and the resilience of production chains. The parties committed to create conditions for facilitating more competitive and high value products to be included in bilateral trade. Both countries agreed to encourage their companies to invest in each other, especially in areas such as infrastructure, energy, logistics, agriculture, industry and high technology (MRE, 2023). In the matter of political factors, Sino-Brazilian relations are marked by cooperation, mutual benefit, understanding and mutual interest in the progress of developing countries.

Therefore, it is evident that China is utilizing a Chinese model for cooperation with the Global South which is characterized by eight guiding principles formulated by Zhou Enlai in 1964. These principles are: (i) Equality and mutual benefit; (ii) Unconditionality; (iii) Relief of the burden on beneficiary countries; (iv) Self-sufficiency and independent economic development; (v) Promotion of efficient projects with less investment; (vi) Better quality equipment; (vii) Transfer of techniques to beneficiary countries; (viii) Chinese experts without special privileges. Thus, China leads the development of the Global South through trade, investment, and external assistance (Vadell, Lo Brutto, Leite & Crivelli, 2020).

However, in Sino-Brazilian relations, it is notable that trade exchanges are characterized by Brazil's role as a producer and exporter of natural resources, while China, in turn, acts as an exporter of manufactured goods and capital (Cunha, Lélis, Silva & De Lima, 2012). By investing in infrastructure and financing, China has built strong connections worldwide, allowing the Asian country to produce higher value-added products and creating a great interdependence and collaboration with developing countries. The debate about the nature of economic relations with China in Brazil occurs due to the growth of exportations in sectors with lower added value such as agriculture. On the other hand, the advantages of these trade relations are associated with the possibilities of investment and increased diversification of negotiations with major development centers (Rodrigues, 2022).



Given the current international scenario, the re-establishment ties with China after the Bolsonaro government and the new Lula government could be an opportunity to promote a new Brazilian international insertion, as well as to bring incentives for an internal reindustrialization plan, thus rescuing principles of Foreign Policy Brazilian as those of balance and diversification (Lopes, Almeida & De Souza, 2023). The new Lula government aims to rearticulate political and diplomatic relations, improve bilateral relations, especially economic ones, and rebuild strategic cooperation on global issues. In this way, the relationship with China aims to boost industrialization, technological advancement, and greater international insertion for Brazil during Lula's new government.

Final Considerations

During Lula's first two governments, relations with China were based on cooperation and mutual interests in areas such as science, agriculture, culture, education, trade, industry, infrastructure, development, and multilateralism. The Dilma government maintained these characteristics. As a result, Lula's first government and Dilma's government brought Brazil closer to China and the Global South. This rapprochement was strategic as it aimed to satisfy the development interests, partnerships, strengthening of multipolarity, and South-South cooperation of both Brazil and China.

During Michel Temer's government, the pursuit of cooperation in Sino-Brazilian relations was maintained, primarily in the economic and trade spheres. On the other hand, Jair Bolsonaro's government was marked by a break with Brazilian diplomatic tradition, specifically the history of pragmatism, the pursuit of multilateralism, and autonomy. The automatic alignment with the USA and the anti-China rhetoric weakened the strategic partnership between Brazil and China, as well as isolated Brazil internationally.

In summary, during the analyzed period, economic interaction between Brazil and China grew, while political relations fluctuated. The administrations of Lula, Dilma, Temer, and Bolsonaro maintained economic interaction with China. Their differences lie in the strategic and political closeness from 2003 to 2016, followed by political distancing during Bolsonaro's government, and a new re-establishment starting in 2023. The new Lula government seeks to restore Brazil's international projection, as well as rebuild global strategic cooperation. In this context, China is a potential ally for Brazilian development and a partner for Brazil in various international agendas.

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THE LUSOPHONE BRIDGE: MACAU'S ROLE IN CHINA-BRAZIL RELATIONS (1999-2024)

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Abstract

Since the handover in 1999, Beijing has strategically used Macau's Portuguese heritage and thriving local economy to develop closer relations with Lusophone countries. Among these nations, Brazil stands out as an emerging power and as China's most important trading partner in Latin America. However, it is crucial to recognize that Macau is not merely a passive entity in this dynamic. As a Special Administrative Region (SAR), Macau possesses a distinct "actorness", empowered by its Basic Law to engage autonomously in relevant external affairs. This study aims to dissect and understand Macau's role in the evolving China-Brazil relations over twenty-five years. To achieve this, I will employ qualitative research methods, primarily online archival excavation, and document analysis, focusing on official documents, local media articles, and academic literature. Applying soft power and paradiplomacy frameworks, I will explore how China has utilized Macau as an instrument of attraction in its dealings with Brazil. Furthermore, I will examine Macau's endeavors to establish itself as a critical paradiplomatic player in these interactions. Lastly, I will delve into Brazil's reactions to China and Macau's efforts to strengthen their ties with the country and how these responses have shaped their triangular relations.

Keywords

Macau, China, Brazil, Soft Power, Paradiplomacy.

Resumo

Desde a transferência em 1999, Pequim tem utilizado estrategicamente a herança portuguesa de Macau e a próspera economia local para desenvolver relações mais estreitas com os países lusófonos. Entre estas nações, o Brasil destaca-se como potência emergente e como o mais importante parceiro comercial da China na América Latina. No entanto, é crucial reconhecer que Macau não é apenas uma entidade passiva nesta dinâmica. Enquanto Região Administrativa Especial (RAE), Macau possui uma "atividade" distinta, habilitada pela sua Lei Básica a envolver-se autonomamente em assuntos externos relevantes. Este estudo visa dissecar e compreender o papel de Macau na evolução das relações China-Brasil ao longo de vinte e cinco anos. Para o conseguir, empregarei métodos de investigação qualitativos,



principalmente consulta de arquivos online e análise de documentos oficiais, artigos dos media locais e literatura académica. Aplicando estruturas de soft power e paradiplomacia, explorarei a forma como a China utiliza Macau como instrumento de atracção nas suas relações com o Brasil. Além disso, examinarei os esforços de Macau para se estabelecer como um actor paradiplomático crítico nestas interacções. Por último, aprofundarei as reacções do Brasil aos esforços da China e de Macau para reforçar os seus laços com o país e como estas respostas moldaram as suas relações triangulares.

Palavras-chave

Macau, China, Brasil, Soft Power, Paradiplomacia.

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THE LUSOPHONE BRIDGE: MACAU'S ROLE IN CHINA-BRAZIL RELATIONS (1999-2024)

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the relationship between China and Brazil has grown significantly. This growth is driven by expanding economic and political ties. At the heart of this evolving partnership is the often-overlooked role of Macau, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. Since Macau was returned to China from Portugal in 1999, Beijing has aptly utilized its unique Portuguese heritage and vibrant economy to strengthen ties with Portuguese-speaking countries (PSC), particularly Brazil. Nonetheless, Macau is not just a passive player in this strategy since its status as a SAR gives it a unique ability to act independently in many external affairs. This autonomy allows Macau to bridge China and the Lusophone world, promoting economic, cultural, and diplomatic exchanges (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

Brazil is the largest PSC and Latin American country, making it a crucial partner for China. Their relationship is marked by significant trade, investment and intersectoral cooperation (Oliveira, 2023). Yet, the place of Macau in this bilateral relationship has not been thoroughly explored. This paper aims to fill that gap, examining Macau's role in Beijing-Brasília relations over the last twenty-five years. The study will use qualitative research methods to analyze official documents, local media articles, and academic literature. By applying soft power and paradiplomacy concepts, the research will look at how China has used Macau to attract and influence Brazil.

Additionally, it will investigate how Macau has actively worked to establish itself as a critical player in these diplomatic efforts. The study will consider Brazil's reactions to initiatives by China and the MSAR, exploring how these responses have shaped the relationship between the three. Interactions between China, Macau, and Brazil offer a complex and fascinating case study in contemporary international relations.

2. Soft Power and Paradiplomacy: Diplomatic Tools in an Interdependent World

In the 1970s, new international players emerged, including non-state and subnational actors, along with new forms of exerting power in world politics beyond military might.



This shift was driven by advancements in transnational communication, finance, trade, and travel, as well as the rise of global interdependence. This new scenario begged for the development of concepts that allowed the understanding of these fast-paced transformations, leading to the appearance of the terms *soft power* and *paradiplomacy* in academic circles (Al-Malki et al., 2023; Oddone, 2023).

Nye (1990) coined the term *soft power*, which refers to a country's ability to influence others and shape their preferences through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment. Nye (2004) also points out that a country's *soft power* lies mainly in three primary resources: culture (in places where it is attractive to others), political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad) and foreign policy (when it is perceived as legitimate and has moral authority).

Culture encompasses the values and practices that impart meaning to a society, manifesting in various forms. It is often categorized into high culture, which includes literature, art, and education appealing to elites; and popular culture, which centers on mass entertainment. When a nation's culture embodies universal values and its policies advocate for shared values and interests, it enhances the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes due to the bonds of attraction and duty it fosters. Commerce is just one method of cultural transmission. Culture is also shared through personal interactions, visits, and exchanges (Nye, 2004).

Government policies, both domestic and international, can be significant sources of *soft power*. Depending on the context, these policies can have varying impacts over the short and long term. Effective policies can enhance a nation's *soft power* by reinforcing its attractiveness and legitimacy. Meanwhile, the political values a government promotes in its domestic actions, its participation in international institutions, and its foreign policy significantly influence the preferences of others. Governments can either attract or repel others through the power of their example. However, governments vie for control of *soft power* against a wide array of opinion leaders, including news media, corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and scientific networks (Nye, 2004).

At the same time, the most encompassing and widely accepted definition of *paradiplomacy* has been advanced by Noé Cornago (1999: 40), who understands it as "sub-state governments' involvement in international relations through the establishment of formal and informal contacts, either permanent or ad hoc, with foreign public or private entities, to promote socio-economic, cultural or political issues, as well as any other foreign dimension of their own constitutional competences."

Paradiplomacy is governed by strong institutional conditions, including the necessity for political legitimacy, defined competencies, professionalized infrastructures, and financial resources for international operations. Furthermore, it is increasingly shaped by agreed-upon rules and is a collection of practices. When subnational governments engage in structured international activities, they do so under the influence of international norms, rules, and practices. Subnational governments, in collaboration with international organizations, transnational networks of subnational governments, and academics, have been participating in an international socialization process. This process is facilitating the establishment of a new international institution (Oddone, 2023).



More importantly, paradiplomacy can render *actorness* to the subnational units that use it. Tianyang Liu and Yao Song (2020) elaborated a four-dimensional analytical framework of the essential dimensions of international actorness in paradiplomacy: 1) authority, which refers to the powers that allow a subnational government to engage in international relations, albeit with certain limitations; 2) opportunity, which refers to opportunities arising from the external environment that directly or indirectly support the role of a subnational government as an actor in international relations; 3) capability, which refers to opportunities generated by the external environment that directly or indirectly enhance the role of a subnational government as a participant in international relations; and 4) presence, which pertains to the external and internal recognition of subnational governments as international actors by third parties.

3. Macau in the Chinese Soft Power Toward Brazil: Attracting a Portuguese-Speaking Strategic Partner (1999-2024)

China's post-Cold War strategy heavily relies on using the soft power approach in its foreign policy. Since 2004, China has expanded its global influence through a network of Confucius Institutes (CI) and Classrooms (CC), modernizing state media, enhancing overseas aid, and investing in cultural promotion. Under Xi Jinping, China intensified these efforts, launching the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, aiming to strengthen global trade networks and investing nearly US\$1 trillion by 2023. China also established international financial institutions, like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB), to create alternatives to the US-led global order (Kurlantzick, 2023; Leahy et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, Brazil has become more important in Beijing's foreign policy agenda since 1993, when it successfully elevated its cooperative relationship with China to a Strategic Partnership (SP), being the first country to do so. In 2012, the Brazil-China partnership advanced to a new level when it was elevated to a global SP as part of both countries' response to the 2008 financial crisis. This elevation signified China's recognition of Brazil's position within the international system (Oliveira, 2023).

Therefore, Brazil remains a highly valued strategic partner for Beijing for three primary reasons: 1) it is a reliable supplier of essential commodities for industrial production and capital formation, as well as foodstuffs to feed China's population of 1.41 billion while boasting a US\$ 157.4 billion bilateral trade (2023). Additionally, it serves as a significant consumer market in Latin America for Chinese goods and services, especially in strategic sectors such as energy, manufacturing, and information technology (Ellis, 2017; Reis, 2024); 2) it plays a pivotal role in South-South Cooperation (SSC) due to its status as a rising power that shares China's aspiration of shifting the world order towards a multipolar system. This includes amplifying the voice of the developing world in international institutions and pushing for the de-dollarization of the global financial system, a shift that both countries believe can be expedited through the joint diplomatic efforts of BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) (Liu & Papa, 2022); and 3) as a regional power, it can help mitigate U.S. influence in Latin America



and compel Washington to refocus its strategic attention from the Indo-Pacific to the Western Hemisphere (Liang, 2019; Pini, 2015).

Because of these reasons, China started to launch a soft power offensive towards Brazil by using Macau as a major asset in this strategy, mainly in the cultural exchanges and foreign policy initiatives. Designated as a platform between China and the Lusophone world, due to the 442 years of Portuguese rule in the enclave (1557-1999) and the acceptance of Portuguese as an official language alongside Chinese after the handover to Beijing, Macau has unique characteristics to serve in this intermediary role effectively. In addition, the increasing demand for Portuguese language courses has transformed Macau into a prime location for linguistic and cultural training for Chinese diplomats, interpreters, CI Mandarin teachers, and businesspeople before they begin working in PSC, including Brazil (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

Among Beijing's cultural initiatives, the most important one is the Cultural Week of China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries, launched in 2008, annually held in Macau and organized by the Permanent Secretariat of the Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macau). The event is also supported by the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau, the Macau Government Tourism Office, the Oriental Foundation, and the Macau Association for the Promotion of Exchange between Asia-Pacific and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Mendes, 2014; Yu, 2018). For five days, artists from Mainland China, Macau, and the PSC perform music, theatrical presentations, dance shows, and exhibit photography, painting, and handicrafts. The Permanent Secretariat describes the Cultural Week as "a brilliant symbol of Macau's establishment as the center of cultural exchange between China and Portuguese-speaking countries" (Secretariado Permanente do Fórum para a Cooperação Económica e Comercial entre a China e os Países de Língua Portuguesa (Macau), 2023).

In the foreign policy arena, the main initiative the Chinese government leads is the Macau Forum. The Forum, created in 2003 by China's Central Government and coordinated by the Ministry of Commerce (MoC), represented a groundbreaking development in international relations. It connects China with nine Portuguese-speaking countries across four continents: Brazil in South America, Portugal in Europe, East Timor in Asia, and six African nations—Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea¹. The Macau Forum's ministerial conferences are always held in Macau and feature a Permanent Secretariat based in the city. The Chinese MoC nominates the Secretary-General. He is assisted by three deputy secretaries-general: one appointed by China's MoC, one by the MSAR, and one on a rotational basis in alphabetical order among the PSC (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

In 2003, the First Ministerial Conference, chaired by then-Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi, reached an agreement to enhance Sino-Lusophone economic collaboration,

¹ Equatorial Guinea joined the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) in 2014, and the Macau Forum in 2022. Although Portuguese is one of the country's official languages, alongside Spanish and French, it is not widely spoken. The only Portuguese-based creole language spoken in Equatorial Guinea is Fa d'Ambô, which is used on the islands of Annobón and Bioko, and in the capital, Malabo. Cf. Agostinho, 2021.



intergovernmental partnerships, trade, investment, entrepreneurship, fisheries, agriculture, engineering, infrastructure development, natural resources, and human resources. The 2010 conference aimed to elevate the Macau Forum to a higher level. The establishment of the Training Center for PSC officials in 2010 also contributed to the renewed momentum generated by the third Ministerial Conference (Matias dos Santos, 2020).

4. The Lusophone Bridge: Macau as a Paradiplomatic Actor in China-Brazil Relations (1999-2024)

According to Liu and Song's (2020) framework, the MSAR has all the elements of international actorhood. Regarding *authority*, the Macau Basic Law (MBL) (1993), which serves as the "mini-constitution" of the SAR and came into effect when Macau was handed over to Beijing, stipulates that Macau "will enjoy a high degree of autonomy for fifty years, except in foreign and defense affairs, which are the responsibilities of the Central People's Government" (Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, 1993, Art. 12). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the MBL presents a hybrid approach to Macau's autonomy since it highlights the binominal approach: "foreign affairs" vis-à-vis "external relations", in which the former is the sole domain of the Central Government while the latter comprises an authorized external space for the SAR (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014). The MBL stipulates that the "Macao Special Administrative Region [sic] may on its own, using the name 'Macao, China,' [sic] maintain and develop relations and conclude and implement agreements with states, regions and relevant international or regional organizations in the appropriate fields, such as the economy, trade, finance, shipping, communications, tourism, culture, science and technology and sports" (Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, 1993, Art. 136).

About *opportunity*, the MSAR's push into an intense international engagement was mainly prompted by China's skyrocketing real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the early 2000s, around 10.5% per year, due to the country's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. WTO membership committed China to further opening its economy, reducing tariffs, and eliminating trade barriers. This created a more favorable environment for foreign investment, leading to a surge in FDI inflows. Furthermore, Chinese growth was favored by comprehensive economic reforms, successful State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) restructuring, an export-led growth strategy, substantial infrastructure investments, a favorable demographic profile, and stable governance (Yao, 2014).

This context transformed China into the second-largest consumer of energy resources after the US, prompting Beijing to place energy security as one of its foremost priorities. At the time, more than 60 percent of China's crude oil imports originated from the Middle East, a dependency Beijing viewed as a strategic vulnerability due to the region's political instability and the dominant US military presence. Consequently, China strived to diversify its energy imports away from traditional sources in the Persian Gulf, turning to PSC such as Angola, Brazil, Mozambique, and Timor-Leste. Additionally, Beijing aimed to



leverage the rich natural resources of PSC to sustain its rapid economic growth (Horta, 2006; Matias dos Santos, 2020).

Regarding *capability*, the MSAR has heavily invested in cultural and diplomatic initiatives to increase its international influence over foreign partners. The Macanese government has sponsored numerous academic exchanges and PSC cultural festivals, while also providing scholarships to students from African PSC. The MSAR has also hosted many meetings involving professionals, academics, government officials, and businesspeople from China and PSC (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014; Yu, 2018).

Concerning *presence*, the MSAR now participates as a full or associate member in over eighteen economic and cultural international institutions, including the WTO, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Macau has consular relations with fifty-seven countries and maintains economic and trade offices in Lisbon and Brussels. Its representative in Brussels, where the European Union headquarters is located, is also accredited in Geneva, the seat of the WTO and many other international organizations. Brazil's importance is evident for Macau: its GDP is 5.15 times larger than that of all the other PSC combined, making it the primary focus for any strategy aimed at promoting a "greater Lusophone" commercial network. This trade relationship could effectively stimulate the international Lusophone community and provide a means to diversify Macau's heavy reliance on Cantonese gamblers from South China. However, the bilateral trade between the MSAR and Brazil continues to be very small: it amounted to around US\$ 3.15 million in 2023. Macau primarily exports plastics, clocks, watches, and machinery to Brazil. Meanwhile, Brazil exports to Macau mainly agricultural and food products (Spooner, 2016a, 2016b; Trading Economics, 2024a).

Therefore, Macau has launched several cultural initiatives to foster closer relations with Brazil and the other PSC. The most notable one is the Lusophone Festival (*Festival da Lusofonia*), established in 1998 and held annually every October to celebrate and promote the culture of the PSC. It also honors the Lusophone communities living in Macau for their contributions to the region's development. Organized by the Institute for Civic and Municipal Affairs and the Tourist Office, this traditional event features a variety of cultural activities, including food, handicrafts, exhibitions, and concerts (Matias dos Santos, 2020; Mendes, 2014).

The MSAR also actively supports academic events that connect local universities and those from the PSC countries. The University of Macau has hosted several meetings of the Association of Universities of Portuguese Language (AULP). In 2011, its Department of Portuguese hosted the World Symposium on Portuguese Language Studies and annually organizes the Day of the Portuguese Language and the Summer Course on Portuguese Language and Culture. This course includes visits and meetings with Macanese officials, educating participants about Macau's role as a cultural crossroads and a platform for relations between China and the PSC (Mendes, 2014).

Despite not being directly aimed at Brazil, the international sports tournaments hosted in the SAR have fostered people-to-people and organization-to-organization links between Macau and Brazil. Brazilians tend to have a prominent presence in Macau's



world-class Grand Prix. For instance, "Pipo" Derani secured third place in the 60th-anniversary race in Fall 2013, and Lucas di Grassi won the 52nd Macau Grand Prix in 2005. The top-ranked Brazilian Women's Volleyball Team has also regularly competed in major tournaments in Macau, facing teams from China, Russia, and the USA, including the 2011 International Federation of Volleyball Championship (Spooner, 2016b).

One of the MSAR's main diplomatic initiatives towards Brazil is its support to the Macau Association for the Promotion of Exchange between Asia-Pacific and Latin America (MAPEAL), a non-profit organization that focuses on the promotion of exchanges and connections between Macau, China, and Latin America, specifically in the areas of culture, business, tourism, academic research, publication, information exchange, and training. Among all the events and activities, two annual events are regularly organized between October and November/December each year. The "Latin American Cultural Festival," held from early October until the end of November, features 9 to 14 activities to foster cultural exchange, along with some business matching activities. Another significant annual event is the "Latin American Pavilion" and the associated seminars/forums, which take place in mid-October at the "Macao International Trade and Investment Fair" to foster business cooperation and exchange (Macau Association for the Promotion of Exchange between Asia-Pacific and Latin America, 2024; Mendes, 2014).

Despite its potential, the MSAR has not yet fully realized its role as a bridge between China and the PSC. The local business community, except for Stanley Ho's group and a few other entrepreneurs, has not placed enough emphasis on Lusophone markets. Additionally, some local authorities, who often focus more on internal matters than global engagement, have shown limited commitment, and the MSAR still needs to establish a trade and economic delegation in Brazil, as the only existing one in a PSC is in Portugal (Matias dos Santos, 2020).

5. Brazil's Responses to China's and Macau's Soft Power Initiatives (1999-2024)

Brazil prizes its relationship with China primarily for economic and political reasons. China has been the largest destination for Brazilian exports since 2009 (Oliveira, 2023). Since 2012, China has been Brazil's leading supplier of imported goods. In 2023, Brazil exported US\$ 104.32 billion worth of goods to China, especially soy, iron ore, and oil, while the country imported US\$ 74.19 billion worth of manufactured goods, especially machines and equipment (Trading Economics, 2024b). Simultaneously, Brasília welcomes diplomatic cooperation with China to maintain its economic and political independence from US influence and interference, thereby enhancing its bargaining power with Washington (Liang, 2019; Pini, 2015).

Brazil's participation in the Macau Forum has become more intense over the years. Initially, Brazil was criticized for sending low-level officials to the Forum's ministerial conferences. However, in 2013, Brasília sent Vice President Michel Temer to the 4th Ministerial Conference. Brazil also values the Macau Forum since it allows the country to engage annually with China and the PSC at the same event (Mendes, 2014; Veloso, 2015; Meneses, 2020).



Some observers (Mendes, 2014; Meneses, 2020; Veloso, 2015) have raised concerns that the Forum might enhance China's influence in the African PSC, which may undermine Brazil's strategic interests in the region. However, Brazilian diplomats have publicly stated that they do not see the Macau Forum as damaging to Brasília's interests. Paulo Estivallet, the former Brazilian Ambassador to Beijing, emphasized that Brazil values and recognizes China's efforts to promote rapprochement with the PSC through this mechanism. He highlighted that Brazil accounts for over 80% of China-PSC trade and is interested in participating in initiatives facilitating business and investments between member countries (Meneses, 2020). Brazil has also steadily engaged in China's cultural initiatives aimed at the PSC, sending diplomats, artists, scholars, chefs, and business delegations to the events held in Macau (Matias dos Santos, 2020). According to Ambassador Estivallet: "Since his [sic] creation and within the limits of its capabilities, Brazil has been seeking to participate in the initiatives promoted by the Macau Forum, both in the economic-commercial field and in the areas of cultural, educational and linguistic promotion" (Meneses, 2020).

It is important to note that Brazil's participation in the Macau Forum fluctuates depending on the strength of its bilateral relations with China. Given the extensive trade volume between Brazil and China, Brazil prioritizes its direct bilateral channels with China over the Forum. Moreover, Chinese soft power may not sufficiently enhance Brasília-Beijing relations due to several challenges: 1) there is an imbalance in trade, with Brazil's exports primarily consisting of soybeans and minerals, leading to the reprimarization of Brazilian exports; 2) the Brazilian industry struggles to compete with Chinese imports, contributing to the country's growing deindustrialization; 3) Brazil has not formally joined the BRI, citing the initiative's ambiguous legal frameworks and a lack of strategic information for Brazil's productive and political sectors; and 4) China remains ambivalent toward some of Brazil's key foreign policy goals, such as securing a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (Lopes, 2023; Oliveira, 2023).

Regarding the MSAR's cultural and diplomatic efforts towards Brazil, the South American country has regularly participated in its initiatives, sending diplomats, business delegations and artists. In addition, Macau, as a place with Portuguese as its official language, remains an attractive place to Brazilian researchers and athletes who want to work in China since it facilitates their lives there. Nevertheless, Brazil does not view the MSAR with the same level of importance as its relations with Beijing. Since the handover, Brazil has made only a couple of notable visits to the MSAR. Brazil's Vice President Michel Temer visited in 2013 for the 10th anniversary of the Macau Forum, and almost a decade earlier, in the fall of 2004, Brazil's Minister of Culture and renowned musician, Gilberto Gil, made a brief appearance. However, Gil's visit was primarily for the Hong Kong music festival, not Macau. Until Temer's visit in 2013, Gilberto Gil was the highest-ranking Brazilian official to have visited Macau. Another issue that limits its relations with the MSAR is that, as Brazil has outlawed gambling casinos in its territory since 1946, the country lacks companies that can invest in the MSAR's thriving gaming industry (Mendes, 2014; Spooner, 2016a, 2016b).



Conclusion

Over the past twenty-five years, the evolving relationship between China and Brazil has highlighted Macau's unique role as a bridge between the two countries. This study demonstrates how Macau's Portuguese heritage and status as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China have been leveraged to strengthen ties with Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking rising power in Latin America.

Following Nye's (2004) framework, China and Macau have focused on cultural and foreign policy initiatives to foster deeper engagement with Brazil. Besides, the MSAR has all the elements of actorness that were advanced by Liu and Song (2020). Macau has sought to position itself as a cultural and economic intermediary, enhancing China's soft power in Brazil through various initiatives and collaborations. Established in 2003, the Macau Forum has been pivotal in promoting economic, cultural, and educational exchanges between China and the PSC, including Brazil. Macau's efforts to host the Cultural Week of China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries and provide a hub for Portuguese language training for Chinese diplomats and businesspeople underscore its strategic importance.

Still, several challenges remain. Apart from a few notable exceptions, the Macanese business community has not sufficiently prioritized the emphasis on Lusophone markets, including Brazil. Establishing a trade and economic delegation in Brazil remains an unfulfilled need, as currently, the only such delegation in a PSC is in Portugal. From Brazil's perspective, the country remains cautious about deepening its engagement with China, primarily due to the asymmetry in their bilateral trade relations, skepticism about the benefits of the BRI, and the lack of support for some of Brazil's strategic goals in its quest to become a great power. Concerning relations between Brasília and the MSAR, Brazil has yet to accord more political and economic importance to the region.

In conclusion, while Macau has made significant strides in enhancing China-Brazil relations, addressing these challenges is crucial to completely capitalize on its strategic position. Macau's distinct actorness, facilitated by its autonomy under the Basic Law, has enabled it to serve as a vital conduit for Chinese diplomatic efforts. As Beijing continues to expand its global influence, overcoming these obstacles will be essential to further solidifying Macau's role in international diplomacy involving the PSC.

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CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY: AN IMPORTANT PART OF CURRENT SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS

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Abstract

The evolution cooperation pattern in regard Sino-Brazilian cooperation, has extended to climate and sustainability concerns in light of the United countries Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. The importance of this subject rests with the fact that two of the top 10 world economies are advocating for the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" and making it an important part of their bilateral relationship. By analyzing government documents, policies, and major projects related to climate change mitigation, the addresses various approaches, cooperation and improvement in bilateral and multilateral efforts. In this study, we argue that the risen to power of President Lula offered opportunities for deeper cooperation between Brazil and China to navigate external pressures and actions to protect the climate. Thus, Brazil and China are not only able to protect tropical rainforests, but also contribute significantly to ameliorate the global climate and promote sustainability.

Keywords

Brazil, China, Climate Changes, Environmental Diplomacy.

Resumo

O padrão de evolução da cooperação sino-brasileira estendeu-se às preocupações climáticas e de sustentabilidade à luz da Convenção-Quadro dos Estados Unidos sobre Alterações Climáticas (UNFCCC) e do Acordo de Paris. A importância deste assunto reside no facto de duas das 10 principais economias mundiais defenderem o princípio das "responsabilidades comuns mas diferenciadas" e do Brasil e da China terem tornado esta preocupações numa parte importante da sua relação bilateral. Neste estudo, defendemos que a ascensão ao poder do Presidente Lula ofereceu oportunidades para uma cooperação mais profunda entre o Brasil e a China para lidar com pressões externas e ações para proteger o clima. Assim, o Brasil e a China não só são capazes de proteger as florestas tropicais, como também contribuem significativamente para melhorar o clima global e promover a sustentabilidade.

Palavras-chave

Brasil, China, Alterações Climáticas, Diplomacia Ambiental.



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CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY: AN IMPORTANT PART OF CURRENT SINO-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS

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Introduction

The global concern on climate change has becoming more and more an urgent topic and it's the defining issue of our time. With the challenges led by shifting weather patterns and rising sea levels, nations worldwide are building strategic partnerships to combat this existential threat. Among these alliances, the relationships between Brazil and China plays a significant role in environmental sustainability (United Nations, n.d.).

As two of the world's largest economies and greenhouse gas emitters, the cooperation between Brazil and China does have the potential to be an important part of global environmental policy. The joint declaration of deepening comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations in 2023 acknowledged the imperative to confront the impacts of climate change. This acknowledgment pushed the establishment of a specialized committee under China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Committee, focused on environmental protection and climate change reduction (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023).

The book *Brazil-China Relations in the 21st Century: The Making of a Strategic Partnership* by Maurício Santoro and *Environmental Diplomacy: Negotiating More Effective Global Agreements* by Susskind et. al. provided the main inspiration for this paper. The content on news and government websites was also a source of reference. They provide factual references, theoretical support, and inspiration for ideas. This study examines both the internal and external challenges encountered in cooperation while also discussing the potential prospects and relevance of Brazilian-Chinese collaboration for other Latin American countries, particularly those with rainforests, and for global South-South cooperation.

The research objective is to analyze Brazil–China relations regarding climate change by scrutinizing their bilateral cooperation and commitments within multilateral platforms, focusing on policy documents and diplomatic exchanges. It will explore opportunities, challenges, and prospects for enhanced cooperation between the two countries in climate action and sustainable development.



Literature Review

According to Susskind et. al. (2014), environmental diplomacy specifically addresses the significance of agreements and negotiations related to global environmental importance and concerns. It refers to the function of international treaties, agreements and accords in promoting cooperation and settling disputes pertaining to environmental matters. According to this supposition, a variety of factors can be used to assess whether environmental treaty-making procedures are successful or unsuccessful, including the involvement of civil society, the strength of scientific consensus, and the execution of accords. The various issues of climate change diplomacy are also made clear by the rise of new academic subfields such as environmental security, global environmental governance, and environmental peacebuilding. By putting these different theoretical concepts to practical use, environmental diplomacies are able to reach agreements that are not only beneficial to the environment, but also enhance international relations by discussing these common and shared environmental issues (Susskind et al., 2014).

Examining Brazil-China ties in the subject of climate change provides important points of view into the changing nature of global cooperation to tackle environmental issues. Since the early 1990s, both nations (Brazil and China) have actively participated in climate change negotiations, especially through their memberships in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This early participation significantly highlights Brazil's and China's importance as major actors in global climate governance (Santoro, 2022).

The literature also discusses the consequences of China's and Brazil's status as countries in the process of industrialization with abundant natural resources and biodiversity. Both nations have committed to combating climate change and protecting the environment, despite having different political systems. Their cooperation in climate diplomacy demonstrates their understanding of the value of group action in addressing global warming in addition to their shared interests (Santoro, 2022) (Cheng, 2022).

Methodological approaches focusing on policy responses related to climate change, provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies adopted by Brazil and China in climate challenges (Barbi, 2016). By analyzing government documents, policies, and major projects related to climate change mitigation, the addresses various approaches, cooperation and improvement in bilateral and multilateral efforts. Overall, the literature on Brazil-China relations shows the importance of understanding the interactions between political, economic, and environmental factors in solving climate change issues.

Historical Background

Brazil and China have strong partnerships including economic cooperation, diplomatic exchanges, and cooperation in various fields. From the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1974 to the upgrade to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2012, their relationships have flourished (Santoro, 2022). In the twentieth century, both Brazil and China went through the periods of intensive development primarily focusing on economic growth and industrialization. During this time, environmental concerns took a backseat as the primary goal was to use natural resources for agricultural and industrial purposes



(Furtado, 2005; Shapiro, 2001). This history resulted in significant environmental problem, including deforestation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity (Watts, 2010).

At the beginning, both Brazil and China didn't focus much on international environmental agendas, viewing them as they will slow down the developmental projects (Correa do Lago, 2007). In Brazil, the military regime prioritized economic expansion in the Amazon, while China was on a path of opening and reform. Environmental concerns were covered by the pursuit of economic growth.

The tide began to turn in Brazil during the democratization of the 1980s, marked by the emergence of a vibrant environmental movement, particularly in the Amazon region. Figures like Chico Mendes, a leader of rubber workers, gained global recognition, symbolizing the growing environmental consciousness of the era. Institutional developments, including the establishment of agencies dedicated to environmental protection, laid the base for future environmental policy and diplomacy (Santoro, 2022).

In 1992, Brazil took a significant step towards holding the global environmental cooperation by hosting the UN Conference on Environment and Development, known as the Earth Summit. This event represented the adoption of important agreements such as Agenda 21, the Convention on Biodiversity, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC, especially, laid the base for international cooperation in climate change by recognizing the need for emission reductions (Santoro, 2022).

In climate change negotiations, both Brazil and China advocated for the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," as mentioned in the UNFCCC. This principle acknowledged the historical responsibility of developed nations for greenhouse gas emissions while recognizing the shared but differentiated responsibilities of developing countries (Santoro, 2022).

In the historical context, the trend of cooperation between China and Brazil on climate change is on the rise. China already has a good understanding of the local situation from its long history of political, economic and historical cooperation with Brazil, which has laid the foundation for the positive trend of cooperation on climate change that follows.

Current Status of Climate Change Cooperation

Brazil and China jointly released a statement in April 2023 pledging to confront the climate crisis together and acknowledge it as one of the greatest challenges of the modern era. At their meeting in Beijing, President Xi Jinping and President Lula da Silva agreed that combating climate change and establishing a just and prosperous global community are crucial and important (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Both states emphasized the need to combine immediate climate responses with conservation and cooperation to achieve sustainable development goals. They agreed to broaden, deepen, and enrich bilateral cooperation in the field of climate change, following the principles of the United countries Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. They also confirmed again their commitment to the Paris Agreement's objective of limiting global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels, with efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. They also expressed determination to strengthen multilateralism and oppose



unilateralism, emphasizing the importance of international solidarity and cooperation in addressing climate change. In terms of concrete actions, both countries have undertaken various joint initiatives, policies, and projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy, and enhancing climate sustainability. These include efforts in transitioning to sustainable and low-carbon economies, developing smart cities, investing in green infrastructure, fostering green industries, and promoting renewable energy sources (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Furthermore, Brazil and China are also cooperating on technology development and sharing, particularly in monitoring forest cover through initiatives like the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite Program (CBERS). They also intend to exchange knowledge and best practices in rain forest protection, sustainable management, ecosystem regeneration, and vegetation restoration. Both countries are engaging in policy dialogues and sharing experiences in climate financing, aiming to mobilize resources effectively and sustainably for climate-related projects (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). Brazil and China have established a subcommittee on environment and climate change under the China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Committee. This will provide a platform for continued dialogue, coordination, and joint action on climate issues (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

Overall, the current situation of cooperation between Brazil and China in climate change reflects a commitment to sustainable development and international cooperation.

Challenges and Opportunities

The relationships between Brazil and China in climate change leads to both challenges and opportunities that will shape global environmental governance in the 21st century.

One of the significant challenges is from the different approaches of past Brazilian administrations towards environmental protection. While President Lula's holds a positive attitude on this, like establishing the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and proposing Amazon-centric summits and conferences, which signifies a commitment to environmental preservation, the legacy of former President Bolsonaro's policies did not. Bolsonaro's unwillingness for environmental concerns and his initial withdrawal from hosting COP25 have played a negative role on Brazil's international environmental image. This difference within Brazil's governance creates challenges in making climate actions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Moreover, the competitive situation between the United States and the European Union for global climate governance leadership intensify external pressure on Brazil's Amazon policy. The influence from these key international actors complicates Brazil's efforts to balance sovereignty with protective environmental measures in the Amazon region. However, this pressure also shows an opportunity for Brazil to establish its own leadership and engage in effective multilateral cooperation, and its influence in global climate governance (Zhou, 2013).

On the other hand, Brazil and China share common ground in addressing climate change, particularly in tropical rainforest protection. China also has a large range of forests and successful experiences to protect them. Both countries have advantages in protecting these vital ecosystems and reducing climate change. The common ground of interests



provides a good way for cooperation, and Brazil and China can exchange their strengths and resources to advance sustainable practices and policies.

Brazil has been formally elected as the host country for COP 30. The Minister for the Environment and Climate Change and head of the Brazilian delegation, Marina Silva, declared that COP 30 will be hosted in the city of Belém do Pará. It will be the first time that the Amazon, an important biosphere for combating climate change, would host a UNFCCC COP. This will bring new platforms and new initiatives for cooperation between Brazil and China (XINHUANET, 2023). The risen to power of President Lula offered opportunities for deeper cooperation between Brazil and China to navigate external pressures and actions to protect the climate. Brazil and China are not only able to protect tropical rainforests but also contribute significantly to global climate and sustainability.

China and Brazil should increase their cooperation and exchanges in the environmental field. The feasibility of expanding environmental cooperation between the two countries is high. They have many points of convergence of interests; at the same time, their development and transformation tasks are similar, and they have the same demands for international cooperation.

This study considers that in the future, Brazil-China cooperation in the fields of climate change, clean and renewable energy, and green economy will push the environmental collaboration between the two countries to a new stage. From today's perspective, Chinese diplomacy in the current international situation shows a new development trend, which is the gradual increase in the sense of independence and innovation. The cooperation between China and Brazil on climate change will help strengthen the discourse and leadership of the two countries on related issues.

Case Studies: Brazil-China cooperation in Climate Change Initiatives

Brazil and China have done significant cooperations across various sectors, reflecting a shared commitment to environmental sustainability. This case study is into three key efforts between the two countries in climate change, including renewable energy, forest protection, and climate change strategies.

Case 1: Renewable Energy Research and Development

Brazil and China have been doing robust research on renewable energy since 2009, primarily as a result of the establishment of the Brazil-China Center for Climate Change and Energy Technology Innovation. Located in Tsinghua University and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, this institute acts as an innovative existence for scientific research and development, with a focus on the manufacture of biofuel from various oil sources. Both countries have made great progress in the conversion of oils into renewable liquid-form fuels through bilateral agreements and cooperative research initiatives, demonstrating the effectiveness of cooperative efforts in creating sustainable energy solutions and future (Paulino, 2017).



Case 2: Wind Energy Expansion and Technology Transfer

Brazil and China have led the world in wind energy expansion during the last ten years, contributing very significantly to the rise in installed wind capacity in both countries. Extensive cooperation in research and development across institutional, public, and private sectors has facilitated this expansion. Among the noteworthy projects are partnerships in Earth observation satellite programs, which established the groundwork for later cooperations in renewable energy technology.

While cooperations in private sector have encouraged innovation through cooperative design projects and licensing agreements, public sector partnerships have facilitated information sharing and technology transfer, such as the Brazil-China Center for Climate Change and Energy Technology Innovation. These initiatives demonstrate how Brazil and China are collaborating to advance the development of sustainable energy, wind energy (Bae & Velasco, 2014).

Case 3: Forest Protection and Climate Change Mitigation

As demonstrated by bilateral agreements and cooperative projects, Brazil and China have increased their cooperation in the areas of climate change, energy transition, and forest protection in recent years. In Beijing, Minister Marina Silva made a statement highlighting this partnership, which includes activities to combat environmental crimes, encourage sustainable land use practices, and improve commodity traceability. In order to accomplish the common and shared goals, both countries seek to enhance environmental protection through technology exchanges and strategic partnerships. Their commitment to international cooperation and group efforts in addressing global climate concerns is further demonstrated by their signing of a joint declaration on climate action (Ministério do Meio Ambiente e Mudança do Clima, 2023).

The case studies presented above shows us the different aspects of Brazil-China cooperation in climate change, including renewable energy research, wind energy expansion, and forest protection. These efforts not only show the potential for mutual benefits but also show the important roles of international cooperation especially between countries with large economies like Brazil and China.

Conclusion

Regarding climate change, Brazil and China have a complex relationship. This research stated that these two powerful countries are directing the worldwide response to climate change through the discussion of their initiatives, including renewable energy research, wind energy, and forest protection. A major step in their joint statement of a comprehensive strategic relationships in 2023 is Brazil and China's commitment to solving climate change. In addition to confirming the two states' understanding of the importance of climate threats, the declaration asks for greater action and cooperation.

Despite the challenges from domestic politics and external pressures, such as those from the United States and the European Union, Brazil and China have built common ground interests in protecting vital and important ecosystems and solving climate change issues.



Considering the future, the risen to power of President Lula offered prospects for deeper cooperation between Brazil and China, as well as other rainforest countries, to resist external pressures (from US or EU), protect their own goods and solve the climate change issues. Brazil and China have the potential to not only safeguard rainforests but also make substantial contributions to global climate change mitigation and sustainability by improving their strategies and using multilateral platforms. The climate change of the 21st century is going to be more complex and deeper, and the cooperation between Brazil and China can enhance the green perspective and discourse beyond the western world.

In conclusion, the complexity of Brazil-China cooperation on climate change demonstrates both the advantages and disadvantages of international cooperation in solving climate crisis. The relationships between Brazil and China are one of the hopes and futures for collective action in saving the world for future generations as we deal with the central issue of our day. The respective efforts of Brazil and China and the results of their cooperation provide a model and template for developing countries.

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