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About the Journal

AUSTRAL: Brazilian Journal of Strategy and International Relations was the first Brazilian journal in the field of International Relations to be fully published in English (2012). It is an essentially academic vehicle, linked to the Brazilian Centre for Strategy & International Relations (NERINT) of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Its pluralist focus aims to contribute to the debate on the international political and economic order from the perspective of the developing world.

The journal publishes original articles in the area of Strategy Studies and International Relations, with special interest in issues related to developing countries and South-South Cooperation – its security problems; the political, economic and diplomatic developments of emerging countries; and their relations with the traditional powers. *AUSTRAL* is published semi-annually in English and Portuguese. The journal's target audience consists of researchers, experts, diplomats, military personnel and graduate students of International Relations. The content of the journal consists ensure the publication of authors from each of the great continents of the South: Asia, Latin America and Africa. Thus, the debate and diffusion of knowledge produced in these regions is stimulated. All contributions submitted to *AUSTRAL* are subject to rigorous scientific evaluation.

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Contact

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)

Centro de Estudos Internacionais sobre Governo (CEGOV)

Av. Bento Gonçalves, 9500 - CEP 91509-900

Porto Alegre/RS - Brazil

Phone: +55 (51) 3308 7988

E-mail: austral@ufrgs.br

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Russian-Ukrainian military conflict completes a year and a half and the Lula administration six months, in a context of uncertainties that do not cease to contradict many analysts, themselves involved in a conflict of unrealistic narratives, two certainties fell in the meantime: that Russia would have an easy military victory and Western sanctions would overthrow it. The alleged Russian military might was not proven on the battlefield. But are the resources needed for a military victory being employed by both sides? It does not seem to be the case. It looks increasingly like a militarily limited conflict aimed at a specific political outcome. And after a long time, public interest in victimizing narratives has gradually waned, whereas domestic support for Vladimir Putin shows no signs of declension, even with the poorly explained “revolt” by the Wagner Group mercenaries.

Moreover, the Euro-American policy of economic sanctions was ineffective against Russia and its government but had a counterproductive effect on a planetary scale. The conjuncture is recessive in OECD countries, from which many states of the Geopolitical South move away, seeking interaction with the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) countries. The most spectacular turnaround has been that of Middle Eastern and African nations. Ironically, Russia's diplomatic reach has expanded globally. And the world is frantic: at the end of May, in the same week, the China-Central Asia Summit took place in Xian, in Kazan the Russia-Islamic World Forum, in Hiroshima the G-7 Summit, and in Lisbon the closed-doors meeting of the Bilderberg Club (the “brains” of the West).

In Brazil, Lula da Silva began his third term by reaffirming the return of “active and affirmative” diplomacy. However, the government does not have a majority in the National Congress and there are divergences between narratives and diplomatic action, with no concrete results to be amounted to the President's exhaustive international agenda. The polarization between NATO and Russia/China and the complex and problematic situation of South American governments oblige the Brazilian leadership to make contradictory signals, which end up displeasing Greeks and Trojans. At the root of the problem lies the economic crisis, the severe political division of Brazilian society, and the demand for Euro-American reciprocity due to the support granted during Lula's election. The old foreign policy finds today a new

reality, much more difficult and complex than the previous one, even though it defends the same values.

This issue features articles by academics from Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay, who make up the Dossier *Latin America and the international scene: changes, dilemmas and challenges*, as well as articles from Canada, Portugal, Ghana, Uzbekistan and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Dossier analyzes the Brazilian Space Program, Venezuelan migrations, post-covid Mercosur, the Latin American perspective in the face of China's Belt and Road, and the conditionalities imposed by aid programs for countries in the South.

The current configuration of the axes of world power has several repercussions in Latin America, with emphasis on factors such as the rise of China and the geopolitical dispute with the United States; the role of the European Union in its relationship with Mercosur; the US presence in the Pacific region; and the part of countries such as Russia and India. In turn, amid the resonances of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, the rise of progressive governments in the seven most populous countries in the region – Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Venezuela and Chile – draws particular attention to the new types of strategies, national and regional, and for the margins of maneuver pursued by them in matters of external insertion, development and security and defence, fundamentally, as well as the social interests and spaces of dispute around these strategies. In this sense, we add a strategic analysis on the current Brazilian government's policy to boost Mercosur and Unasur.

The themes of the other articles that make up this issue, in turn, are of the most relevancy and originality in Brazil. They deal with the Chinese Grand Strategy for outer space, the inevitable geopolitical clashes resulting from the Sino-Russian alliance, bilateral relations between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and India, the impact of the Belt and Road in Africa, and the activities of two jihadist movements in the Greater Sahara.

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scene: changes, dilemmas and challenges: Leonardo Granato, Paulo Visentini, and Guilherme Thudium. As usual, we would like to thank Professor Cristina Soreanu Pecequilo for revising the translations, as well as our qualified body of reviewers. The teamwork of NERINT/UFRGS researchers has allowed us to maintain the regularity and quality of AUSTRAL.

Disclaimer: *AUSTRAL* prioritises British English as the standard variety of the English written language. Some English translations, however, may be written under the American English dialect.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE: CHANGES, DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES

PRESENTATION: THE BRAZILIAN CHALLENGE OF REACTIVATING UNASUR AND STRENGTHENING MERCOSUR

Leonardo Granato¹

In his third presidential term, President Lula has been devoting a large part of his government agenda to foreign policy, aimed at strengthening the country's capacity to advance its interests and, within the aforementioned public policy, at rebuilding integration relations with neighboring countries. Faced with the spread of nationalism and protectionist postures in the midst of a complex international scene marked by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and tensions between the United States and China, the Brazilian option is for the defense of peace, dialogue and cooperation, starting with its strategic environment represented by South America and Mercosur.

With regard to the South American region, the Brazilian government's ability to convene and unify perspectives was challenged by the heterogeneity of agendas and priorities of different countries, even among countries with progressive governments. In fact, the so-called "Consensus of Brasilia", a joint declaration resulting from the presidential meeting of May 30, 2023, highlights the size of the aforementioned challenge, since there was no mention, in that declaration, of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and its reactivation. Faced with its dismantling during the Bolsonaro government, carrying forward the Brazilian government's priority objective of reactivating UNASUR will require, perhaps more than in the past, a broad effort to build consensus.

With regard to Mercosur, also under a setback in recent years, Brazil will play, during the second half of 2023, the pro-tempore presidency of the bloc, which will represent the opportunity for the Brazilian state to project its foreign policy priorities, as well as the principles that guide its internal public policies. In President Lula's own speech at the 62nd Mercosur Summit, which took place in Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) on July 4, 2023, the major issues to be privileged during his tenure at the head of the bloc were portrayed. Such matters refer, essentially, to the strengthening of Mercosur in its multiple

¹ Business School, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Porto Alegre, Brazil. E-mail: leonardo.granato@ufrgs.br. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0337-7220>

dimensions, and to the conclusion of the bi-regional agreement with the European Union.

With regard to the economic-commercial dimension of the Mercosur bloc, highlighted in this text, intra-Mercosur and extra-Mercosur trade flows and investment flows emerge as three interdependent fronts. With regard to intra-Mercosur trade, which in 2022 totaled more than 45 billion dollars, President Lula defended in his speech the need to increase its volume by adopting a reference currency for regional trade and strengthening the task of eliminating non-tariff barriers. With regard to extra-Mercosur trade, the Brazilian government's bet will be to improve the Common External Tariff, protecting regional competitiveness against foreign competition, and ruling out any type of regression towards a free trade zone and the relaxation of the clause relative to the joint conduction of external negotiations.

Still regarding the aspect in question, Mercosur must continue to contribute to the opening of new markets for its countries' export products. In his speech, President Lula stated, in this sense, that he wants to expand and improve existing trade agreements with other South American countries, and that he wants to advance in the agreements that are being negotiated with Canada, South Korea and Singapore, as well as explore new fronts of negotiation with China, Indonesia, Vietnam and countries of Central America and the Caribbean.

In the context of the objective of opening new markets, there is still the challenge of concluding the agreement with the European Union, signed in 2019. Without a doubt, it is in the interest of the Lula government to close this agreement with the Europeans during his presidency of the Mercosur bloc, but there are still stumbling blocks on the way. The first of these refers to the environmental issue, as in order to prevent the entry of agricultural products from deforested or degraded areas, the European Union, in the so-called "Green Annex", formulated requirements that the Brazilian state considers excessive and very strict. Furthermore, what seems to be behind these environmental requirements is the fear of the entry of competitive agricultural products into the European internal market, recreating, therefore, under new guises, the traditional protectionist agricultural policy. Taking advantage of the commitments that the country has been assuming in the environmental area (zero deforestation in the Amazon by 2030), in his speech at the Mercosur summit meeting, President Lula criticized the European bloc for fostering mistrust in Brazil, and stated that partners do not negotiate based on the "threat of sanctions".

The second of the stones refers to the issue of opening up government purchases, through national treatment for European suppliers, and the

limitations that such opening would entail in fostering internal development. In his speech at the Mercosur summit, President Lula stated, regarding the matter, that “it is inadmissible to give up the purchasing power of the state, one of the few instruments of industrial policy that we have left”. Brazil thus defends the need to guarantee a balanced agreement (that is, with openings and reciprocal concessions), which favors room for maneuver in the Mercosur countries for the adoption of public policies that promote industrialization and productive integration, avoiding the traditional European extractivism. “We have no interest in agreements that condemn us to the eternal role of exporters of raw materials, minerals and oil”, said President Lula in his speech. In this sense, the question that arises today concerns whether the significant reserves of lithium and cobalt and the production of green hydrogen, functional to the goals of productive decarbonization in Europe, will represent real opportunities to promote industrial development in the region.

In addition to trade flows, there is still the investment flow front, since, as portrayed in President Lula’s speech, deeper integration demands productive investments, creators of new social wealth (skilled employment, and production of science, technology and innovation), and investments in physical and digital infrastructure. Regarding this point, at the 3rd Summit Meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the European Union, which took place in Brussels on July 17 and 18, 2023, the Brazilian representative stated in his speech that “initiatives to mobilize resources and investments are welcome and must include technology transfer and real integration of production chains. We need a partnership that puts an end to an international division of labor that condemns Latin America and the Caribbean to the supply of raw materials and poorly paid and discriminated migrant labor”. President Lula has publicly reinforced that the objections to the agreement in question respond to Brazil’s interest in defending its productive assets, and that a new counterproposal will be presented in the coming weeks with the aim of continuing the negotiations, evidencing, in such a position, the Brazilian government’s conviction that a non-subordinated external insertion involves avoiding the alienation of unrestricted openings, appealing to negotiated openings and reciprocal concessions.

Finally, in addition to the issue of trade and investment flows, the reinvigoration of Mercosur will also, for the Lula government, involve defending democracy; improve the bloc’s political institutions; strengthen the fight against asymmetries, fundamentally in relation to Paraguay and Uruguay; recover the civic and socially inclusive agenda, including issues such as social participation; and advancing the climate agenda. Faced with the

complexity of the challenges to be faced in the field of regional integration, perhaps one should expect strong pragmatism from Brazil to equate diverse interests, but without renouncing the basic claims of its foreign policy aimed at the sovereign insertion of the Geopolitical South in the capitalist world order.

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THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE BRAZILIAN SPACE PROGRAM: CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN THE THIRD SPACE AGE

Marco Aurélio Chaves Cepik¹

Jaíne Garcia de Souza²

Vanessa Redel Dal-Berto³

Introduction

Among all Latin American nations, Brazil was one of the first to develop national space legislation and represents the Latin State that has made the most significant investments in space education in recent decades. Although the development of Brazilian rockets began in the 1950s, the Brazilian experience in the space sector in the last seven decades has suffered from several dilemmas and challenges, despite being considered a regional power (Froehlich et al. 2020).

In addition, Brazil has a geographical advantage that few space powers have: a launch base for space assets in an equatorial position. That is, carrying out launches along the equatorial line makes the object move 500 km/h faster after the moment of its launch, representing a 30% saving in fuel and a great attraction for other States that seek, through cooperation or bilateral

¹ Department of Economics and International Relations, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Porto Alegre, Brazil. E-mail: mcepik@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4147-5486>

² Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Estratégicos Internacionais, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Porto Alegre, Brazil. E-mail: jaíne.gsouza95@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6625-2313>

³ Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Lisboa, Portugal. E-mail: v.redel.dalberto@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5572-1487>

agreements, take advantage of this advantage to put its space objects into orbit (Guimarães 2011; Souza 2022).

Given this context, the paper intends to investigate the space program's importance for Brazil's development in the Third Space Age. In addition, it seeks to understand how popularizing the relevance of the Brazilian Space Program (PEBR) would impact its consolidation, generating new capabilities, commercial opportunities, partnership initiatives, and sovereignty considerations. To this end, it seeks to answer the following problem: "*Why is the Brazilian space program stagnant?*"

It starts from the hypothesis that, as observed over these more than six decades of the Brazilian space program, the main reason for its apparent stagnation – and, in a certain way, decay – is the recurrence of false resummptions, resulting in negligible national advances in the field. The space sector has to partner with other space powers to advance in this sector. The growing technological barriers imposed by the great powers that hold the specific know-how regarding certain critical aspects of space technology end up making greater autonomy and less foreign dependence demanding.

In order to fulfill the proposed objective, this article has three sections. The first illustrates a general picture of the strategic importance of outer space and what are the reasons for more and more States to start investing in space assets. The second section presents an overview of the Brazilian space program in this Third Space Age. The third section is divided into two moments, initially illustrating the idea of regional space integration in Latin America and the possible Brazilian protagonism. And finally, specific prospects for Brazil in the space region.

It can be concluded that despite the potential for growth and possible strengthening of the Brazilian Space Program, the country lacks a long-term national space strategic plan that seeks to consolidate the base of any State that has ambitions in the space region: the workforce, infrastructure, economics, and products & innovation. Over the first two decades of the 21st century, it was possible to observe false resummptions in the Brazilian space sector. It resulted in a high dependence on other space powers to acquire the necessary know-how for national space technological development. Despite the situation that the PEBR finds itself to be shared among other emerging space powers, some cases, such as China and India, have become successful. However, contrary to the competitive profile observed in Asia, in Latin America, what prevails cooperation, and for Brazil, fostering regional space integration would result in national strategic advantages and regional ones.

The Growing Relevance of Outer Space to International Strategy

Since the first artificial satellite developed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was successfully launched into outer space in October 1957, the space sector has been constantly growing and adapting to new geopolitical challenges. The space question represents the transition in how the States noticed the possibility of obtaining advantages in outer space beyond purely scientific questions, thus enabling the consolidation of the objectives of each State in the intelligence, civil, commercial, and military sectors. This article understands outer space as the environment outside the atmosphere above 100 km from the Kármán Line (Klein 2006; Cepik 2015).

Throughout the Cold War, nations' investments in space assets revolved around three purposes: "establishing military superiority, maintaining national prestige, and gaining strategic independence" (Ribeiro e Vasconcellos 2017, 217). In this way, the legacy of the space race – initially between the United States of America (USA) and the USSR – resulted in a dependence on space-based resources, especially for strategic, tactical, and operational support of wars and conflicts since the 1990s. Because of this, several other emerging countries have decided to invest in technological means to gain access to the space region as India, Iran, South Korea, China, and Brazil. From then on, space is no longer used only for military purposes; a new direction for relations in space. There is an increase in private companies and the number of satellites in orbit for various purposes: telecommunication, espionage, meteorology, and navigation (land, air, and sea), among others (Harvey et al. 2010; Bowen 2020).

In this article, the Space Age has three moments in which the maturation levels of space programs are used as parameters, considering the layers present in the technological space ladder. For Wood and Weigel (2012), the ladder has four points. The first step represents opening a national space agency. The next layer consists of a State with enough know-how to build satellites for Low Earth Orbit (LEO) locally. At the third level, those States that have developed knowledge to the point of locally developing satellites for Geostationary Orbit (GEO) stand out. The last level of the ladder consists of space powers capable of launching satellites and manned missions.

Figure 1: The Space Age

Space Age	Period	Profile
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First	1957-1969	The space programs of this era emerge due to pressures related to national security. Marked by the first space achievements of the great powers. From the first object in orbit to the first manned mission.
Second	1970-1990	The moment in which international treaties, agreements, and conventions on the peaceful use of outer space are consolidated. Marked by the rise of new space powers, which began to use the space region as tactical, operational, and strategic support. It was also characterized by the fall of the USSR and the dynamics, to a certain extent, “unipolar in the USA.
Third	2000-2023	The current moment in which the norms related to outer space that was established in the 20th century are challenged. Marked by discussions about space security, the possibility of a space war, the growing protagonist role of private companies in the space region, the militarization of space, and the congestion of satellites and space junk. Also marked by the oscillation between cooperation and competition.

Source: Own elaboration (2023) based on data from Garcia 2022.

The rise of emerging space powers has reinforced competition over cooperation in the space sector. Enjoying the successes of a robust space program means autonomy to the point of not submitting to the political, military, and economic interests of great powers that already have such capabilities for space power. Incorporated to the strategic importance of outer space, one must also consider access to certain positions and regions in space, such as the location of launch sites or even terrestrial orbits (Souza 2022). From the logic in these four moments mentioned above, it becomes easier to highlight the characteristics of the different Space Eras, as shown in Figure 1. One can see the evolution in how the space powers begin to deal with the region in question, to the point of adopting policies, operations, and

investments, especially in elaborating strategies to deal with this new strategic domain. According to Sadeh (2013),

The purpose of space strategy is to coordinate, integrate, and prioritize space activities across security, commercial, and civil sectors. Without strategy, space activities continue to provide value, but it becomes difficult to identify and execute long-term programs and projects and to optimize the use of space for security, economic, civil, and environmental ends. Strategy is essential for all these ends, and all the more so, since dependence on, and use of, space is accelerating globally and space is integrated in the fabric of activities across all sectors and uses (Sadeh 2013, 1).

That said, it is essential to highlight certain positions and regions in space due to the strategic advantages that a State, organization, or even specific groups can acquire from them – even to the point of being able to shape international treaties or space laws. Inherent to the value of these positions, the space command stands out. Meaning that upon acquiring space command status – which can acquire through presence, coercion, or force – a space power would have “the ability to ensure access to and use of CLOCs when needed to support the instruments of national power” and would also be able to “to prevent or deny the enemy’s access to and use of his CLOCs, or at least minimize the most severe consequences an adversary can deliver along them.” In short, commanding space reflects how a State manipulates the celestial lines of communication to achieve its civil, military, commercial, and intelligence purposes (Cepik e Machado 2011; Klein 2019, 23).

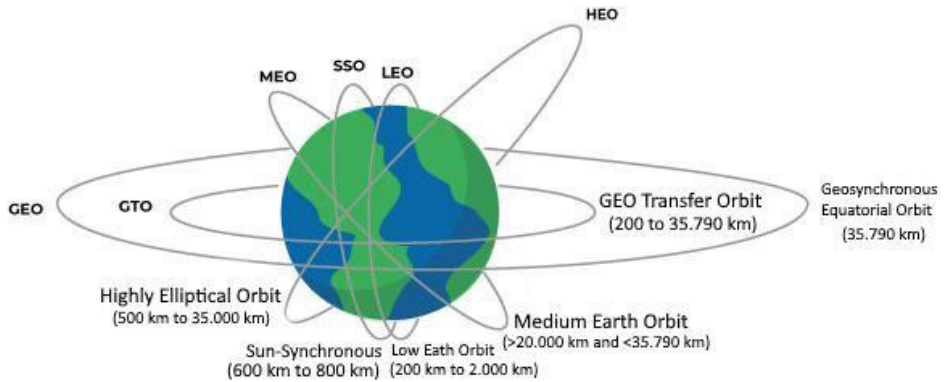
As Klein (2006) illustrates, strategic positions are broader than just considering the military issue since non-military actors also have interests in outer space. Such positions “confer some advantage or have some measure of value and, therefore, diplomatic efforts may be necessary to regulate or limit access to such positions.”. In response to the high level of competition for these limited sites, only a select group of countries will succeed in accessing and using these sites and, from them, will achieve political or diplomatic gains because of this advantage (Klein 2006, 80).

Those positions deal with physical communications, moving equipment, spacecraft, or personnel. Those dealing with non-physical communications tend to deal with electromagnetic transmissions and the effects of weapons. Therefore, space activities have choke points: celestial-based crosslinks and downlinks or terrestrial-based uplinks, which transmit and receive data and information. Based on this panorama, the strategic importance of the different orbits in which satellites launch becomes central to future analyses. This article uses six types of orbits as a basis for research,

as shown in Figure 2, namely:

1. Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
2. Medium Earth Orbit (MEO)
3. Geosynchronous Equatorial Orbit (GEO)
4. Sun-Synchronous Orbit (SSO)
5. Highly Elliptical Orbit (HEO)
6. GEO Transfer Orbit (GTO)

Figura 2: Os Tipos de Órbitas Espaciais



Source: Adapted from Souza 2022, 46.

Each location has specific characteristics that help in the success of space missions. Over the last decades, the LEO and GEO orbits are increasingly congested and may even represent a chokepoint. It means that the space power that achieves the best positions in the *space heartland* (LEO and GEO orbits) would be closer to consolidating the space command status, therefore, having the power to the point of influencing economic, political, and security issues (Space Report 2021; Souza 2022).

Currently, the space region has more than 5,000 operational satellites in orbit, with 86% (4,700) in LEO orbit and 10% (565) in GEO orbit. Between 2010 and 2020, there was a considerable increase in state spending on space activities of 18% compared to previous decades. Among the actors that stood out in investments in the space sector, the main ones in 2020 were the United States, ESA, and China. However, the increase in Japan's space budget is also worth mentioning - surpassing Russia, which pointed to a more than 30% reduction. In addition, France's growth in the space economy is evident, surpassing the budgets of India and Germany (Space Report 2021; UCS 2022).

In 2021, the global space economy reached a total of US \$469 billion, showing considerable growth compared to 2020, representing a total of US \$447 billion. Furthermore, according to data from the Space Foundation (2022), the sector that recorded the highest increase in revenue was the commercial sector, registering 6.4% since 2020. As Cepik (2015) points out, countries increasingly depend on outer space and cyberspace due to the energetic, technological, and demographic structural transition. Given this, emerging space powers' evolution and presence in the space region increasingly impact current astropolitics dynamics as more space programs reach significant maturation levels. This point of view ends up translated into space guidelines developed – and sometimes revised – in recent decades, such as

1. Russia: *"Federal Space Program for 2016-2025"*, from 2016,
2. Paraguay: *"Política Espacial del Paraguay,"* of 2019,
3. China: *"China's Space Program: a 2021 perspective (White Paper)"*, from 2022,
4. India: *"SpaceRS Policy" and "SpaceRS NGP,"* from 2020, and
5. Brazil: *"National Space Activities Program (2022-2031)"*, from 2022.

All these elements presented throughout this section point to some reasons for a country to start investing in space assets; among these advantages would be: "communication, surveillance, reconnaissance, navigation, meteorology, marketing and anti-satellite weapons (ASAT), the first warning of missiles and rocket launches" (Souza 2022, 63). Based on this reality, it becomes difficult to predict the direction of international relations in outer space when there are still countless questions characteristic of the Third Space Age without answers since such discussions are concentrated mainly among the grand space actors. Also, outer space in the 21st Century re-signifies itself as a new frontier but with an old reality.

The Brazilian Space Program in the Third Space Age

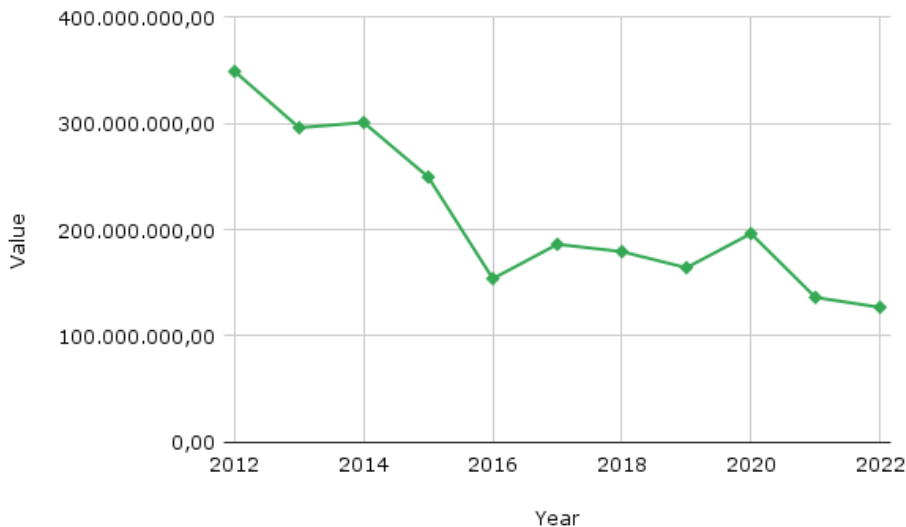
Contrary to what was observed in previous decades, the beginning of the 2000s proved to be optimistic for the Brazilian space sector, as economic growth, the creation of the National Defense Strategy (END), and a more significant effort to adopt a more active foreign policy. In this context, the Brazilian Space Program (PEBR) is now recognized as a strategic project, resulting in the creation and resumption of some projects strongly supported by space assets, such as

1. Amazon Protection System (SIPAM)
2. Amazon Surveillance System (SIVAM)
3. Integrated Border Monitoring System (SISFRON)
4. Blue Amazon Management System (SISGAAZ)
5. Air Defense and Air Traffic Control System (SISDACTA)
6. Military Satellite Communications System (SISCOMIS)
7. Brazilian Aerospace Defense System (SISDABRA)

In response, these systems enable and reinforce border monitoring and the protection and use of data for the various national sectors, especially defense. Given that Brazil is one of the countries that make up Latin America, holding the most extensive land and coastline, holding a great diversity of natural resources, which has in its territory one of the most extensive forests in the world, the Amazon. In addition, abundant water resources and oil reserves in the South Atlantic region demonstrate the need for Brazil to invest in its space program (Cossul 2019; Matos and Ferreira 2020). In order to support all socioeconomic, civil, and military strategic projects, there is a need for a solid basic spatial structure, that is, the complete mastery of space technologies, which can divide into four elements. The first would be a launch base on Brazilian soil, with an infrastructure capable of supporting launches of different types of space assets. The second and third summarized the national production and launch capacity of satellites and launch vehicles. The last element – and the most ambitious to consider, considering an emerging space power – would be the development, command, and control (C2) of an independent national global navigation system (Cepik 2015).

The ambition was to develop three elements mentioned above through the Complete Brazilian Space Mission (MECB) (satellites, launch vehicles, and launch site). However, as Matos (2021, 140, own translation) points out, “the most ambitious projects suffered continuous impasses related to technological embargoes, budget restrictions, and the lack of clarity in the definition of a public space policy.”. According to Matos and Ferreira (2020), regardless of the optimistic projections for the Brazilian space sector at the beginning of the Third Space Age, the oscillations in the space budget between 2003 and 2011 pointed to a little advance of the sector in the country. This situation worsened from 2013 onwards, as shown in Figure 3. In the following years, it declined, registering 154 million reais in 2016. In 2017, it reached the highest level compared to the previous year but fell again, reaching 2022 with an average investment of only 127 million in the budget.

Figure 3: Budget of the Brazilian Space Program (2012-2022)⁴



Source: Own elaboration (2023) based on data from Brasil 2022.

The budget destined for the related areas oscillates in grand proportions during its route, and the result is reflected in the capacity to operate the aerospace means. Therefore, when analyzing the budget of the Brazilian Space Program, it is noted that even with the space command's relevant role in the Third Space Age, Brazil still needs to achieve independent access to this region. Many projects need to be on time, postponed, and gaining new deadlines. Most were postponed to the next edition of the National Space Activities Program (PNAE). Projects not finalized in the 2012-2021 PNAE are now included in the new PNAE, which ends in 2031 (Câmara dos Deputados 2010; Brasil 2021).

In summary, the low investment in the development of space assets makes Brazil heavily dependent on other space powers, even more so when the country could be advancing at an increasing pace to the point of seeking new markets. However, it has focused mainly on the development of nanosatellites. The history of failures and cancellations of the Satellite Launch Vehicles (VLS) program reinforces space dependence, so much so that the launch of the *Amazônia-1* satellite, which the Brazilian VLS would carry out, was canceled and, as an alternative, the launch was carried out by India in 2021 (Matos and Ferreira 2020).

⁴ The data used to elaborate this figure are in millions of reais.

Concerning the launch site, the Alcântara Launch Center (CLA) has become the second best-located space base on Earth for launching artifacts into space. Currently, the base that occupies the best strategic location is represented by the Space Center of Kourou, in French Guiana, under French rule. As illustrated in the previous section, the CLA's strategic advantage is due to its geographical position close to the equator, which saves considerable fuel for the ships. In addition, the climate in this region is stable, allowing launches during a good part of the year. Launching artifacts in all orbits is also possible due to their angle (equatorial and polar orbits) (Brasil 2018; Câmara dos Deputados 2010).

However, the CLA, over time, ended up becoming scientifically obsolete due to the lack of interest on the part of Brazil that it would be necessary to invest in R&D to achieve global scientific and technological advancement. One of the options to encourage such progress would be using the base for private purposes, raising investment to fund Brazilian operations in search of mastery of space operations, and guaranteeing the supremacy of its activities. However, to do so, clear regulations are needed that protect operations on Brazilian soil by states or foreign companies, given that the CLA is, within the country's potential, one of the most relevant strategic assets (Brasil 2019).

From 1985 to 2022, Brazil launched many space objects, many of which were launched with or without foreign partnerships and is described throughout Figures 4 to 6. The country has carried out nearly 50 launches of satellites to the space region, among successful and unsuccessful missions, with launches carried out throughout the Third Space Age reaching a total of 37. The Geostationary Defense and Strategic Communications Satellite (SGDC), for example, was developed in partnership with France and reached Earth orbit in 2017 directly from the Kourou base since, for this type of launch, Brazil did not have the necessary infrastructure for its launch through the CLA (UNOOSA 2022; AEB 2023). This satellite has dual-use (civil and military) under the power of the Brazilian administration, meaning Brazil holds the cryptographic key of the SGDC. It is possible, through the SGDC, to bring broadband to locations that used to be inaccessible previously, in addition to assisting in the monitoring of other Brazilian systems linked to the navy, army, and air force. In this way, Brazilian autonomy with the SGDC allows the country to act with greater sovereignty in managing its military means without interference in data visualization by means external to Brazil. Furthermore, the success of the SGDC emerges as one of the achieved goals of the 2012 PNAE (Marques 2017; Telebras 2018; Redel 2018).

Figure 4: Space Launches of Brazil (1985-2022) – Part I

Name of Space Object	Launch	Orbit	Function of the space object	Space Object Type
BRASILSAT A ₁	08/02/1985	X	Geostationary communication satellite launched from Kourou French Guiana. It was initially operated by Embratel and then leased to PANAMSAT in 1995. In March 2002, it was re-orbited, reaching a disposal orbit above the geostationary arc.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
BRASILSAT A ₂	28/03/1986	X	Geostationary communication satellite launched from Kourou, French Guiana, operated by Star One S.A. In March 2004, the satellite was re-orbited in a disposal orbit.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
MICROSAT 2 (DOVE, <i>Oscar17</i>)	22/01/1990	in orbit	The satellite is not registered with the United Nations.	Brazilian satellite
SCD 1	09/02/1993	in orbit	A satellite designed to collect meteorological data transmitted by data collection platforms distributed throughout the national territory	Brazilian satellite
BRASILSAT B ₁	10/08/1994	X	Satellite dedicated to telecommunication services. In December 2010, it was re-orbited and is now in the disposal orbit.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
BRASILSAT B ₂	28/03/1995	GEO	Satellite dedicated to telecommunications services launched from Kourou, French Guiana.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
BRASILSAT B ₃	04/02/1998	GEO	Satellite dedicated to telecommunications services launched from Kourou, French Guiana.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
SCD 2	23/10/1998	in orbit	The primary function of this satellite is Earth observation.	Brazilian satellite
SACI 1	14/10/1999	in orbit	The Sino-Brazilian satellite supports scientific experiments (study of plasma bubbles, observation of abnormal cosmic and solar rays in the magnetosphere).	Brazilian satellite
CBERS 1 (<i>Zi Yuan 1</i>)	14/10/1999	in orbit	The Sino-Brazilian monitoring satellite, using optical sensors, of terrestrial resources and remote sensing in Brazil and China	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership

BRASILSAT B ₄	17/08/2000	GEO	The satellite is dedicated to telecommunications services and was launched from Kourou, French Guiana.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
CBERS 2	21/10/2003	X	It was decommissioned in 2009.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
Estrela do Sul 1 (EDS1/ TELSTAR 14)	10/01/2004	X	In a geostationary orbit, a communication satellite that offered comprehensive coverage throughout Latin America launched from the Sea Launch platform Odyssey. In November 2011, the satellite was re-orbited and is currently in a disposal orbit.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
AMAZONAS -1	04/08/2004	GEO	Geostationary telecommunication satellite launched from Baikonur, Kazakhstan. It has C and Ku band transponders.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
CBERS 2B	19/09/2007	X	It was decommissioned in 2010.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
STARZONE C ₁	14/11/2007	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Kourou, French Guiana. It operates in the C and Ku bands, belonging to Embratel Star One S.A.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
STARZONE C ₂	18/04/2008	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Kourou, French Guiana. Belonging to Embratel Star One S.A., it operates in the C, Ku and X bands.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
AMAZONAS -2	01/10/2009	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Kourou, French Guiana. Provides service to North and South America, in C and Ku bands.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
Estrela do Sul 1 (EDS1/ TELSTAR 14)	20/05/2011	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Baikonur, Kazakhstan. It was developed to replace the EDS1, but after launch, it had the same flaw as the EDS1, which resulted in only 60% of its total capacity. Provides Ku-band coverage.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership

Source: The authors (2023) elaborated, based on UNOOSA 2022; AEB 2023.

Figure 5: Space Launches of Brazil (1985-2022) – Part II

Name of Space Object	Launch	Orbit	Function of the space object	Space Object Type
STARONE C ₃	10/11/2012	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Kourou, French Guiana. It operates in the C and Ku bands, providing broad coverage throughout South America, Florida (USA), and the pre-salt region.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
AMAZONAS 3	07/02/2013	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Kourou French Guiana. The launch of this satellite expanded the coverage of the Amazonas-1 satellite services. It has transponders in Ku, C, and Ka bands. In addition, it provides services to several cable TV operators (Vivo TV, CTBC TV, and Movistar IV Digital Latinoamérica).	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
CBERS 3	09/12/2013	X	Satellite successfully launched; however, due to a failure, it became inoperative.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
AMAZONAS 4A	22/03/2014	GEO	The satellite is not registered with the United Nations.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
NanoSatC BR1	19/06/2014	em órbita	Technological development satellite aims to collect data from the Earth's magnetic field, especially in the South Atlantic Magnetic Anomaly region (AMAS) and the Brazilian sector of the Ionospheric Equatorial Electrojet. It was released from Dombrovsky, Russia, and developed in partnership between UFSM and INPE	Brazilian satellite
CBERS 4	07/12/2014	em órbita	Operational satellite.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
AESP 14	05/02/2015	X	The second Brazilian CubeSat was developed by the Technological Institute of Aeronautics (ITA) in partnership with INPE, launched by a Falcon 9 v1.1 at Cape Canaveral, USA. Despite the launch's success, after a month in orbit without receiving feedback, AB declared it inoperative due to several failures.	Brazilian satellite

STARONE C4	15/07/2015	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Kourou, French Guiana. It has Ku band operations - and its orbital position is considered hot - and is used by Claro TV.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership in commercial operation.
SERPENS	17/09/2015	X	Third national CubeSat to be launched into space, jointly developed by UnB, UFABC, UFSC, UFMG, IFF, and INPE, with support from AEB. It also had international partners such as the University of Vigo (Spain), Sapienza Università di Roma (Italy), and the US Morehead State University, California State Polytechnic University. With a shelf life of six months, it was possible to collect environmental data on a platform developed by Brazilian students. In March 2016, it disintegrated upon re-entering Earth's atmosphere.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
Eutelsat 65 West A	09/03/2016	em órbita	It is operated by Eutelsat (linked to ESA), broadcasting and broadband services in Latin America for civilian use.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
STARONE D1	21/12/2016	GEO	Telecommunications satellite launched from Kourou, French Guiana. It is the first satellite of Embratel Star One S.A.'s fourth generation, with the capacity to cover the South, Southeast, and Northeast regions; and parts of the North and Midwest regions of the country. It is equipped with transponders in C, Ku, and Ka bands.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
Tancredo 1	16/01/2017	X	Picosatellite was developed by the Presidente Tancredo Almeida Neves school (SP), with the support of INPE, AEB, and the Italian company GAUSS Srl. It was launched from the Tanegashima Space Center, Japan, destined for low Earth orbit. After ten months in orbit, the satellite re-entered Earth orbit.	Brazilian satellite

Sky Brasil-1 (Intelsat 32E)	14/02/2017	GEO	Telecommunications satellite, owned by the American company DirecTV, was developed to expand the services of the company Sky Brasil. It has Ku and Ka band transponders.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
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Source: The authors (2023) elaborated, based on UNOOSA 2022; AEB 2023.

Figure 6: Space Launches of Brazil (1985-2022) – Part III

Name of Space Object	Launch	Orbit	Function of the space object	Space Object Type
SGDC	04/05/2017	GEO	Communication satellite, whose objective is to provide a safer network for the country's strategic and military communications, under the coordination of Telebrás and the Ministry of Defense. It was launched from Kourou, French Guiana, and has transponders in X (providing internet and communication to the government and the Armed Forces) and Ka bands	Brazilian satellite
AMAZONAS 5	11/09/2017	GEO	The satellite is not registered with the United Nations.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
SES 14	25/01/2018	GEO	Communication satellite operated by the company SES S.A., launched from Kourou, French Guiana. It has transponders in the C and Ku bands. The data collected by this satellite serve the aeronautical, maritime, and residential markets.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
Al Yah 3	25/01/2018	GEO	Satellite for telecommunications services and broadband internet.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
Telstar 19 VANTAGE	22/07/2018	GEO	It was built by Space Systems/Loral, operated by Telesat Canada, to expand its broadband services via satellite	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
ITASAT	03/12/2018	em órbita	Satellite for technological development.	Brazilian satellite
CBERS 4A	20/12/2019	em órbita	Earth observation satellite.	Brazilian satellite

FloripaSAT-1	20/12/2019	em órbita	CubeSat was developed by SpaceLab at UFSC (Federal University of Santa Catarina) through amateur radio retransmission services, with the primary objective of technological development.	Brazilian satellite
AMAZONIA 1	28/02/2021	em órbita	The satellite is not registered with the United Nations	Brazilian satellite
NanoSatC-Br2	22/03//2021	em órbita	The CubeSat contains two missions: scientific and technological. It was launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan.	Brazilian satellite
STARONE D2	30/07/2021	GEO	The satellite is not registered with the United Nations.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
ALFACRUX	01/04/2022	em órbita	The satellite is not registered with the United Nations.	Brazilian satellite
CARACÁ I	25/05/2022	em órbita	The Project Lessonia - 1 project launched through the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket at the Kennedy Space Center, in Cape Canaveral, in the United States. Low-orbit, dual-use satellites of remote sensing radar (SRR).	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
CARACÁ II	25/05/2022	em órbita	The satellite is part of the Lessonia-1 Project and has radar technology for soil monitoring and as an aid in the fight against drug trafficking and illegal mining. This satellite has dual technology, and the region that will benefit most from its monitoring will be the Amazon region.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership
SPORT	26/11/2022	em órbita	Nanosatellite in partnership between the Brazilian Space Agency (AEB) and the North American Space Agency (NASA). with takeoff from Kennedy Space Center (Florida). For scientific research in the ionosphere.	Brazilian satellite with a foreign partnership

Source: The authors (2023) elaborated, based on UNOOSA 2022; AEB 2023.

Other partnerships emerged over the first two decades of the 21st century. They resulted in the creation of other satellites, as in the case of China, and the series of remote sensing satellites (CBERS), which only the

CBERS-4 launched in 2014. Cooperation with Germany, present in the project to develop the Microsatellite Launch Vehicle (VLM), and cooperation with Russia, which seeks, in addition to joint studies for creating a new launch vehicle, a database for testing a liquid propellant rocket engine. Ukraine also proved to be another exciting partner for Brazil in terms of the space sector since both nations reached an agreement that would result in the construction and launch of the Cyclone-4 rocket on national soil; however, this partnership ended in 2015 (Machado 2014; Missagia 2020).

Brazil still does not have a space law, which would be decisive for the regularization of space operations on Brazilian soil. The Brazilian Space Law Code is currently under discussion between the government and the Brazilian Association of Aeronautical and Space Law (SBDA) in the form of a preliminary proposal “on the foundations of the Brazilian legal system applicable to the country’s space activities, complemented by national legislation pertinent and the instruments of international law to which Brazil is committed.”, in essence, the Spatial Code deals, throughout its text, with issues such as space infrastructure, the private sector, and even remote sensing (Froehlich et al. 2020, 57).

Brazil’s strategic plans are under the AEB, which, through the PNDAE, promotes the development of space activities of national interest. Thus, every ten years, new guidelines are promoted by the PNDAE, which is currently in its fifth edition: 2022-2031. The current objectives of the PNAE are aimed at the continuous and stable development of the space sector as a strategic representative for the State. Therefore, to guide the Brazilian space sector, the country currently has the following Strategic Space Objectives (OEEs) (AEB 2022, 16, own translation)

1. Elevation of PEBR’s presence in the State’s set of priorities
2. Fostering entrepreneurship and the competitiveness of the national productive sector
3. The scientific and technological development that seeks to nurture needs concerning space goods and services
4. A continuous search for sovereignty and elevation of Brazil’s autonomy in space activities

Bill 1006/22 was drawn up in 2022, outlining the general rules for institutional means, licensing companies, and authorizing space launches. This law would result in a regulatory framework for space operations, such as using frequency bands and orbital positions, the peaceful use of facilities and machinery aimed at space projection, international cooperation, preservation of the environment, and the performance of the private sector. In addition,

the law develops the proposal for creating the *Brazilian Space Registry* and the *Brazilian Space Cadastre*, which help centralize information, registration of products, services, research, and other information on artifacts. However, the project still needs to be analyzed in terms of a vote so that it will come into force later (Agência Câmara de Notícias 2022).

Therefore, recent Brazilian initiatives can demonstrate an update of Brazilian spatial thinking, by decision-makers, to accelerate the country's aerospace capabilities. However, stagnation remains a challenge to be faced in the coming decades, which is related to the current lack of political coordination and financial resources, exacerbating its deficiencies. An example of this is the projects that were supposed to be completed in the PNAE (2012-2021), and have been transferred to the PNAE (2022-2031).

The Space Sector and Contemporary Brazil

All progress observed in the space program, especially after the military dictatorship (1964-1985), came about through the intention of transforming the country into a medium-sized power. However, this vision of Brazil's projection was fading away with time. Based on the analysis of data about the evolution of the PEBR in the last six decades, it is possible to perceive that, as Machado (2014, 74, own translation) points out, "the Brazilian State as a whole has not yet recognized, until now, that the lines of space communications are strategic infrastructure for the country and that, therefore, command of space is a necessary condition for the realization of the great national strategy." This section discusses two critical elements that can positively impact the Brazilian space sector. The first deals with regional spatial integration as a critical factor for a pivotal position on the part of Brazil in Latin America; then, from the Brazilian space performance in this Third Space Age, an analysis is made on possible perspectives for the future of Brazil in the space region.

Regional Space Integration in Latin America

Bearing in mind the strategic plan necessary for Brazil to be able to place itself in the sphere of command of space and escape the stagnation it faces, a viable alternative would be to invest more in its relations with the neighboring states of Latin America – the countries considered Latinos are in three different geographic regions of the American continent (North, Central, and South), consisting of a total of 33 nations, covering an area of about 13% of the Earth's land surface. Thus, cooperation can play a significant

role in promoting regional protection. However, the area in question has a late development in space operations and is still very dependent on sensitive technology from the great space powers (Froehlich et al. 2020).

Brazil is currently facing the loss of its leadership profile in the region, which affected the abrupt end of the Dilma government (2006-2011) – due to the impeachment in 2016 –, the Temer (2016-2018) term to the presidency, and the presidency of Bolsonaro (2019-2022)—a period characterized by the internal political and economic crisis, intensified in 2020 by the coronavirus pandemic, which resulted in complex social, economic and political crises in Latin America—resonating together, with the weakening of many of the regional bodies. Furthermore, in Latin America's space arena, reality still points to a dependence on space agencies and industries from other more robust space powers. For example, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil have agreements or treaties with NASA, ESA, or even private companies to, based on joint work, obtain sufficient know-how to build satellites, launch space assets, and collect data (Portales et al. 2014).

Among the nations mentioned above, all have a space program; however, these programs have a different investment in space education than Brazil currently has. Furthermore, it can be observed that only two Latin nations are more committed to space activity: Argentina and Brazil. Both nations possess space skills and capabilities, which resulted in possession of earth observation, communication, and science and technology satellites. Peru, Venezuela, Chile, and Mexico only have capabilities in two sectors – communication and Earth observation or technology and education. The nations with know-how in just one sector are Bolivia, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Uruguay. In contrast, nations with little or no capacity in the space sector are mostly Caribbean states (Froehlich et al. 2020).

Regarding launch capacity to the space region, as mentioned in other sections, some Latin American nations have favorable conditions for launching because they are close to the equator. Despite this advantage, only Brazil and Argentina have developed launch capabilities with orbital and suborbital launch sites. There are also nations with only suborbital launch sites, like Mexico, Peru, and Panama (Froehlich et al. 2020). The space cooperation experience in Latin America in space activities included the creation of spaces for dialogue and reflected on the space issue. It is essential to mention some of them:

1. Space Conference of the Americas (SCA)
2. Central American Aeronautics and Space Association (ACAE)
3. Space Generation Advisory Board (SGAC)

4. Latin American Remote Sensing Society (SELPER)

Unlike other regions, Latin America still needs a specific space cooperation and integration body that would work similarly to the European Space Agency (ESA) or the Organization for Space Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (APSC). Therefore, to change this situation, in 2011, during the meeting of the UNASUR Defense Council, the possible creation of the South American Space Agency (SASA) was discussed. However, there was a significant rejection by Brazil, which argued that this would be an organism with much bureaucracy and little progress. As illustrated by Froehlich et al. (2020, 90),

The SASA could enable countries to exchange more information on natural disasters and climate change, as well as strengthen actions related to the digital divide or security cooperation. The creation of SASA would reinforce the region and would work as a proactive structure to advance new regional alliances. At the same time, a regional agency that can support a space regional program would guarantee stability to the space agenda when the region faces political and economic fluctuations. (Froehlich 2020, 90).

Another attempt, this time joined by some States, took place in 2021 with the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency (ALCE), based in Mexico. Currently, the agency has 19 member countries⁵, highlighting Argentina and Mexico, both nations that boosted this project to get off the ground. This creation represents a new attempt – now focused on the space sector – to go beyond the peripheral region label and more, to seek means through *regional space integration* to elaborate strategies that reduce, over time, dependence on robust space powers for launch capability, technologies, and experience. This idea has been maturing for more than a decade.

Once again, Brazil chose not to be part of this regional integration initiative, given that the country showed no interest at the time of the negotiations – Jair Bolsonaro's government (2019-2022). The absence of the most extensive space power in Latin America in this space agency resulted in a low budget for the activities since the contributions were from Argentina and Mexico, resulting in an investment of US\$100 million for 2022. In this way, few established institutionalization components remained stagnant after the pandemic without demonstrating continuity of efforts (Santana 2022).

⁵ At the time of the writing of this article; the following are part of ALCE: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Santa Lucia, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines and Venezuela.

Observations and Perspectives for the Future

When examining which countries have three indicators in common – GDP (over US\$ 1 trillion), Area (over 2 million km²), and Population (over 100 million inhabitants) – in the year 2022, it is found that only five states are at the intersection of these three indicators: India, Russia, China, United States, and Brazil. It is curious to consider that this group is composed mainly of members of the BRICS and, when highlighting the space capacity of each one, is noted the discrepancy in the levels of maturation of the space programs of these States when compared to Brazil, as well as the space strategy developed and improved in the Third Space Age. The Brazilian space program's maturation level is far below what is expected of a State with such dimensions.

The rise of emerging space powers, especially those from Asia, reinforces the competitive characteristic of outer space, implying a spill-over effect on other issues such as the security dilemma and the arms race. While other space powers invest in building a space station – as is the case with China – in crewed missions, launch vehicles, or even in global satellite navigation systems, Brazil finds itself inert between the production of nanosatellites and space agreements with countries like China, Ukraine, Germany, and the USA, for example. In short, the Brazilian advance in the space sector has not been able to keep pace with the space development of its partners.

Because of this, most of the companies dedicated to space technology in Brazil still need to be more significant. This lack of investment in technology, innovation, and science establishes a delay in the development process of space operations, unlike what was observed in the evolution of the national space sector in other States, as in the cases of South Korea and India, for example. In the Brazilian case, there needs to be a clear national awareness of the importance of investing in outer space and its strategic value, both by State decision-makers and society. This lack of strategic vision leads to short-term public policies, which result in the discontinuation of many projects in the area (Guimarães 2011).

Maintaining the status quo and Brazil's current coma also affect how the civilian population and decision-makers see the Brazilian space program. To a certain extent, it can be stated that the PEBR stagnation ends up being harmful only for Brazil because, in general, the coma situation forces the country to form alliances with advanced space powers since it does not have the capabilities to promote the security of its vast territory. On the other hand, changing this condition of dependence to greater autonomy would imply

more significant investment and national development of spatial capabilities, freeing itself from the peripheral condition and assuming a more significant role in the international scenario concerning the space region.

It is challenging to find ways to popularize the relevance of the Brazilian Space Program precisely because they are high value-added technologies, and the discussions about it are restricted to academic, corporate, and governmental circles. In Brazil, no popular culture clearly illustrates how outer space supports national interests, whether in peace or war. For example, the national defense systems – SIPAM, SISFRON, SISGAZ, SISDACTA, and SISCOMIS – need the space environment to achieve interoperability between forces. However, none of this is critical at the national level when the idea linked to investment in the space sector is highly criticized among the civilian population, emphasizing that the amount of money destined for space projects should be reallocated to other sectors (Machado 2014).

As Câmara (2001, 3, own translation) points out, “It is necessary to change the conduct of the space program, to treat it as an industrial program, in which the training of national companies and the synergy between the different sectors are the guiding concerns of the strategy of contracts government.”. As seen, therefore, the author’s vision exposed more than two decades ago remains the reality of the PEBR and ends up encompassing an even more significant problem, which is the difficulty of Brazil in being able to see its role as a space power - whether focusing only on the projection regional, or possibly aspiring to a more significant role in the international space scene -, and start behaving as such.

There is a clear need for the country to develop more specific and less broad Strategic Space Objectives (OEEs) in order to effectively consolidate the national strategic foundation of the space sector. With that being said, a potential option to overcome the stagnation phase faced by the space program would involve focusing on four key areas. The first area would entail increased investment in Research and Development (R&D) to foster national space technological development and attain mastery over these capabilities. Secondly, within the realm of economic investment, attention should be given to the construction and improvement of infrastructure for centers and units dedicated to the space sector. The third aspect takes into account the growing role of the private sector in the Third Space Era. Consequently, there is a need for the establishment of a “National Space Promotion Center” with the objective of regulating space activities and the use of facilities. This would serve as a means to regulate the relationship between the public and private sectors. Lastly, the fourth point to be raised emphasizes the urgency of a “National Space Law.” As mentioned in the previous section, the country lacks a framework to govern space activities. Therefore, the enactment of such

legislation is of paramount importance.

Space technological development and integration with countries in the Global South may represent a first step out of the stagnation that the country currently finds itself in, but also serve as an example, as seen in the cases of China and India. These space powers connect an industrial policy to a vision that values national development through their space programs (Matos 2021). Today, the Brazilian State is still South America's most significant military power; it has a strategic territory (Legal Amazon and the Blue Amazon) with the longest South American border. It also has the second-best base for artifact releases (CLA). Furthermore, together, Latin America, which has one of the regions with the most significant natural strategic diversity in the world, and today is on the margins of global space policies. Therefore, it is necessary to overcome the space scientific backwardness and act in the dynamics of the third space age.

Final Remarks

This article sought to investigate the possible causes of the stagnation of the Brazilian Space Program in the 21st century. For this, it was necessary to provide theoretical and conceptual subsidies on the macro environment of Space Power in international relations. In this way, the Brazilian Space Program's consolidation is still long and challenging. It is possible to verify significant advances, but also frustrating setbacks. An overview of Brazil in the Third Space Age was illustrated in this article.

Investment in science, technology, and innovation must be a strategic priority for long-term national development. Brazil must keep up to date and adapt to constant technological innovations and the demands of the space market, which implies a proactive stance in research and development. Brazil must invest in technical training for the aerospace industry and qualified labor to continue moving forward. In addition, it must seek improvements to its infrastructure and consistent and lasting State public policies, which transcend governments and political parties, so that they leverage its nascent development.

Therefore, given the necessary attributes of a national and regional strategy in the Third Space Age, Brazil has finite capacities to raise national development in space operations alone, given the limitations verified in this article. However, regional cooperation proves to be an essential strategy to overcome national limitations and achieve a more influential role in the challenges of the Third Space Age. Regional collaboration allows sharing of knowledge and resources, sharing costs and risks, and expanding market

opportunities. Thus, joining efforts and transforming their national space policies into more effective regional policies capable of overcoming stagnation and technological restriction could result in a more effective insertion of space resources in disputes around the command of space.

The consolidation of Brazilian space capabilities becomes fundamental, not only for its defense tactics but also for expanding the country's socioeconomic development. Space technology has practical applications in areas such as agriculture, health, safety, environment, and communications, generating benefits for society and progress for the country. Therefore, to overcome stagnation and technological barriers, a joint and coordinated effort is needed from several national actors, such as the government, the aerospace industry, universities and research centers, and society

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THE CROSSROADS BETWEEN ACTORS, NORMS, PRACTICES AND INSTITUTIONS: MASS MIGRATION FROM VENEZUELA IN SOUTH AMERICA¹

Sérgio Luiz Cruz Aguilar²

Introduction

The political, economic, and social crisis in Venezuela, which took a turn for the worse in 2015, resulted in the mass migration of Venezuelan citizens to several South American states, including Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The number of Venezuelan migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers between 2015 and 2022 reached 4,992,215 persons (R4Va 2022). By March 2022, Colombia had received 1.84 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees, followed by Peru (1.28 million), Ecuador (513,903), Chile (448,138) and Brazil (325,763) (Dourado & Bittencourt 2022). Consequently, mass migration from Venezuela was classified a crisis by South American governments, leading some countries to implement restrictive policies. With regards to Venezuelan migration, therefore, it is important to understand the broader discursive trends, the norms created and agreed upon within intergovernmental institutions and organisations, and the practices carried out by national governments.

In this context, this paper discusses the linkages between incentives and norms that emerge from institutions such as the South American Conference on Migration (SCM), the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and practices adopted by governments during the Venezuelan migration crisis. Through a qualitative approach, observations of practice and discourse, and the critical analysis thereof, the paper discusses governmental discourses within institutions; the

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² Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences, Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho. São Paulo, Brazil. E-mail: tcaguilar2012@hotmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4757-4426>

emergence of collective norms; and the contradictory practices employed as responses to the migration crisis. The main objectives are: to examine the main questions that were addressed within the three institutions and what norms emerged as a result; to understand whether, and if so how, Brazilian, Colombian, Ecuadorian, and Peruvian governments broke those agreed upon norms and turned to more restrictive measures; and to explore possible explanations for such contradictory behaviour. The data were analysed through the factors: characteristics of the organisations/institutions and the weight of their influence; impact of migrants in each country; domestic public opinion on migrants; political context of each country; and justifications for implementing restriction.

The SCM, Mercosur and CAN were chosen because of their regional scope, range of characteristics, and the fact that they all deal explicitly with migration, be that directly or under specific circumstances only. The four countries were chosen because they are members or associates of these institutions and are among those most affected by the Venezuelan crisis. The paper is mostly descriptive; it does not aim to generalise conclusions, rather, to provide initial findings and explanations regarding the crossroads between actors, norms, practices, and institutions related to the specific case of contemporary Venezuelan migration and to these four South American countries.

The article is divided into four parts. The first section presents the conceptual and theoretical framework used to identify the factors employed in the analysis. The second section presents how migration issues were dealt by the selected intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and intergovernmental institutions (IIs). The third section presents the variation of norms across the four countries. A final section discusses possible explanations for states' behaviour regarding Venezuelan migration. The last section concludes.

International organisations/institutions, ideas, norms, and behaviours

The term 'international organisations' is used to refer to a wide variety of formal structures which can include "multinational corporations, bilateral organizations, multilateral organizations, and international non-governmental organizations" (Dijkzeul and Beigbeder 2003, 7). Both IGOs and IIs are places where ideas and thoughts are shared, and collective decisions can mediate individual behaviours. They involve "a set of rules that stipulate the ways in which states should cooperate and compete with each other [and]

prescribe acceptable forms of state behaviour while proscribe unacceptable one” (Mearsheimer 1994-5, 9). Thus, they create norms, “a standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891) which can alter state preferences and therefore state behaviour (Mearsheimer 1994-5). IGOs can also exercise political authority over their subjects according to their ‘areas of action’. Through the performance of these roles, organisations produce policy programs and implement operational and information activities (Rittberger et al 2012).

Yet there are important differences between the two. Intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) are established through joint agreements engendering obligations between governments (UIA 2015) and can be considered a subset of international organisations. Some authors have differentiated between public international organisations, whose members are predominantly states, and private international organisations, whose members are mainly private actors. Moreover, the former can either be intergovernmental or supranational depending on the decision-making system they adopt (Bauer and Knill 2007). IGOs are based on states, and as such are subject to international law, i.e., they possess international rights and duties according to their constitutive treaties and agreements. They consist of bureaucratic branches for performing ongoing tasks and are formally autonomous. Every organisation has its own set of rules for guiding members to achieve its goals. Consequently, IGOs can be seen as “institutional agreements that combine a normative framework, member states and a bureaucracy” (Biermann et al. 2009).

On the other hand, international institution (II) is a term used by sociologists to refer to “systems of norms, rules and decision-making procedures that give rise to social practices, that assign roles to participants in these practices, and that guide interaction among participants” (Biermann et al. 2009, 354). The term institution can be applied to both the formal organisation and/or the behavioural patterns and practices of a given society. Thus, while the term institution usually refers to both immaterial and physical entities, organisation strictly refers to a physical entity. IGOs and IIs diverge in their organisational forms, goals and objectives, activities, number of participants, agendas, and functions; they can also be universal or regional depending on their participants and the scale of their activity. Considering these distinctions, I refer to Mercosur and CAN as IGOs, and to the SCM as an international institution.

Scholars have also recognized different types or categories of norms: while regulative norms order and constrain behaviour, constitutive norms create new actors, interests, or categories of action. As such, there are both intersubjective and evaluative dimensions involved in norms, and what

is appropriate (or not) is defined in conjunction with “the judgments of a community or a society” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891-892). This means that moral assessment is often attached to the observance or non-observance of practices. Norms often limit the range of choices available to members and constrain their actions. In this way, norm conforming behaviour takes place by praising, ignoring, or disapproving of norm-breaking behaviour, and stigmatising certain actions in the process (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998).

While the constructivist approach understands shared ideas, beliefs and discourse surrounding appropriate behaviour to be the driving force behind world structures, order, and stability, the realist approach views ideas and norms and the ways that they shift as a product of power and interests (see Martin and Simmons 2013; Mearsheimer 1994-5). While the former focuses on an international system characterized by concepts of rectitude, rights, obligations, and the sense of state responsibility created by its community, the second assumes that institutions have minimal influence on state behaviour. The realist approach considers that although rules are incorporated into formal IGOs, it is not the organisation itself that compels states to obey the rules, but rather that states choose which rules to obey or not according to their own interests (Mearsheimer 1994-5). By these standards, IGOs need to cultivate legitimacy among those they aspire to govern (members and audiences alike) in order to ensure that relevant actors comply with their rules and decisions (see e.g. Chayes and Chayes 1996; Henkin 1979; Franck 1990; and Hurd 2019).

The term ‘ideas’ has at least two distinct meanings: shared beliefs, or tools/implements. Ideas permit people to construct meaning about themselves and their activities and make certain kinds of action possible. At the same time, by precluding other types of meaning and action, they also constrain behaviour (Laffey and Weldes 1997). Constraints of the system notwithstanding, states still have considerable freedom of action, and make choices to protect national interests (Mearsheimer 1994-5).

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, 895) highlight a three-stage process: norm emergence, norm acceptance and norm internalization, where each stage “is characterized by different actors, motives, and mechanisms of influence”. Norms take hold when norm entrepreneurs persuade or convince a critical mass of member states as to the appropriateness or desirability of behaviour on certain issues, largely through organisational platforms (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Norms on migration can therefore be viewed through the prism of a shared perception of humanity, thereby the motivation for compliance (or not) is the recognition that migrants are entitled (or not) to certain rights as human beings (see e.g. Monroe 1996).

Nonetheless, the process of norm emergence, acceptance and internalization involves competing with other norms and perceptions of interest. Ideas have a constitutive role in generating or constructing interests, in defining the problems to policies need to respond to (Weldes 1996). Ideas are meanings that denote, describe, represent, label, depict, or express a given phenomenon (Geertz 1980). Ideas are put into words, and through language are transmitted to (sometimes also translated for) members, who then extract their own interpretation (Lakoff 1995). Governments care about international and domestic legitimacy and thus construct certain categories and representations to promote particular forms of attachment among populations, assigning value (or not) to their activities (Starr 1992).

Political actors are rational and make means-ends calculations about how to achieve their goals. Keeping in mind the rationalist approach and its distinction between interests and ideas, ideas can be considered merely the tools used by policymakers to manipulate audiences, procure given material interests, and mobilize support (Sikkink 1991). Citizens' perceptions and the judgments they make regarding certain issues are central to the survival of the elite. Some situations lead to a turnover, shifting perceptions around specific situations or issues. In this sense, even if governments generally comply with norms, they tend to break them when a better alternative is available, as this allows them to maintain or acquire the support of their country's citizens. This can lead to contradictions between discourse and practice. While one might expect migration norms to be accepted and internationalized, the impact of large inflows of migrants can result in negative measures targeting this group, which contradicts the discourse and norms the state has agreed upon in the scope of IGOs and/or IIs, i.e. the government's non-compliance.

The particular type of idea that interests me here is that of migration, i.e. the distinct beliefs, principles, and attitudes regarding this issue, and how this can lead governments to enact restrictive measures against norms they agreed to as part of international organisations and/or institutions. I use the cases of SCM, CAN and Mercosur to explore the debates that take place and decisions that are made surrounding migration within international institutions. I then look at how Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru behaved in the face of Venezuelan mass migration. My analysis seeks to explain why states adopt restrictive measures contrary to the shared ideas and agreed upon norms. The chosen IGOs/IIs influence the behaviour of their members in different ways. This influence varies across time according to the given context of particular moments. Accordingly, I sought to establish the proportion of influence emanating from either SCM, Mercosur or CAN at those moments when Venezuelan migratory flows were higher. Both the

number of migrants and the economic situation of the receiving country can impact local perceptions of migrants, as they can be made scapegoats for the impact of economic downturns on local inhabitants.

Following this logic, I sought to establish whether there was any correlation between variations in each country's GDP and increasing migration flows with the adoption of restrictive measures. Relatedly, public opinion in the host countries varied significantly, ranging from humanitarianism to cases of discrimination and xenophobia. To address this, I sought public opinion surveys from each of the four countries. The above factors influence political actors and their decisions, which are rational and concerned with domestic legitimacy. Thus, their political survival leads to internal decisions that sometimes contradict the discourse presented to the outside world. To corroborate this, I looked to the political situation of receiving countries at the time when restrictive measures were adopted (where they occurred). Finally, I set out to understand how governments justified the implementation of restrictive measures and legitimized their decisions for domestic and international audiences. What I found was that restrictive measures were carried out in the name of perceived (as opposed to real) security reasons, where security discourse was used for political gains.

Migration issues in regional IGOs and IIs

Three IGOs/IIs were selected for this study. The South American Conference on Migration (SCM), a regional consultative process which specifically addresses the migratory question, and two regional organisations – the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) – which, although more broadly concerned with integration, have also established institutions to deal with migratory issues.

The South American Conference on Migration (SCM)

The SCM is a regional consultative process created 20 years ago as an intergovernmental space. Its aim is to recommend initiatives and programs to promote and develop policies on international migration, debate ideas and share good practices through informal and non-binding meetings. Annual conferences are held in the territory of a member country that exercises the Pro-Tempore Presidency in which, beyond government officials, representatives of international organisations, civil society and specific

governments participate as observers. Its Technical Secretariat is carried out by the Regional Office for South America of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The SCM maintains the South American Observatory on Migration, which collects and exchanges relevant and strategic information for the formulation of public policies on migration in South America. Within this framework, the SCM constitutes a space for dialogue and consensus for the construction of regional migration policy (SCM 2022).

In general, the SCM emphasised that human rights should be placed at the centre of migratory policies, regulations, and programmes of member countries, and that the relationship migration-development goes beyond the economic aspect and “must be addressed comprehensively, including its human, social, cultural and environmental perspective” (SCM 2013, 4). The Conference has consistently condemned acts of xenophobia, discrimination, racism, and the criminalisation of irregular migration. Its members have agreed that facilitating migratory procedure is fundamental to the human development of society as a whole, and that there is a need to strengthen existing mechanisms to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families (SCM 2013).

In practical terms, the SCM has approved the ‘Regional Guidelines on Protection and Assistance to Persons Displaced Across Borders and Migrants in Countries Affected by Natural Disasters’ as a framework to facilitate the admission and stay of foreigners from countries affected by disasters of natural origin and the adverse effects of climate change (SCM 2018). SCM’s members have also officially declared: the recognition of the right to migrate in a secure manner, without criminalisation; the need for a multidisciplinary and multilateral treatment of the issue; the relevance of the agreements on migration regularisation; the commitment to prevent, prosecute and sanction migrant smuggling and trafficking; the importance of maintaining regional coherence in the definition and application of migration policies; the rejection of the abuse of authority, especially arbitrary detentions and deportations applied in certain extra-regional countries, as well as unilateral administrative laws and measures that sanction and discriminate against migrants; a commitment to coexistence, social inclusion, citizens’ participation and the insertion of migrant persons, as well as articulating joint actions and common stances towards the protection of migrants, among others (SCM 2010).

Best practices were also shared among members. They included: the Brazilian National Conference on Migration and Refuge, which made it possible for migrants and refugees to participate at all stages (SCM n/d a); the Colombian Migrant Assistance Office, which included an Inter-Institutional

Network of national and local entities to assist and advise migrants returning from abroad (SCM n/d b); Ecuadorian initiatives to promote cross-cutting public policies on human mobility (National Development Plan - *Plan para el Buen Vivir* and the Human Mobility Equality Agenda) (SCM n/d c); and the Peruvian Migration Management Multisectoral Commission, created in 2011 as a multisectoral space for coordinating, evaluating, proposing, prioritizing, and supervising policies and actions related to comprehensive migration management (SCM n/d d).

The Southern Common Market (Mercosur)

Mercosur is an integration process of an intergovernmental nature, whereby decisions must be made by consensus. The bloc is formed of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela (which is presently suspended) and Bolivia (currently in the process of joining), and includes associated countries (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guiana, Peru, and Suriname). Once approved, its norms are mandatory and, where necessary, incorporated into national legal systems through the procedures provided by the legislation of each country. Over time and for the purposes of implementing its regional policies, Mercosur has created several permanent bodies, including the Meeting of Ministers of Interior and its Specialized Migration Forum (FEM in its acronym in Portuguese) (Mercosur 2022). The FEM is a space in which the most advanced agreements on migration in the bloc have been negotiated. FEM resolutions are adopted by consensus and sent to the Ministers of the Interior for their consideration and approval and have the potential to become binding instruments.

Some of the main things the FEM has discussed and decided upon are related to: the exchange of information on migration legislation of member States and harmonisation of such legislation; facilitating the movement of people, including preferential channels for citizens and residents of member countries (Mercosur 2002, 2010, 2012, 2017) and the transit with personal identity (Mercosur 2008); cross-border transit; migrant trafficking (Mercosur 2001, 2005); the declaration of principles on migration policy (Mercosur 2004); vulnerable children and adolescents (Mercosur 2006); refugees and stateless persons (Mercosur 2012); among others.

The 20+ years of operation of both the Meeting of Ministers of Interior and FEM can be divided into two phases: the first focused on ensuring circulation within the bloc's territory, relating to border control and tourism; while the second focused on placing migrants as human beings at the centre

of migration policy. In general, discussions and actions have been much more focused on citizens of member states (and associates) than on nationals of third states. Between 2017 and 2021, communiqués about migration were directed at countries outside Mercosur. Moreover, although the approval of new agreements has constituted a valuable driver of change, difficulties in their implementation were quickly identified, as was the absence of follow-up and evaluation actions to monitor compliance (IPPDH 2012).

The Andean Community of Nations (CAN)

The CAN was founded in 1969 and is currently formed of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and associated countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay)³. Its decisions are mandatory and part of the legal system of the Community. In 1999, the Andean Committee of Migration Authorities was created to analyse and recommend decisions regarding migration (CAN 1999).

Several matters of social security (CAN 1978) and labour migration were thus decided upon equally within the block (CAN 2003a; CAN 2004a, b; CAN 2005), including procedures for hiring and protecting workers and their families, equality between the labour rights of immigrant and national workers, and non-discrimination in the workplace. Chronologically, the main achievements on migration issues included: the creation of the Andean Migration Card (TAM) (CAN 1996; CAN 2001e, f); the opportunity for members (and if deemed appropriate, third countries) to establish Border Integration Zones through bilateral mechanisms, aimed at promoting the free movement of people simplifying migration procedures, among other things (CAN 2001a); the creation of Binational Border Attention Centres with harmonized administrative and operational procedures for the efficient and integrated control and management of the entry and exit of people (CAN 2001b); authorization for traveling through the sub-region with national identification documents, without passports or visas, as well as the creation of the Andean Passport (CAN 2001c); and, airport entry windows for nationals and foreigners residing in CAN countries (CAN 2002). Moreover, the organisation established a mechanism for cooperation across consular assistance and protection services for the benefit of any CAN nationals outside their country of origin (CAN 2003b; CAN 2013).

In 2021, the Andean Migratory Statue was approved. The Statue regulated the movement and residence of Andean citizens and their families

³ Venezuela was a member and withdrew in 2011, as was Chile, which withdrew in 1976.

as well as non-community permanent residents within the CAN countries. It incorporated the aforementioned achievements and reinforced others, including: the non-discrimination for reasons of nationality, race, sex, creed, social status or any other reason; the prohibition of criminalisation of migration; national support for those who have obtained temporary or permanent residence; procedures for temporary residence and family reunification; and several other rights (education, suffrage, transfer of remittances). However, the Statue recognised that the rights prescribed therein could be limited by the members due to the need to preserve the life and health of people, public order, and essential interests of national security. Moreover, rights relating to mobility are subject to the internal regulations of each Member (CAN 2021).

Migration issues and the flow from solidarity to restrictions: four cases

To explore the debates at the centre of this study, I chose Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, since they are part of the three aforementioned IGOs/IIIs (as members or associates), in addition to the fact that this study forms part of a broader research project relating to Venezuelan migration in these countries.

Brazil

Venezuelan migration to Brazil began increasing in 2015 and reached its peak in 2018. It particularly impacted the northern state of Roraima, especially the border town of Pacaraima. In response, the Brazilian government deployed the military-led operations Welcome (*Operação Acolhida*) and Control (*Operação Controle*) and, to a certain extent, militarised the border with Venezuela.

In March 2017, the Normative Resolution n. 126 established a temporary residence visa for a period of up to two years, aiming to promote the migratory regularisation of Venezuelans. In addition, in 2017, Brazil published a new migration law, which presented an advance in normative standards and proved to be more protective of migrants than its predecessor. The law included the decriminalisation of migrants, the abolishment of prisons for deportation and expulsion purposes, and the guarantee of temporary humanitarian welcome visas (Brazil 2017).

In 2018, nearly 128,000 Venezuelans entered the country. Brazilian

authorities proudly reported several initiatives to deal with the crisis including vaccination, medical care, shelters, reception centres and measures to transfer those migrants who wished to go on to other regions of the country (Brazil 2018e). However, after a visit by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to Brazil, the precarious reality of the reception in Roraima at the time was exposed. The Commission raised cases of rights violations, hate speech, episodes of xenophobia, and found several risk factors involving migrant homelessness, in particular (OEA 2018).

In February 2018, the Provisional Measure No. 820 provided emergency measures to address people in situations of vulnerability as the result of humanitarian crisis and detailed priority areas of action such as social protection, health care, and human rights, among others (Brazil 2018d, converted into the Law 13.684 of 21 June 2018). The measures included public security and the strengthening of border control as well as support for the internalisation of the mentioned people. The Interministerial Ordinance n. 9 of March 2018 provided grantees for a residence permit which benefited Venezuelan immigrants (Brazil 2019).

Federal decrees recognized the situation of vulnerability resulting from the migratory flow to the State of Roraima and structured a joint management body for the crisis. As a result of the decrees, the Ministry of Defence established parameters and responsibilities for the execution of Operations Welcome and Control (Brazil 2018a, b). Presidential Decree n. 9,483 gave police power to the Armed Forces and legitimised the use of force, if necessary, initially limited to the border town of Pacaraima because of the violent onslaught perpetrated by Brazilians against the encampment of Venezuelans, and later was expanded to the state capital Boa Vista (Brazil 2018f).

In June 2019, Brazil formally recognised the severity of human rights violations in Venezuela through a Refugee Law incorporating the Cartagena Declaration (Brazil 1997). This provided a more efficient means for granting refugee status and asylum to nationals from Venezuela through a simplified procedure (UNHCR 2019). In 2021, the simplified procedure was extended until the end of 2022, and between June 2019 and June 2021 more than 50,000 asylum applications were recognized as a result (Correio Braziliense 2021).

In March 2020, the federal government restricted the entry of Venezuelan immigrants into Brazil because of the advance of coronavirus, and the border was closed on the grounds of preventing and reducing risks in emergencies that could affect people's lives (based on the National Policy on Public Security and Social Defence) (Brazil 2018c), the potential impacts on

the national health system, and the potential spread of the coronavirus (Brazil 2020).

Colombia

Colombia experienced a turning point in the nature of mobility. From its traditional concern with the departure of its own nationals due to internal conflict ongoing for several decades, the country had to deal with the reverse, such as the flow of migrants incoming from Venezuela.

Decree 1239 (2003) created the Intersectoral National Commission on Migration which was aimed at coordinating and guiding the implementation of migratory policy (Colombia 2003). Law 1465 of 2011 created the National Migration System for accompanying the government in the preparation, execution, development, and evaluation of the Integral Migration Policy (Colombia 2011b). A Special Administrative Unit (*Migración Colombia*) was created to perform the functions of surveillance and control of migration (Colombia 2011a).

Although Venezuela departed from the Andean Community in 2011, the free movement of nationals residing in border cities was maintained between Colombian and Venezuelan. Terms and procedures for the authorization of entry and stay, as well as temporary residence permits, were laid out in 2012 (Colombia 2012, 2021b). On August 19, 2015, Venezuela ordered the closure of its borders with Colombia because of political disagreements between governments and deported 2,200 Colombians. A year later, Colombia created the Border Transit Immigration Card (*Tarjeta Migratoria de Tránsito Fronterizo*) to allow the entry and transit of these people within the border areas between the two countries, while Venezuela reopened the border entirely. Law 1873 of 2017 established that, given the social emergency on the border with Venezuela, it would design a humanitarian care policy and allocate resources to implement it (Colombia 2017a). In 2019, Law 1997 issued a special and exceptional regime for Venezuelans to acquire Colombian nationality (Colombia 2019).

Notwithstanding, the country put into place certain measures that restricted Venezuelans' entry. The government created the *Permiso Especial de Permanencia* (PEP) for Venezuelans who entered the country through migratory control, qualified with a passport and without judicial records, as well as regulating expulsion or deportation measures (Colombia 2017b), and established the *Permiso de Ingreso y Permanencia de Tránsito Temporal* (PIP-TT) for migrants in transit (Colombia 2018b). In 2018, President Santos

announced that the Border Transit Immigration Card would no longer be issued, as the reality had changed, and only those who had a passport or already had an immigration card would be able to enter Colombia. Moreover, all those who had entered national territory and did not have this document would be considered illegal, running the risk of being deported when identified. In the same year, Decree 542 determined measures for an Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (RAMV) aimed at designing a policy of humanitarian attention and obtaining more information about the migratory phenomenon of Venezuelans in the country (Colombia 2018a).

In March 2020, the government determined the closure of the Colombian border with Venezuela as a measure to contain the spread of the new coronavirus (Colombia 2020). In 2021, the Temporal Statute of Protection for Migrants was established. It was composed of the Single Registry of Venezuelan Migrants and the Temporary Protection Permit intended for the regularization of Venezuelan migrants (Colombia 2021a).

Ecuador

Ecuador was a pioneer in defending universal citizenship. Its Constitution of 2008 (modified in 2021) states that no human being will be considered illegal because of their migratory status (Ecuador 2008). Ecuadorian legislation and documents include: the “Framework Agreement for Inter-institutional Cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion”; the “Integral Plan for the Care and Protection of Rights in the context of the increase in the Venezuelan migratory flow in Ecuador”; and, most importantly, the Organic Law of Mobility (2017), which defined procedures for the reception and regularization of immigrants in the country. The Law’s guiding principles are: the prohibition of criminalisation, equality before the law and non-discrimination, granting the most favourable interpretation to the person in mobility, guarantees for children and adolescents, and *non-refoulement* (Ecuador 2017). In addition, the country was prominent regarding the Quito Declaration on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region and the Plan of Action of the Quito Process on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Nationals in the Region, which both aimed to ensure the proper management of migratory flows with a focus on the human rights of foreigners in contexts of human mobility.

However, after the intensification of the flows of Venezuelans and the election of President Lenín Moreno, the country adopted more restrictive

measures for the reception of migrants, mainly from Venezuela. In March 2018, the National Committee for Integral Border Security was created on the grounds of increased insecurity on the northern border and risks associated with drug and arms trafficking, among others, followed by the militarization of the border with Colombia (Ecuador 2018a). A series of ministerial resolutions were published from August 2018 onwards, establishing stricter requirements for this group to enter the territory. As an example, Resolution 152 declared an emergency in the border areas of Carchi, El Oro and Pichincha, where a high number of Venezuelan migrants circulated, allowing immediate actions to mitigate the migratory flow in the region (Ecuador 2018c). Lenín Moreno argued that it was based on the security of the migrants themselves (UOL 2018).

Resolution No. 242 determined the need for Venezuelans to present a passport to enter the country. The resolution was changed in the same month to allow Venezuelans to enter with just their identity card, however, they were then required to present a certificate validating it, issued by a regional or international organisation recognized by Ecuador or Venezuela (Ecuador 2018b). Furthermore, due to crimes committed by Venezuelans, especially a femicide in the city of Ibarra in 2019, the country registered several protests and cases of xenophobia (Escaracas 2019), with a disproportionate response being unleashed by the country's institutions. The passage of pedestrians on the Rumichaca International Bridge was restricted, and the President claimed that "we have opened the doors, but we will not sacrifice the security of anyone" (Moreno.... 2019), announcing the requirement of a criminal record certificate for Venezuelans (Ecuador 2019a). The government used the case to justify the requirement for a visa for Venezuelans at the cost of 50 dollars (an almost impossible amount for the migrants), contrary to the Urban Mobility Law enacted in 2017 (Ecuador 2017). The following month, the Interministerial Agreement n. 002 repealed this requirement for some migrants (Ecuador 2019b) and Resolution 826 granted amnesty to Venezuelans who were irregular and granted temporary residence visas for humanitarian reasons but validated the visa requirement for Venezuelans to enter the country (Ecuador 2019c). These changes in immigration regulations worried the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) (OEA 2019).

In mid-March 2020, a decree proclaiming a State of Exception was published because of the pandemic, and a protocol for the operation of border centres was established, allowing the entry only of Ecuadorians and foreign residents (Ecuador 2020).

Peru

There have been fundamental changes to Peruvian immigration legislation, which was chronologically based on three primordial statutes: the 1991 Immigration Law (Peru 1991), which focused on security and came under scrutiny of institutions such as the *Comisión Andina de Juristas*, and the *Comité de Protección de los Derechos* and the *Defensoría del Pueblo* (Blouin 2021, 146); the 2015 Immigration Law (Peru 2015); and the Immigration Law, which was enacted in 2017 and amended in 2021 (Peru 2021), and remains in force until today. Meanwhile, in 2012, Legislative Decree 1.130 created the National Migration Superintendence (named *Migraciones*) within the Ministry of Interior to regulate services and policies on migration matters, which involved the creation of a system of sanctions and control elements (Barbieri 2020, 227).

Briefly, Legislative Decree n. 1.350 followed a human rights-based approach, recognizing migration as a complex phenomenon and expressing “the state’s commitment to providing comprehensive and multidimensional responses” (Said and Jara 2020, 5). Having been adopted within the framework of the intensification of Venezuelans’ entry, it presented certain advances in terms of human rights compared to previous legislation. However, despite its humanitarian appearance, it has not supplanted the idea of migratory control and governability (Blouin 2021) since it provides for sanctions such as impediments to entry and expulsions for reasons of national security, public health, and public order (Peru 2017). In this sense, the National Police supporting *Migraciones* can carry out expulsions and retentions which illustrates the omnipresent control of migrants (Blouin 2021).

Although Peru is a signatory to the Cartagena Declaration (1984), and thus recognizes its definition of refugee, Asylum Law (No. 27.840/2002) and Refuge Law (No. 27.891/2002) enacted alternative instruments to regulate the entry and stay in the national territory, which oscillated between opening and closing restrictions according to the government in place (Jubilut and Fernandes 2020). For example, the government of Pedro Kuczynski (2016-2018) established the Temporary Residence Permit (PTP), while Supreme Decree N° 007 (2017) added a new migratory quality of ‘Special Residence’ (Peru 2017). For about a year, the PTP was the most recurrent form of regularization, permanence, and access to rights and work for Venezuelans in Peru. The PTP was considered by State agents and international organisations as an unprecedented mechanism of solidarity with Venezuelan migrants in the region.

However, Blouin noticed too much emphasis placed on the issue of

regularisation of migrants and how this, to a certain extent, contradicted its humanitarian scope because of the temporality (one year) and exceptionality of the mechanism that translated the desire to frame the “flow in a convenient perspective, in this case of short duration, for the country” (Blouin 2021, 151-152, my translation). Moreover, during the interim government of Martín Vizcarra (2018-2020), this permission was terminated when the migration policy gradually moved towards a more restrictive situation based on a discourse of securitisation (Said and Jara 2020). A passport became required “to guarantee security and enable the police to properly record, with photographs and fingerprints” (G1 2018, my translation), a humanitarian visa was stipulated as *sine qua non* requirement for entry, and the asylum policy took on an even more restrictive form (see Blouin 2021).

In this context, the borders were closed to Venezuelan citizens and policing at migration control posts was increased, as well as the mandatory passport, visa and ‘clean record’ for entry and stay of foreigners in the country. The humanitarian visa could only be issued in a few consular offices outside Peru and included a series of requirements and documentation, functioning as a barrier to contain the entry of Venezuelans. The focus was on surveillance, regularisation, and control of who enters and leaves (Blouin 2021). Thus, while the use of regional transit and migration mechanisms (e.g. the Andean Migration Card and the Mercosur Visa, which was suspended for Venezuelans in 2017) demonstrate international cooperation to respond to the emergency of the flow, and while the Migration Law is supposedly informed by human rights, they contradict the national regularisation, control and security mechanisms of Peru (see Barbieri 2020; Blouin 2021). Furthermore, during the electoral process of 2021, migration was among the central issues raised. For example, Pedro Castillo (then candidate for the Presidency) stated that “it is necessary to order the house, it is necessary to order the country. Here we ratify ourselves: assuming the mandate, we will issue a supreme decree so that people who have come from another country and fail to respect our homeland, will be given 72 hours to return to their country” (Pedro 2021).

IGOs/IIs, discourses, norms, and the contradictory practices on migration

The descriptive sections above indicate that all three IGOs/IIs presented discussions and decisions surrounding the issue of migration. The discourse of governments within these IOs/IIs and in their countries was generally focused on solidarity with migrants. However, in certain situations, especially

with the large increase of Venezuelans' entry, practices have indicated the adoption of restrictive measures, the closure of borders, and even the use of the military to host and control actions.

States ranged from adopting policies and mechanisms that facilitated migration to a series of measures hindering and restricting Venezuelan migration. An initial explanation for these attitudes might be found in the characteristics of the IGOs/IIs themselves, as well as the weight of their respective influence on members' decisions. The SCM is a discussion forum; it does not have the force of mandatory compliance, unlike Mercosur and CAN. Migration rules have the potential to be accepted even when they cause constraints, while influences and incentives relating this issue, both international and domestic, have even allowed changes in the approach – e.g. Mercosur, which changed from a focus on intra-bloc circulation to a more comprehensive and humanitarian approach.

SCM, due to its scope, worked with ideas and beliefs that would lead to a more humanitarian posture of the policies, regulations, and programs of South American countries in general. It sought through good practices to encourage their adoption within the scope of the Conference. Within the scope of Mercosur and CAN, decisions were much more focused on the interior of the bloc and on the common borders of its members, also implying migratory control. However, they sought to guarantee the right of mobility, the protection of migrants in these movements, and the guarantee of rights in the host countries.

Mercosur has gone through numerous phases of advances and setbacks in its 30 years of existence. If during the 2000s, Mercosur strengthened its political, social and citizen agenda, in the following decade the bloc was emptied due to the advance of right-wing governments, especially with ideological disagreements between the presidents of Brazil and Argentina from 2019. This became clear with the abrupt withdrawal of the Brazilian president from the virtual meeting of the bloc's thirty-year celebration, in March 2021 (Gavião 2021). With regards to CAN, over the last decade, the contestation of neoliberal policies by governments, the development of alternative initiatives with distinct ideological characteristics (e.g. ALBA), the functional and societal discredit of Andean integration, the lack of leadership, the low decision-making role of the Andean supranational institutions, and the prioritization of national interests, among other factors, decreed the disruption of Andean integration (Bressan and Luciano 2018). Consequently, during the Venezuelan migration crisis, both Mercosur and CAN suffered blows to their degree of legitimacy, especially relating to their social agenda. As a result, the weight of their respective influence on state decisions in the

migratory field can be considered low.

A second factor in the shaping of state policy might be the impact of migrants. While in Brazil the ratio between the country's population and the number of Venezuelans entering was 0.11%, in Colombia it was 3.2%, in Ecuador it was 2.18% and in Peru 2.6%. Consequently, while the impact was absented in Brazil, the ratio in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru potentially impacted country conditions and public opinion regarding Venezuelan migration. The impact could also been related to economic conditions. In Brazil, Venezuelan migration to Brazil began to grow in 2015 and reached its peak in 2018, with a decrease in numbers beginning in 2019. During the same period, the economy (measured in relation to GDP) grew from -3.546% in 2015, to 1.784% (2018) and 1.41% (2019), falling to -4.059% in 2020 because of the COVID 19 pandemic (World Bank 2022). The operations Control and Welcome were deployed in 2017 when GDP was increasing. It can therefore be inferred (dependent on supporting evidence in the continuation of this research) that, despite its scale, Venezuelan flow did not affect the country. As a result, the topic did not appear as part of the political debate of Brazil's 2018 electoral process. At most, the consequences of the migratory movement were limited to the state of Roraima, in the north of the country. The government's justifications for deploying the military were much more to protect migrants than to control or restrict their movement. In fact, it was the lack of capacity of Roraima's state to deal with the influx of Venezuelans that led its authorities to ask for federal support.

In the case of Colombia, Venezuelan migration began to grow in 2014 and reached its peak in 2018, entering decline as of 2020. The country's GDP varied from 4.49% in 2014, to 2.95% (2015), 2.08% (2016) and 1.35% (2017), rising again to 2.56% in 2018 and 3.28% in 2019, and falling to -6.79% in 2020. In the years with the greatest flow of Venezuelans (2018 to 2019), GDP was on the rise. It was only in 2020 that it fell sharply, following the world trend due to the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2022). Nonetheless, certain restrictive measures came into effect in 2017-2018 when GDP was rising. The official discourse justifying restrictions was related to public security, although there is no evidence that the crimes committed by Venezuelan migrants would justify the measures.

In Ecuador, the number of Venezuelan migrants has grown considerably since the beginning of the crisis, rising from 102,910 arrivals in 2016 to 285,634 in 2017, reaching its highest number in 2018, when 955,488 Venezuelans crossed the borders (Ecuador 2022). Between 2017 and 2018, about 1,200,000 Venezuelans entered the country, excluding informal border crossings. The migratory flow provoked a policy reaction and, from 2017

onwards Ecuador's immigration legislation became more restrictive (Ecuador 2017). The country's GDP grew from -1.22% (2016) to 2.36% (2017). In the years with the highest Venezuelan influx, GDP fell to 1.78% (2018) and to 0.01% (2019). The accentuated outflow of migrants in 2020 happened during the same year that the GDP decreased -7.75% (World Bank 2022). During the greatest influx of migrants, the country saw an economic downturn. These factors coincided with more restrictive migration measures being adopted by the government.

In Peru, a country whose inflow of Venezuelan migrants was practically negligible prior to 2015, approximately 223,000 Venezuelan migrants entered through the country's borders in 2017, and 815,000 in 2018 (Migraciones 2020). From 2018 onwards, migration policy began to take a more restrictive approach. This shift in the character of migration policy was the result of changes in domestic public opinion when the number of Venezuelan migrants residing in the country increased (Said and Jara 2020). Entries fell by half in 2019 (440,925). Peru's GDP grew from 2.51% (2017) to 3.96% (2018), falling to 2.20% in 2019 and -11.14% in 2020 (World Bank 2022). Thus, during the peak of Venezuelan entries into the country, GDP was increasing considerably, the same year when more restrictive measures began to be adopted.

In Brazil there is no perceived relationship between the arrival of migrants, economic growth variation, and the need for restrictive measures relating to security. In Colombia, in the 2015 and 2021 period, the peak of Venezuelan migrant flows occurred during the same year that the economy was on the rise. In this way, this initial assessment has not allowed us to establish a relationship between the arrival of Venezuelan migrants, economic variation, nor regarding security reasons. In Ecuador, there is a potential correlation between the arrival of Venezuelan migrants and economic variation in the country, although there is no evidence that security concerns acted a central motivation for the restrictive measures adopted by the government. In Peru, there is no possible correlation between the increase of Venezuelan migration, economic variation, and restrictive measures adopted by the country. There is also no evidence of real security reasons for restrictive measures.

Domestic public opinion regarding Venezuelan migration can also influence governments to enact restrictive measures. In Brazil, a 2018 study by the Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) analysing news-related blog posts, news sites, and Twitter publications indicated that immigration was far more likely to be used to criticize left-wing ideology than it was to discuss the issue of migration itself. While part of those engaged in debates were against the unrestricted entry of Venezuelans, others were in favour of welcoming them.

The 2017 Migration Law was the main point of contention for actors and groups critical of the reception of immigrants. In this context, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Aloysio Nunes was criticized for “opening doors” to Venezuelans, “referring to a socialist policy of welcoming foreigners” and privileging immigrants to the detriment of Brazilian citizens who face “various problems of access to public services and will suffer from the competition of Venezuelans for employment and social benefits” (Calil and Barboza, 2018, my translation).

In Colombia, surveys on the perception of migration carried out by the Venezuela Migration Project have shown that 62% believed that Venezuelan migration led to increasing poverty levels, while only 34% believed that they represented an opportunity for development. 72% also considered that migratory irregularity implies greater crime or citizen insecurity, and between 59% and 61% perceived that Venezuelans generated no/low confidence (Proyecto... 2021). According to the Americas Barometer survey, 54% of Ecuadorian respondents expressed the belief that migrants worsened crime in the country, where 71% indicated migrants in general and 56% indicated Venezuelan migrants as a factor for the worsening of crime. 62% of Ecuadorians in the Sierra believed that Venezuelan migrants contributed to increasing crime, compared to 50% of coastal people (World Bank 2020). In Peru, 70% considered that Venezuelan displacement has a negative impact, emphasizing the increase in citizen insecurity and crime (63%) and a higher level of informality and fewer jobs in the country (39%). In contrast, 8% considered that the arrival of Venezuelan refugees and migrants had a positive impact (ACNUR 2021). Thus, except for Brazil, where the migration issue was associated with the political-ideological debate, negative public opinion towards Venezuelans was largely associated with public security issues (criminality).

Political contexts can also influence attitudes towards Venezuelan migration. In August 2017, when Venezuela was in the middle of a wave of protests and acts of repression from Maduro’s regime, and the outflow of Venezuelans from the country has increased drastically, the Trump administration endorsed the opposition leader Juan Guaidó and attempted to support the protesters through an aggressive policy of sanctions (Wilson 2019; Jraissati and von Laer 2021). That same month, Mercosur suspended Venezuela from the bloc based on the Ushuaia Protocol on Democratic Commitment (Mercosul 2017).

However, the stance of the governments of the countries studied in this article varied, as did the possible relationship between them and the policies targeted at Venezuelan migrants. In Brazil, since the 2016 Temer

government, the ideological divide between the right and the left has polarised the political debate on immigration, which is used as a way of criticising left-wing ideology more broadly. Notwithstanding the turn to the right with the Bolsonaro government, who adopted strong critical stance and isolation of Maduro, there were no restrictions applied to migrants, Operation Welcome was maintained, and regulations allowed for easier recognition of refugee status for Venezuelans.

In Colombia, the largest flow of Venezuelans coincided with the second term of Juan Manuel Santos (2014-2018) and the presidency of Iván Duque (2018-2022). The former was a member of the *Partido de la Unidad Nacional*, which proposed a third way composed of both liberals and conservatives. The latter, from the *Centro Democrático* party, founded by Alvaro Uribe and which calls itself centre, although some members consider it to be right-wing (La Derecha 2014; Presidente... 2013). During this particular period of Venezuelan migrant inflow, speeches highlighted the need for solidarity and a fraternal attitude towards immigrants. When Ecuador started to require a humanitarian visa for Venezuelan immigrants, in 2019, and the return to Colombia in the absence of the requirements to enter the country, the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticised this attitude.

However, the governments hardened their speeches. President Iván Duque declared that those considered illegal could not enter Colombian territory and, if they did, they would be deported; that any criminal or illegal conduct on the part of Venezuelans would not be tolerated and result in appropriate criminal and immigration sanctions, including immediate deportation. Moreover, the Special Migration Group was created with clear security intentions regarding respect for order and public space, and the control of prostitution, smuggling, and illegal migration, especially to take people to courts (Colombia 2018c). In the context of the pandemic, official speeches indicated concerns surrounding irregular migrants, including threats to make vaccines against Covid-19 unavailable to them (Nexo Journal 2020). Relations with Maduro remained conflictive during the governments of Santos and Duque regardless of political ideologies, consequently it can be said that the restrictions applied to Venezuelans were much more linked to irregular migrants and the pressure to regularise the situation of those who were in the country than to the conflictive relations between the two governments or external pressure against Maduro.

In Ecuador, Lenín Moreno had been Rafael Correa's vice-president and came to power with a discourse of continuity with the previous government. However, he broke with '*correrismo*' and invested in unpopular neoliberal reforms that resulted in intense protests across the country. As

regards to Venezuela, after a greater proximity between the governments of the two countries during Rafael Correa's government (Pincay 2018), relations between Ecuador and Venezuela deteriorated with the Moreno government, especially in October 2018 (González 2019), even with the president leading Alianza País, the same party as his predecessor and considered leftist. Moreno administration's initial approval rating of 66% reached just 4.8% by the end of his term (Rueda 2021). This may provide some explanation as to the country's change of discourse. Initially based on solidarity and on guaranteeing human rights, the country's policy has shifted to prioritizing the security of Ecuadorians and using the association between Venezuelans and crime as a way of justifying the adoption of restrictive measures. Thus, changes in the legislation for the reception of Venezuelans and securitization measures adopted by the government can be linked to both, conflictive relations with Venezuelan regime and domestic politics of Ecuador.

In Peru, the political situation in the period of greatest Venezuelan inflows was likely to have influenced the restrictive measures adopted. Pedro Kuczynski who was elected in 2016, resigned in 2018 (Ya es... 2018). Although elected by the centre-right party *Peruanos por el Cambio*, at first, Kuczynski's approach was to advocate for guaranteeing the rights of Venezuelan migrants. But this changed when the number of Venezuelans entering the country increased and Congress advanced a debate regarding his impeachment. During the Venezuelan crisis of 2017, Kuczynski withdrew his ambassador to Caracas and condemned Maduro regime (Peru... 2021). Moreover, during his government the Lima Group was created as political articulation forum composed of 14 American countries in order to monitor the situation in Venezuela (Rossi 2019). Vice President Martín Vizcarra then took over the presidency and governed as an independent until deposed by Congress in November 2020 (BBC 2020).

When in the presidency, Vizcarra's stance emphasised the expulsion of 140 Venezuelans stating that "we are not going to allow people who bring delinquency to continue [...] If necessary, 500, 800, 1,000, 2,000 of those who commit these type of crimes will be expelled to their home country [...] we want to ensure an orderly and safe migration [...] through better control of the entry of citizens of Venezuela" (Perú... 2019, my translation), and added that "we are now going to be more rigorous in controlling the people who enter. And those who have entered illegally will be expelled" (Latina Noticias 2019, my translation). President Vizcarra's tightening of the requirements for entry into the country can be seen as an attempt to gain public support and legitimise his government. Thus, changes in the posture regarding Venezuelan migrants can be linked to both, conflictive relations with Venezuelan regime

and domestic politics of Peru. When Pedro Castillo of the left-wing *Peru Libre* party took the power in July 2021, diplomatic relations with Venezuela were re-established (Peru..., 2021).

Finally, governments’ justifications for implementing restrictions and (in some instances) deploying the military were often related to security reasons. In Brazil, federal forces were sent to Roraima in 2018 in the name of guaranteeing the safety of migrants following incidents of violence against them (Mendonça 2018). Meanwhile, the establishment of Operation Control aimed to curb cross-border crimes and prevent the entry of migrants through clandestine routes. In Colombia, the measures were justified by the necessity to control migratory movement in favour of security. In Ecuador, the creation of the National Committee for Integral Border Security and the militarization of the northern border with Colombia were justified by the increase of insecurity on the northern border and the risks associated with drug and arms trafficking, among others (Ecuador 2018a). In Peru, the restrictions imposed took place within a discursive framework that associated migrants with an increase in crime.

The graph below summarises this explanation.

Figure 1

	Binding effect	Weight of influence during migration crisis		
SCM	No	Low		
Mercosur	Yes	Low		
CAN	Yes	Low		
↓				
	Brazil	Colombia	Ecuador	Peru
Effect of local vs migrant population ratio	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Economic conditions	No	No	Yes	No
Negative public opinion	Partial	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political context	Ideological division; No concerns on migration; Measures facilitating migrants	Solidarity ↓ Political interest ↓ Restrictions	Solidarity ↓ Political interest ↓ Restrictions	Solidarity ↓ Political crisis ↓ Restrictions
Justification for restrictions	No	Security	Security	Security

Source: The author (2023)

Conclusions

This article has sought to analyse how the migration issue has been dealt within three South American IGOs/IIs through practices surrounding Venezuelan migration to Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. The aim of the article was to examine contradictory practices and discrepancies between, on the one hand, the discussions, and decisions of these IGOs/IIs, and on the other hand, the measures adopted by states during the Venezuelan migration crisis of 2015. By exploring selected factors, we sought to explain this contradictory behaviour.

The observations led to the following conclusions. The IGOs/IIs in question sought to encourage and to create norms to facilitate migratory movements and guarantee the rights of migrants, in a broader sense in the case of the SMC, and in a more intra-bloc sense in the cases of Mercosur and CAN. However, during the Venezuelan crisis, both Mercosur and CAN suffered from an emptying of the social agenda which may have led to a low ability to influence its members on migration issues. Except for Ecuador, which experienced a downturn in the economy during the peak of Venezuelan inflows, it was not possible to establish a correlation between a drop in GDP and the restrictive measures implemented domestically. While the relative impact of migrant inflows was significant in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, and may have influenced the negative public opinion and restrictive measures these countries adopted, in Brazil the impact seems to have been felt only in Roraima, a state that acted as the gateway for migrants and that lacked the means to deal with the problem. Finally, public opinion, combined with the political situation of the countries, may have been the main cause of contradictory behaviour (by changing discourse and adopting restrictive measures). Consequently, migration was possibly politicised in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, leading the political elite to break with previously agreed upon norms for political gains and to the use of a security discourse to justify restrictive measures and legitimize decisions for the benefit of domestic and international audiences.

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ABSTRACT

Intergovernmental organisations and institutions are generally created to discuss and find collective solutions to problems that transcend national borders and individual states' capacities. However, certain crises push for isolated, typically restrictive, actions from governments, making the role of such institutions somewhat murky. The South American Conference on Migration (SCM), the Specialized Migration Forum of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), and the Andean Committee of Migration Authorities of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) are three intergovernmental forums that were created with the aim of negotiating agreements, creating, and implementing community legislation, and achieving regional policy with regards to migration. However, from 2015, mass migration from Venezuela, which was considered a crisis by South American governments, led to restrictive policies in some countries. In this context, this paper discusses the linkages between institutions, actors, norms, and practices by examining the interactions between SCM, Mercosur and CAN and the practices of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru regarding the Venezuelan migration crisis. Through a qualitative approach, observations of practice and discourse, and the critical analysis thereof, this paper discusses debates and decisions within institutions; the emergence and non-compliance of collective norms; and the contradictory practices employed as responses to the migration crisis.

KEYWORDS

Venezuelan Migration; International Institutions; International Norms.

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MERCOSUR AND POST-COVID 19 EXIT STRATEGIES IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: RENEWABLE ENERGIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Amalia Margarita Stuhldreher¹

Virginia Morales Olmos²

Introduction:

The beginning of the third decade of the 21st century confronted the world with the challenge of a global pandemic, where the conditions were imposed by an international environment defined since the turn of the millennium by rapid changes, risk, and uncertainty, together with what Hirst and Malacalza (2020) call a multilateralism reconfiguration without a clear direction. With the coronavirus crisis, it was suddenly necessary to respond to a challenge of global scope, although it is worth highlighting the existence of precedents and alerts that were not duly considered: numerous analyses by the World Health Organization (WHO) outlined pandemic scenarios, establishing the need for healthy environments for the prevention of potential pandemics and underlining environmental risks as a factor directly affecting morbidity at global and regional level (Prüss-Üstün 2006). Likewise, approaches from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) indicated that the emergence of zoonotic diseases prone to be transmitted to humans is often linked to environmental disturbances and are stimulated by phenomena such as climatic events, floods, and famines (UNEP 2016).

To the complex post-pandemic and hegemonic dispute scenario at

¹ Institute for Sustainable Development, Innovation and Social Inclusion, Universidad de la República. Montevideo, Uruguay. Email: astuhldreher@hotmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0918-3099>

² Department of Economic Sciences, Universidad de la República. Montevideo, Uruguay. Email: vmolmos@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3963-7864>

the international level, an issue within the security area such as the War in Ukraine was added in February 2022. This represents a strong reintroduction of geopolitical considerations in energy matters as well. In view of this, this study adopts a multilevel governance perspective to identify opportunities and challenges of Latin America regionalism and its potential for the coordination of instruments such as the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR, for its acronym in Spanish) level.

Assuming a conceptual perspective of sustainable human development (Griffin 2001, Bertoni et al. 2011), this paper analyzes the dynamics of the Bloc in terms of its normative-institutional framework and actors' roles in promoting renewable energies given their contribution to the struggle against climate change. We explore elements that could eventually support future regional climate governance while raising questions of political economy, as well as differences between policies implemented in recent years and their inherent tensions. Based on a combined methods approach, a qualitative component is developed on the one hand, covering journalistic, bibliographical and documentary review (secondary data), as well as primary data from semi-structured interviews conducted between 2017 and 2022 with qualified stakeholders in Uruguay: perceptions regarding opportunities and challenges of the development of energy policies in MERCOSUR are considered focusing on renewable energies, climate change and the situation in Uruguay. The assumption of the new Brazilian government in 2023 is also considered here, with a relaunching of the "green" agenda, which may influence the external positioning of the Bloc. The quantitative component analyzes the evolution of investments in renewable energies in Uruguay during the last decade, presenting the evolution of electric energy exports due to the investment process already mentioned. Finally, the changes in the country's energy matrix are analyzed and compared to the energy matrices of Argentina and Brazil.

Analytical framework

The developments of recent decades are intertwined with moments of breakdown and questioning of international governance, which leads authors such as Sanahuja (2020) to describe events like the 2008 crisis as emerging issues that transcend the circumstances. They are rather, evidence of a broad globalization crisis, understood as a hegemonic model and narrative, following the end of the post-Cold War period, marked by the promotion of a Western

version of democracy, liberal internationalism, and economic globalization. The new stage of the so-called “post-globalization” brings challenges to Latin America’s foreign and development policies. On the other hand, the advent of the COVID 19 pandemic represents in this vision a “critical juncture” - plausibly understood as a “crisis within a crisis”. This would have connotations of reshaping correlations of forces, of redefinition of norms and institutions of the social, economic, and political structure, with a view to constructing new principles and legitimacy criteria. Following the author in a recent work of neo-Gramscian inspiration (Sanahuja, 2022a), the expression “interregnum” could be applied to an assertive description of the current historical period. This would imply an organic crisis marked by contradictions in a highly transnationalized and financialized global economy, but transcending the economic phenomenon to encompass international politics, immersed in a stage of systemic instability and erosion of the prevailing consensus of previous decades, both at international and domestic political levels. Contrasting with this vision, for Rodrik (2020) the pandemic would reinforce trends already present, without envisioning a new course for global political and economic dynamics. Instead, the author emphasizes the risks of climate change, which would become the “next foretold crisis.”

In Latin America, the concept of governance has been debated since the 1990s in relation to the role of regionalism in the new global architecture proposed by the United Nations Commission on Global Governance (1995), which was challenged by academic and political-diplomatic criticisms of this “adaptive” or “functional” vision of global governance. In fact, during recent decades there have been multiple schemes seeking an “alternative” regional governance, such as the Bolivarian Alliance for Our America’s Peoples (ALBA), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, acronym in Spanish) or the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, acronym in Spanish), while other types of initiatives such as the Pacific Alliance or the Forum for the Progress of South America (PROSUR, acronym in Spanish) have also emerged. Despite the undermining caused by segmentation, Riggirozzi and Wylde (2018) establish an explicit link between the conceptual category of governance and the development challenge, emphasizing institutional elements and the array of actors as crucial factors in regional integration processes. Likewise, Riggirozzi and Ryan (2021) stress that regional responses to challenges and opportunities raised at the international level have become a recurrent element, although the authors identify little recognition of regional policy impacts, where the influence exerted by the creation of regulatory frameworks, the regional diplomacy dynamics and the social policy impacts have been ignored, affecting the credibility of regional organizations and

negatively influencing regional governance. In turn, Riggirozzi and Tussie (2021) visualize the concept of post-hegemonic regionalism in connection with a manifestation of governance that has redefined the regional space as a sphere of action and contention.

The foregoing underscores the relevance of the approach to Latin American regional governance contemplating the specificity of various topics. In relation to sustainable development and decarbonization, different instruments established by the international community such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement specify the relationship between the energy issue and climate change (Rivera Albarracín 2019). The Escazú Agreement must be also mentioned in this context. Although the fragmentation of the international governance mechanisms for the energy sector does not define sufficiently clear connecting lines between these issues, there are opportunities within the national spheres to internalize commitments established at the international level, which is relevant for the reconversion of the MERCOSUR countries' energy matrices.

The urgent need for these changes is expressed in the Human Development Report elaborated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which conceptualizes the beginning of the new "Anthropocene" geological era due to the eminently anthropogenic nature of the threats facing the planet: in particular climate change, where State actions, regional authorities, and local communities are of crucial importance (UNPD 2020). The United Nations World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reports also highlight the severity of the climate crisis (WMO, 2020). At the action level, the Climate Summit convened virtually by the Biden Administration in April 2021 showed attempts to reposition the United States on environmental issues and emphasis on renewable energies, presenting its new goal of cutting emissions: between 50% and 52% by 2030, compared to levels in 2005. At the Summit of the Americas in June 2022, the U.S. government announced a series of measures to address the climate crisis, create green jobs and strengthen energy security. The aim was to promote trade and renewable energy investment in the Americas, fostering regional collaboration through the Renewable Energy in Latin America and the Caribbean (RELAC) initiative. Regional development banks will be given a leading role here: the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) will finance projects up to US\$50 billion over the next five years³.

3 See: https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-06-09/estados-unidos-lanza-una-propuesta-para-luchar-contra-el-cambio-climatico-en-la-cumbre-de-las-americas.html?rel=buscador_

Meanwhile, within the European Union (EU), proposals such as the Green Pact prior to the pandemic and the Next Generation EU program approved in July 2020 do not constitute mere sectoral strategies for decarbonization and fight against climate change, but rather seek to promote a green transition that fosters a cycle of investment, productive transformation, growth, and employment focused on sustainability (Sanahuja 2022b). Regarding the relationship with the EU, after the progress made in June 2019 on the preliminary trade agreement made with MERCOSUR, there was an impasse based on different issues, including the environmental concerns of the European partners. However, the discussion of a “green” exit from the pandemic as well as the energy crisis resulting from the Ukrainian War has repositioned the bi-regional issue in a different perspective: As Verdes-Montenegro and Jeger (2022) point out, Latin American and Caribbean countries, heavily impacted at different levels (social, financial, etc.) by the aforementioned crises, find it vital to link with the EU, which proposes the region a more diverse agenda compared to that of other foreign actors. In particular, the Social Agenda and the Green Transition are two of the central pillars of bi-regional cooperation. Specifically related to MERCOSUR, the authors underline that despite the aforementioned political economic challenges that have delayed the ratification of what has been agreed between the two regions, it is clear that this type of association agreement cannot be understood as a simple free trade agreement, but that its geopolitical dimension must be considered, as well as its potential to generate a common space for policy dialogue, regulatory convergence, and productive transformation for digital and green transitions, with the reconstruction of the social contract. Contrasting this view, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has pointed out the lack of drastic measures for an effectively “green” post-COVID-19 exit, although it recognizes the potential of renewable electricity generation and the production of electric cars, together with the creation of clean energy jobs⁴. ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) contributions regarding the construction of the future also point to renewable energies as one of the vectors for overcoming the climate crisis and as a possible key to post-pandemic recovery (ECLAC, 2020).

noticias.

4 See: https://elpais.com/clima-y-medio-ambiente/2021-11-04/la-agencia-internacional-de-la-energia-calcula-que-las-ultimas-promesas-dejarian-el-calentamiento-global-en-solo-18-gradus.html?rel=buscador_noticias

Renewable energy in MERCOSUR

Regarding MERCOSUR, recent analyses (Ayuso 2022) show the difficulties of establishing common standards and homogeneous policies given the great disparities among its members in terms of size, population, economic weight, and levels of development. Additionally, economic crises that successively hit the region due to its vulnerability to external shocks, its dependence on the export of raw materials, and the lack of internal financing, which stimulated defensive policies and weakened the solidarity among its members. In this view, although all these elements impeded further integration and stimulated centrifugal forces, MERCOSUR would nevertheless be the organization with the greatest potential in the region, and its success or failure would be an indicator of the health of Latin American regionalism. For authors like Alejandro Frenkel (2022), the Bloc is currently undergoing a process of identity redefinition, which becomes more visible when discussing trade orientation. In this sense, prioritizing progress on non-economic agendas may be a good way to untie the troublesome knots and the lack of agreements that currently define the integration process.

Considering the evolution of the Bloc - with its economic-commercial focus - it is possible to identify a zigzagging development process of the institutional-normative scheme that sought to frame the promotion of renewable energies. Regarding the perceptions of difference actors and stakeholders, this paper reports the results of a series of semi-structured interviews conducted from 2017 to 2022, making explicit the evolution of visions of experts from the public area in the Frente Amplio (FA, "Broad Front") government, as well as referents from the coalition government headed by President Lacalle Pou since March 2020. In 2017 and 2018, leaders of the National Energy Directorate (DNE, Dirección Nacional de Energía) of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining (MIEM, Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Minería) reported years of difficulties in articulating within the Bloc⁵, with a weakening of consultation venues, like the SGT No. 9 (Working Sub-Group), in charge of energy issues, which had ceased to meet since 2011. Despite this, the then Director of Energy emphasized the coordinating potential of MERCOSUR's institutional framework, without denying the limitations imposed by discordant policies and divergent evolutions of national energy matrices⁶. On the other hand, during those years the energy infrastructure was reinforced through the Structural Convergence

⁵ Interview with Wilson Sierra (DNE), Uruguay, on 8/8/2018.

⁶ Interview with Olga Otegui (Director of DNE), Uruguay, on 07/31/2017

Fund (FOCEM, Fondo de Convergencia Estructural), which allowed for a significant increase in energy trade within the bloc, given the surpluses generated by the strong share of renewable energies in the Uruguayan energy matrix. However, the different paths taken by the countries were made explicit: in June 2019, Presidents Macri and Bolsonaro emphasized in a joint Declaration the strategic weight of oil and natural gas reserves and production in the Pre-Salt and Vaca Muerta deposits, although they alluded to bioenergy and biofuels as key to energy security, economic development, and environmental protection. At the regional level, a different trend emerged in October 2022 when a ministerial meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was held in Buenos Aires, where Argentina's pro tempore presidency managed to promote a regional position paper on climate change and access to climate finance in preparation for the COP27 to be held in Egypt in November. Furthermore, new visions seem to gain strength with the new government assuming office in Brazil in January 2023, which has relaunched the green agenda internally and externally: thus, before the beginning of the VII CELAC Summit of January 2023 in Buenos Aires, President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva together with his Argentine counterpart Alberto Fernández made express reference to the importance of integrating energy policy with a focus on renewable energies in MERCOSUR. In turn, Lula da Silva underlined his intention to finalize the agreement with the EU, overcoming discrepancies that had arisen in environmental matters, particularly during the previous administration of Jair Bolsonaro⁷. Moreover, in his visit to the United States in mid-February 2023, Lula stressed that he sought to "reposition Brazil in global geopolitics," adding that Brazil would take "this climate issue very seriously" and calling on President Biden to build together a "stronger global governance" on the matter⁸. This is especially interesting if one considers that, as López Burián (2023) states, Brazilian politics has historically been a key piece in understanding Latin America's political positioning.

Regarding the specific issue of climate change it must be stated that at the end of the FA administration in Uruguay, DNE representatives had a positive view of energy trade with the Bloc, with strong links between economic and environmental factors on the basis of renewable energies⁹. When the MERCOSUR-EU Agreement was signed in June 2019, officials of

7 See: <https://ladiaria.com.uy/mundo/articulo/2023/1/lula-y-alberto-fernandez-anunciaron-que-trabajaran-en-la-creacion-de-una-monedacomun->

8 See: <https://ladiaria.com.uy/mundo/articulo/2023/2/lula-y-biden-destacaron-que-la-democracia-triunfo-en-sus-paises/>

9 Interview with Wilson Sierra (DNE), Uruguay, on 8/8/2018.

the National System for Climate Change Response (SNRCC, Sistema Nacional de Respuesta al Cambio Climático) expressed optimistic expectations about technological innovation at the domestic level, as well as in Argentinian and Brazilian industrial sectors, with the potential for boosting regional cooperation¹⁰. This contrasted with the vision of officials from the Climate Change Unit of the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries (MGAP, Ministerio de Ganadería, Agricultura y Pesca) who represented Uruguay in the international negotiations on climate change: regarding the real possibilities of articulating the Latin American region outwardly, they mentioned the conditioning factors of the primacy of economic and geopolitical interests over those of an environmental and climatic nature¹¹. Regarding the internal organization of the Bloc, the representative for Uruguay of an international organization linked to the fight against climate change, like the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), noted the heterogeneous nature of the MERCOSUR countries due to their differences in size and orientation in energy matters¹². An example was Argentina's bet on gas imports, generating difficulties in the official balance sheets due to the lack of US dollars¹³.

After taking office in March 2020, the government led by Lacalle Pou expressed its intention to extend the regional energy cooperation existing even before MERCOSUR: within the MIEM, Minister Omar Paganini envisioned the La Plata Basin as an area of integral complementation for the MERCOSUR countries, especially Argentina and Paraguay¹⁴. In July 2020, when Uruguay assumed the pro tempore presidency of MERCOSUR, the new Director of Energy was appointed as Uruguay's delegate to the SGT No. 9, with the intention of revitalizing areas of coordination¹⁵. However, on the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty of Asunción in March 2021, the differences between the partners regarding the future projection of the Bloc were very clear, where the Uruguayan presidency pointed to more flexible trade negotiations, without prejudice to positively valuing the energy trade between member countries on the basis of renewable energies. As Frenkel (2022) points out, the triumph of Lula da Silva for the Brazilian presidency will also likely determine a change in the energy agenda, given its key nature at both regional and global levels:

¹⁰ Interview with Ignacio Lorenzo, President of the SNRCC Coordination Group, on 7/24/2019.

¹¹ Interview with Walter Oyancabal, Climate Change Unit, MGAP, on 7/26/2019.

¹² Interview with Vicente Plata, FAO Representation in Uruguay, on 7/24/2019.

¹³ See: <https://elpais.com/argentina/2022-06-28/argentina-limita-el-acceso-a-dolares-para-el-pago-de-importaciones.html>

¹⁴ See: <https://www.miem.gub.uy/noticias/omar-paganini-se-comprometio-trabajar-en-reducir-costos-de-energia-y-transporte-que-afectan>

¹⁵ Interview with Walter Verri, Undersecretary of MIEM, on 7/9/2020.

in fact, Bolsonaro's climate change denialism and anti-environmentalist positions have affected relations with Europe and the United States, as well as hindering the evolution of the energy transition and the promotion of so-called "green investments" at the regional level in a decisive manner.

In relation to the possible energy articulation, the Environmental Unit of Uruguay's MIEM is currently pointing out the potential of the links established in the Bloc: "We probably should get more out of MERCOSUR in terms of energy, since we have a logic of sharing resources, we have signed Agreements, we have joint dams"¹⁶. In this vision, energy exports to Brazil during 2021 stand out, which implies a significant foreign currency income to the country, even if it was from turning on thermal power plants in Uruguay, which affects its GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions balance: "But how could we leave them without energy? In any case, it is a difficult trade-off, which could be solved if we turn on the thermal power plant using green hydrogen"¹⁷.

Renewable energy and climate change: Uruguay versus Argentina and Brazil

According to IRENA's (International Renewable Energy Agency) experts like Scholten et al. (2019), the development of renewable energies will affect the patterns of cooperation and conflict between countries, with geopolitical repercussions. Given that a large part of renewable energies is destined for electric power systems, there will tend to be a future 'regionalization of energy relations', with a shift from global networks to others of regional scope, with the emergence of 'network communities' centered on economic Blocs. For IRENA (2016: 11), policies in Latin America were decisive in fostering investment in renewables, with Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay standing out, valued for their legal, institutional, and administrative frameworks.

The evolution of MERCOSUR countries shows differences in their productive profiles, regulatory frameworks, sectoral policies, and resource allocation. In absolute terms, Brazil and Argentina have achieved the highest levels of investment: as González Jauregui (2022) points out, the role played by China, whose commercial banks have focused their loans on renewable energies, is particularly noteworthy. Argentina takes the first place in this ranking, followed by Brazil, although neither of them have joined the One

¹⁶ Interview with María José González, Co-Coordinator of the Environmental Unit of the MIEM, on 8/4/2022.

¹⁷ Interview with María José González, Co-Coordinator of the Environmental Unit of the MIEM, on 8/4/2022.

Belt and One Road Initiative (OBOR). In the Argentinian case, within the framework of the RenovAr Plan launched in 2016, the prominence of Chinese investments in wind and solar power plants became evident. In the Brazilian case, Chinese investments in hydroelectric energy and wind energy are noteworthy, in addition to the fact that links have been developed with Brazil in terms of joint research and development in the renewable energy sector.

By contrast, in terms of relative investment amounts, the case of Uruguay is interesting, where since 2004 there has been a national debate to define a new energy policy, with the participation of the State, private companies, academia, and social agents¹⁸. As a result of this agreement, in 2008 the Executive Branch outlined an approach projected to 2030, proposing energy independence within the context of regional integration. Thus, it aimed to generate 500 MWh with “new” renewable energies by 2050, which was surpassed by a much faster evolution. By 2017, 98% of the electric energy generated was already of renewable origin, with the highest production over the previous ten years: 14,363.90 GWh (Ministry of Industry Energy and Mining, 2019a), and with a consolidated regulatory framework that decisively promoted renewable energies. The Decree on the promotion of renewable energies is worth mentioning: 354/09 (2009), Energy Efficiency Law 18.579, Agrofuels Law 18.195 and Regulatory Decree 532/2008 (2008), Solar Thermal Energy Law 18.585, Decree on the Relevance of the Wind Resource 258/09 (2009); Decrees promoting the purchase of electric power from renewable energies: 77/06, 397/07, 296/2008, 403/09 (from 2007 to 2009), as well as tax benefits. This allowed for securing investments higher than US\$ 8 billion (Uruguay XXI 2022a).

Since the government change, the MIEM focused on a review of the energy policy overall management, in order to correct the excessive contracting of wind energy: indicating a gap in the energy plan of the previous government, an overproduction with respect to what was proposed in the Inter-Party Agreement (500 MWh of wind energy), which currently reaches 1,500 MWh, has occurred. It is questioned that at times, the National Administration of Power Plants and Electric Transmissions (UTE, Administración Nacional de Usinas y Trasmisiones Eléctricas) is required by contract to pay for the surplus generated but not delivered, with a loss of energy, while at other times wind power is used and hydroelectric power is not delivered. Based on this, the model was reviewed, taking advantage of the Combined Cycle Power Plant with gas purchases from Argentina as a backup. In retrospect, Minister Paganini of the current Lacalle Pou administration had a positive view of the FA’s financial strategy to attract international investment, providing

18 Interview with Olga Otegui (Director of DNE), Uruguay, on 07/31/2017.

buying security and achieving high levels of private investment. However, this has generated an “over-enthusiasm”, resulting in 1,000 MWh of private contracting. At the State level, UTE also developed its own wind farms, some with investment open on the stock exchange (400 MWh more), in addition to solar energy and biomass. As a novelty, the new government sought to use the Combined Cycle Power Plant as a backup for export contracts, requiring gas to maintain competitive costs. However, negotiations were interrupted by the pandemic¹⁹. On the other hand, despite the positive assessment of the 2010 Interparty Agreement, the new Undersecretary Walter Verri stressed the need to review it as the first energy policy challenge, understanding that the commitment to renewables is an irreversible path for Uruguay, with international recognition. The new approach would focus on the use of waste as an energy source (circular economy), the promotion of e-mobility, and self-generation to be fed into the grid through the PROSUMER program (photovoltaic energy).²⁰. In public declarations the Director of Energy in July 2022 emphasized the need to sustain a “strategic vision” in terms of electric transportation due to its advantages in environmental and noise terms.

According to data from the REN21 report (2021), Uruguay is the second country in the world in terms of the proportion of renewable energies in the energy matrix²¹. For the second stage of energy transition and in relation to the transition towards decarbonization, the MIEM considers four pillars to be addressed in stages: thus, in the so-called “first transition” Uruguay made progress in the first pillar by decarbonizing its electric matrix, reaching 97% of the energy generated from renewables. It also made progress in terms of the second pillar related to energy efficiency, as well as in the third pillar of “green” electrification. In the second transition, the focus is on the fourth pillar, specifically on the so-called hard-to-abate sectors, where it is no longer efficient to use electrical energy, but rather green hydrogen to make fuels or to use biofuels²², for example.

In this context, the new administration made clear its commitment to the so-called “Hydrogen Economy”, to further the decarbonization of the energy sector, and the production of raw materials. As possible benefits for the country, MIEM officials mentioned the potential for hydrogen exports, as well as direct local consumption and for industries related to the production of

19 Interview with Minister Paganini held on 3/31/2020 at Radio Program ‘No Toquen Nada’, (99.5 FM).

20 Interview with Walter Verri, Undersecretary of MIEM, on 7/9/2020.

21 For more details see: https://www.ren21.net/gsr-2021/chapters/chapter_01/chapter_01/

22 Interview with María José González, Co-Coordinator of the Environmental Unit of the MIEM, on 8/4/2022.

raw materials and green chemicals, for local consumption or export: the aim was to develop a first operating Green Hydrogen pilot in Uruguay, based on the combination of public and private efforts²³. So a pilot plan was launched in collaboration with the National Agency for Research and Innovation (ANII, for its acronym in Spanish) and the Technological Laboratory of Uruguay (LATU, also for its acronym in Spanish), with an investment of ten million dollars, aiming to generate at least 1.5 MW²⁴. According to members of the Environmental Unit of the MIEM, the launching of the Green Hydrogen Roadmap must be seen in the context of new energy geopolitics: “It is no longer the oil-producing countries that are on the peak of the mountain, but all those that have wind and sun to produce a new energy vector like green hydrogen. We have to position ourselves in the global competition while driving our own decarbonization to lower GHG emissions at the national level”²⁵.

The specific aim is presently to decarbonize transport and industry, where green hydrogen would have a strong potential for long-distance transport, heavy transport, maritime and air transport), highlighting export opportunities, whether in the form of fuel, green fertilizers or raw materials: “In that regard, hydrogen is like a Swiss Army knife (...) The Roadmap is ambitious because it is about adding value to energy by turning it into an export product, in a context of uncertainty since it has no price. We must monitor what is happening in the world and cautiously go along with it”²⁶. POn the other hand, there is still resistance at the local level in relation to environmental issues due to the intensive use of water, as well as doubts about the feasibility of projects that require great investments²⁷.

Against this background, some significant nuances in the energy policy direction are currently emerging since in June 2022 the State-owned company ANCAP (acronym in Spanish for National Administration of Fuels, Alcohol, and Portland), announced that the oil companies Shell and the APA Group submitted bids to prospect hydrocarbon deposits, with a view to

23 See: [https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-industria-energia-mineria/comunicacion/noticias/hidrogeno-verde-eslabon-clave-para-completar-transicion-energetica#:~:text=Actualmente%20el%20m%C3%A9todo%20que%20se,\)%20y%20ox%C3%ADgeno%20\(O2\).](https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-industria-energia-mineria/comunicacion/noticias/hidrogeno-verde-eslabon-clave-para-completar-transicion-energetica#:~:text=Actualmente%20el%20m%C3%A9todo%20que%20se,)%20y%20ox%C3%ADgeno%20(O2).)

24 See the Director of Energy’s statements in this regard: <https://www.elobservador.com.uy/nota/el-desarrollo-de-energias-renovables-es-un-gran-paraguas-para-el-pais-2022721123245>

25 Interview with María José González, Co-Coordinator of the Environmental Unit of the MIEM, on 8/4/2022.

26 Interview with María José González, Co-Coordinator of the Environmental Unit of the MIEM, on 8/4/2022.

27 See: <https://elpais.com/america-futura/2023-03-09/lider-en-energias-renovables-uruguay-apuesta-al-hidrogeno-verde.html>

subsequently exploiting three new blocks located offshore in the Uruguayan Sea, after ANCAP has signed a contract with Challenger Energy in May of the same year. This led socio-environmental organizations to demand from the government more information about these contracts, considering that the process contradicts the path of the energy transition. In turn, the president of ANCAP affirmed in a press conference that the country “is putting itself back on the world oil map”²⁸. In this context, it is significant that in 2022 Uruguay lost its global leading and outstanding position in the “Green Future Index”, a world ranking compiled by MIT Technology Review, a publication specialized in technological and environmental issues, part of the Massachusetts Technological Institute (MIT) and sponsored by Morgan Stanley.

The index evaluates the progress and commitment of 76 countries in relation to decarbonization. While in 2021 Uruguay ranked in the top twenty countries showing the greatest commitment and progress on this topic, in 2022 it dropped in rank from number 20 to 38. Consequently, the country was placed almost at the bottom of the table in the second group of twenty countries that although they are making progress towards building a low-carbon future, they are not among the best²⁹.

Specifically, regarding the fight against climate change, during the FA administration, it was expressly linked to the promotion of renewable energies. With the 2009 establishment of the SNRCC coordinated by the then Ministry of Housing, Land Management and Environment (MVOTMA, for its acronym in Spanish), a multi-stakeholder and multilevel climate governance scheme was defined. In 2016 the Paris Agreement was ratified and in 2017 the National Climate Change Policy (PNCC, Política Nacional de Cambio Climático) was introduced, with the diversification of the energy matrix (SNRCC, 2017). From the SNRCC in 2019, the particularity of the first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of 2017 was emphasized, making the country’s goals explicit to the international community and

28 See: https://ladiaria.com.uy/ambiente/articulo/2022/6/la-petrolera-shell-y-el-grupo-apa-exploraran-tres-bloques-en-la-plataforma-marina-uruguay-y-se-hara-un-pozo-para-buscar-hidrocarburos/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tarde

29 The index mentioned above includes five components: (a) carbon emissions (indicator that measures how countries reduce carbon dioxide emissions overall, as well as in key areas); (b) energy transition (contribution and growth rate of renewable energy sources and nuclear energy); (c) “green” society (indicator that focuses efforts made by government, industry, and society to promote “green” practices); d) innovation and enabling environment for building a low-carbon future), and e) climate policies (ambition and effectiveness of each country’s climate policy, sustainable agriculture policies and use of spending to achieve a “greener” environment as part of the “exit” from the COVID-19 pandemic. See: <https://www.elpais.com.uy/negocios/noticias/uruguay-dejo-lideres-mundiales-medio-ambiente.html>

prioritizing subsequent five-year actions and goals³⁰. Likewise, the 2018 National Environmental Plan for Sustainable Development bet on renewable energies (MVOTMA, 2018). To FAO, Uruguay's role in adaptation and mitigation stands out, portraying one of the countries that advanced most rapidly, developing empirical evidence to support public policies: Uruguay was the first country to propose an NDC with numerical measures, showing a strong commitment, as well as an institutional and technical maturity that excelled at the international level³¹. Despite the changes in the environmental and climate institutions that implied the creation in 2021 of the new Ministry of Environment (MA, for its acronym in Spanish), which absorbed the SNRCC, the technical experts emphasized the continuity of the commitments assumed by Uruguay in climate matters. Thus, the new government did not see reasons for a drastic change in either policy or guidelines. In this respect, the interviewees point to a very smooth transition from one government to another in relation to climate change³².

Primary energy sources and electric power trade

The primary energy supply determines its availability for domestic consumption as well as for exports. From a Uruguayan perspective, we compare the changes in primary energy supply resulting from the analysis of the energy matrices of the three countries under study, considering the 2015 to 2021 period. The energy balance is divided into two main parts: energy sources and consumption. Energy sources are divided into primary and secondary energy sources. The analysis of the share of the different primary energy sources from the total allows us to determine the degree of transformation of the energy matrices towards the use of renewable sources, especially non-traditional ones. In this study, a recent period of analysis was used to determine whether the changes previously seen have continued or ceased, and if there were no changes, whether there have been recent changes.

Uruguay exports electric power to Argentina and Brazil. From the analysis of the 2015-2022 period, these have been increasing (Figure 1). Traditionally, the main export partner had been Argentina, but Brazil has been increasing its share. Particularly in 2021, electric power exports to Brazil valued in dollars, increased 7.5 times. This jump can be explained by the

30 Entrevista com Ignacio Lorenzo, Presidente do Grupo de Coordenação do SNRCC, em 24/07/2019.

31 Interview with Vicente Plata, FAO Representation in Uruguay, on 7/24/2019

32 Interview with Cecilia Penengo, technical specialist of SNRCC, on 3/29/2021.

drought suffered by that country, which prevented it from using hydroelectric energy sources. Imports valued in dollars are reported in 2016, and from 2018 onwards, there is an increase in imports, with a peak in 2020. This change in Uruguay's electric power trade with its neighboring countries is partially related to extreme weather events, especially droughts and high temperatures, which has resulted in close collaboration between them, to meet demand.

In Uruguay, there have been discussions about the relevance of producing energy for export to other countries, even when it must resort to other sources and produce energy, especially for export, incurring at times high costs and using fossil fuels, like oil. The authorities' argument has been to ensure the supply of energy in all three countries.

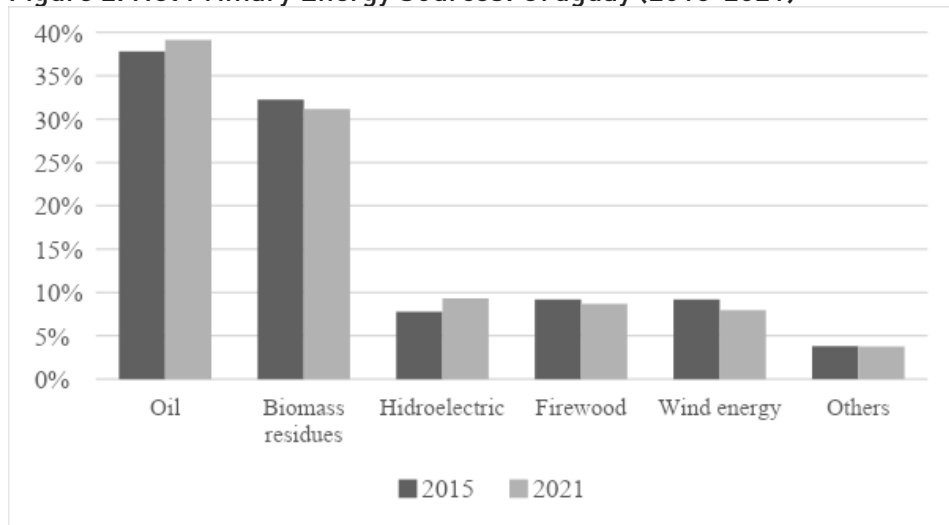
Figure 1. Uruguay's electrical energy exports by destination



Source: Uruguay XXI (2023).

The primary energy supply in Uruguay showed very marked changes between 2010 and 2015, and these changes have been consolidated after 2015. As of 2015, the prevalence of oil as a primary energy source continued, complemented by a stable participation of 8-9% of wind energy (Figure 2). Hydroelectric energy, which was one of the main primary energy sources, shows a similar participation in 2015 and 2021. Biomass residues have also maintained a stable share in this period, at about 30%. A big change took place between 2007 and 2008 when its share increased from 4% to 14% and further increased with a jump between 2014 and 2015. This phenomenon is clearly explained by the increase in the country's production capacity for cellulose, which has black liquor as a sub-product, a source of energy production.

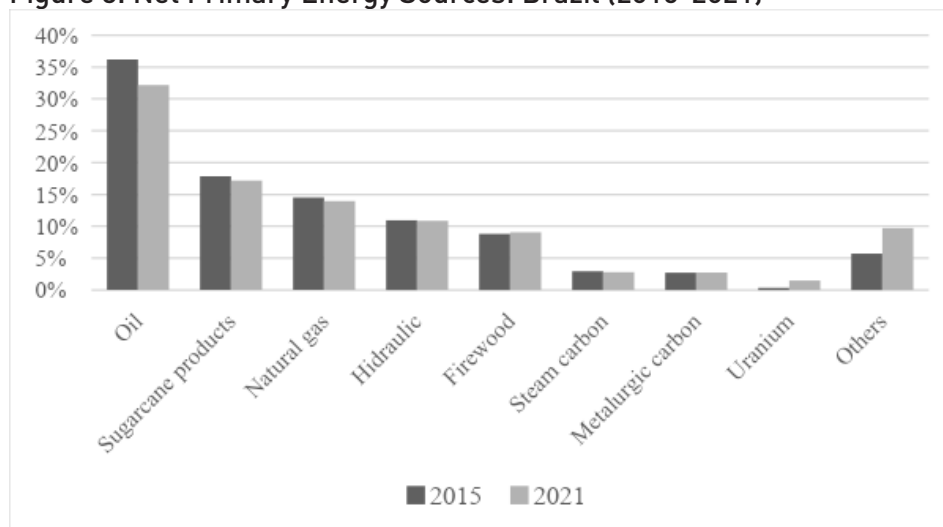
Figure 2. Net Primary Energy Sources: Uruguay (2015-2021)



Source: MIEM (2022).

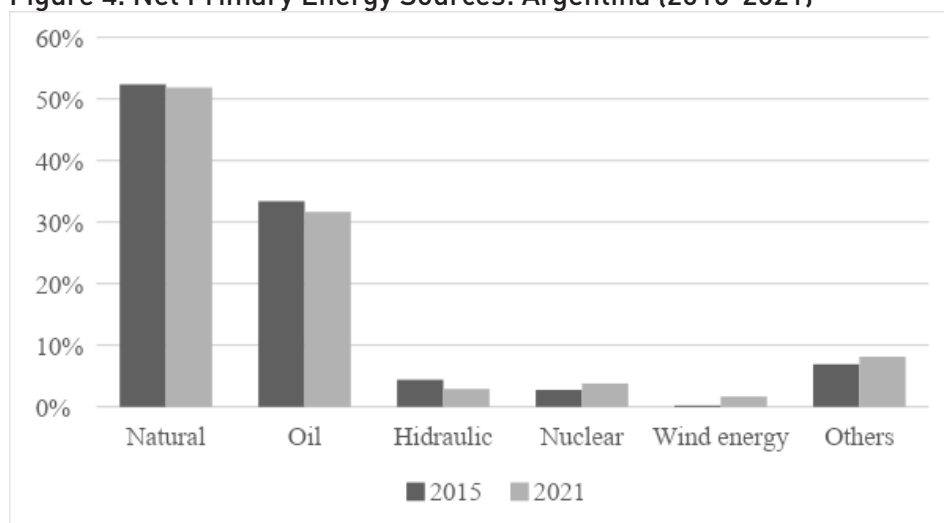
In the Brazilian case, although oil remained the main source of energy, as in Uruguay, between 2015 and 2021 there was a decrease in the share of primary energy supply (Figure 3). It may be noted that this was a big change in conjunction with the increase in the share of “other energies” from 6% to 10%. Sugarcane products remain in second place, with some fluctuations in the analyzed period. Natural gas maintains its third place.

Figure 3. Net Primary Energy Sources: Brazil (2015-2021)



Source: Brazil, Empresa de Pesquisa Energética, (2022).

With respect to Argentina, if primary energy sources are analyzed in the years 2015 and 2021, we can observe that natural gas continues to be the main source, contributing more than 50%, followed by oil with a share ranging between 34 and 33% (Figure 4). In terms of non-traditional renewable energy sources, low participation of wind energy is noted, with 1.7% in 2021, but with a significant increase from 2015, when its share was less than 0.5%. Within the group of other energies, some changes are observed, including the increase in the share of bagasse from 1% to 1.48%, and the increase in the participation of solar energy, which went from a negligible percentage to 0.25%. On the other hand, similar shares are observed for vegetable oils, mineral coal, firewood, and vegetable alcohols in both years.

Figure 4. Net Primary Energy Sources: Argentina (2015-2021)

Source: Ministry of Finance (2022). .

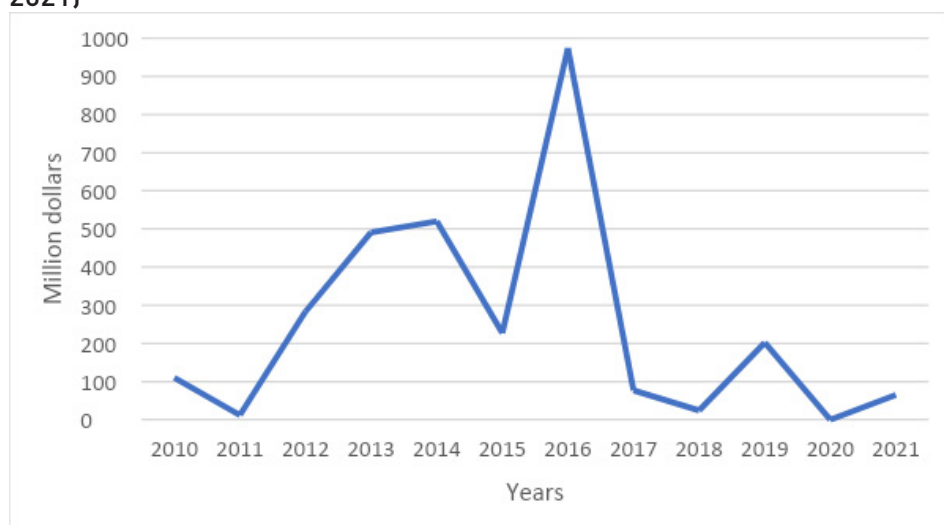
While Uruguay is the country that made the greatest changes in terms of its energy matrix, the analysis of more recent years, particularly the 2015 to 2021 period, shows that there are no major changes in the share of primary energy production by source. There was an increase in cellulose production, which explained the increase in the share of biomass in the total primary energy sources. Therefore, it was not due to specific new investments in renewable energy projects, but a by-product of other investments. In the case of Argentina, we see something like the Uruguay case: the incipient participation of some new energy source, in the case of the latter it was wind energy. As for trade, in the Uruguayan scenario we see recent changes: an increase in trade, with an increment in Brazil's participation as an export destination.

The change in Uruguay's energy matrix was supported by a strong process of attracting investment in the renewable energy sector. The regulatory framework for attracting investment was established with Decree 354/009. This decree declares the promotion of activities aimed at the production and use of energy from renewable and indigenous sources and energy efficiency. Companies submit their investment projects to the Investment Law Application Commission (COMAP) under the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which analyzes and authorizes projects that comply with the benefits of the Investment Promotion Law (16,906 of 1998 and successive decrees).

For this analysis, we took COMAP data and built a database where we

considered all those projects that are classified by activity since the activities are not standardized. For this work, all activities that included some reference to energy production were considered, covering the January 2010 - October 2021 period. They were then classified by the type of energy involved in the investment. In cases where this did not arise from the description, the Investment Promotion Decree was consulted. According to these estimates, investments of approximately US\$ 3 billion were promoted during this period, and in 2020 there were no investment projects that included renewable energies submitted to COMAP

Figure 5. Uruguay: Investments in promoted renewable energies (2010-2021)



Source: Prepared by the authors based on COMAP data (2022).

During investment peaks, more than 70% of the investments promoted refer to wind energy projects. More recently, there has been an increase in investment for projects using solar energy, but not at the same level as investments in wind energy.

Conclusions and future prospects

This paper assumes a perspective of sustainable human development, expressly considering the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs, and the Paris Agreement, considering the global processes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

and considering debates on Latin American regional governance. Given the international context, as well as the challenges and dilemmas faced by Latin America, this analysis addresses the potential and weaknesses of MERCOSUR to coordinate energy policies that contribute to the fight against climate change by promoting renewable energies. With a specific look at the evolving perceptions from different actors in the Uruguayan scenario, we consider the particular investment process in the renewable energy sector, which led to a radical change in the energy matrix and made energy exports possible for both public and private parties. The Uruguayan investment promotion regulations were an important factor, as well as Decree 354/009, which provided a clear framework.

From the data analysis between 2015 and 2021, it can be said that some observed trends are consolidated. In Uruguay's case, we no longer see major changes in primary energy sources, but we notice the emergence of solar energy in investment projects. In all three cases (Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil), the changes in primary energy supply are not radical, as was the case with Uruguay in the 2010s, but some changes are evident.

Investments in Uruguay have been directed towards the wind energy sector, followed by the large biomass sector, and more recently there has been a growth in investments aimed at the solar energy sector. The country continues with a strong investment drive, and a continuous replacement of fossil fuel energy with renewables is being pursued. With the data analyzed up to the year 2021, it is not yet possible to see major changes in investments. However, changes may be observed in the trend of electrical energy exchanges from Uruguay, with greater participation from Brazil as an export destination and continuing the exchange with Argentina. These trends should be analyzed within the scope of collaboration between countries to ensure energy supply in the event of climatic situations like droughts.

Although the oil share in energy generation has decreased in some countries, it is still the first or second source of energy in the three analyzed countries. Seen from the point of view of "energy independence" of the countries, this observation has different implications for each country, since Argentina has oil reserves, for example. On the other hand, the use of non-renewable natural resources has implications in terms of sustainability.

Compared to Uruguay, the energy matrixes of both Argentina and Brazil show differences, since non-renewable energies are prioritized, either as sources of income or as mechanisms for energy security and national sovereignty. At the same time, political economy dynamics impact MERCOSUR's coordination areas and affect the emergence of a climate governance scheme at the present time. However, as Riggiorozzi and Tussie

(2021) point out, in a post-pandemic scenario different regional governance configurations could (re)emerge. This could begin to be reflected in the new stances outlined in Brazil with the new government and the coincidences voiced by the current Argentinian government on the importance of energy integration within the Bloc. Despite the differences that have emerged in recent years, this analysis in terms of multilevel governance with a focus on renewable energies makes it possible to identify incipient agreements at the Bloc level, which could even include its international repositioning, particularly about the ties with the EU and the bi-regional agreement under discussion. In this context, it can be asserted that the development of energy infrastructure in MERCOSUR and the growing trade based on “clean” energies represent positive factors in terms of decarbonization. Given the urgency of the climate challenge, the growing instruments of global climate governance, and the need to implement the Paris Agreement, the Bloc’s meager achievements in the energy field could constitute a significant asset for a future regional climate governance scheme.

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ABSTRACT

COVID 19 affected the projection of the SDGs, with debates on a post-pandemic “green” exit. With a multilevel perspective, this paper addresses the evolution of energy policies in MERCOSUR countries, focusing on renewable energies and climate change. Uruguay’s case is discussed, in contrast with Argentina and Brazil. Points of convergence in divergent situations are considered, given the commercial exchanges of electric energy between Uruguay and its MERCOSUR partners. Investments in renewable energies in Uruguay, its current situation, and its prospects are analyzed, considering the position of the Block and an eventual scheme of regional climate governance in the future.

KEYWORDS

MERCOSUR; Climate change; Renewable energies

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LATIN AMERICA AND CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: CHALLENGES AND PROPOSALS FROM A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Victor Ramiro Fernandez¹
Juliana Gonzalez Jauregui²
Gabriel Esteban Merino³

Introduction

The new turbulent century has brought a recurring and unique process of hegemonic crisis, systemic transformations in the world economic structure, and a reconfiguration of the multipolar order characterized by systemic chaos (Arrighi; Silver 1999). On the one hand, this recurring process is distinguished by financial over-accumulation that penetrates with financialized logic on the dynamics of production and expands both to the *Global North* (the USA and the EU) and the *Global South*. On the other hand, a progressive displacement and replacement of the foundations of the material accumulation is taking place, positioning Asia at the center, and especially China, but without being based on the logic of financialization (Merino 2021).

In this context, the most remarkable transformation has been the rise of China, based on a rapid and unique national process of industrial and technological development associated with an autonomous financial capacity, but also a growing regional leadership, and a geoeconomic and geopolitical projection with global scopes (Beeson 2018). This unprecedented development

¹ Development and Public Policies, Universidad Nacional del Litoral. Santa Fe, Argentina. E-mail: rfernand@fcjs.unl.edu.ar. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8650-8934>

² Faculdade Latino-Americana de Ciências Sociais. Tucumán, Argentina. E-mail: jgonzalezj@flacso.org.ar. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5903-6863>

³ Center for Geographical Research, Universidad Nacional de La Plata. La Plata, Argentina. E-mail: gmerino@fahce.unlp.edu.ar. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7802-4307>

model combines different productive modalities under the direction of a nucleus of 95 State conglomerates (Gabriele; Jabbour 2020), led by the so-called “market socialism” and/or “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

The Chinese imperative of modernizing through globalization has become key when implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Launched in 2013, the BRI represents not only the reconstruction of transportation networks and the development of infrastructure in Eurasia but also an “articulated route” to the Global South, to reach Africa and Latin America. Based on the aim of acquiring influence in the region, Latin American countries were formally invited to integrate the BRI during the China-the Community of Latin American and the Caribbean States Forum (China-CELAC Forum) in January 2018, after the Chinese Foreign Affairs ministry, Wang Yi, announced that the region was a “natural extension” of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2017).

Until April 2023, 22 Latin American countries have signed the memorandum of understanding to integrate the BRI. Nevertheless, a regional consensus that establishes the conditions to guarantee mutual beneficial cooperation with China in the BRI framework, where the promotion of economic development prevails, is still absent (Gonzalez Jauregui 2020).

The question that arises is what the implications for Latin America are to integrate the BRI. In response to this, while part of the Chinese academic approach agrees on the importance of evaluating the existence of a “strategic overstretching” –disagreeing on the reach of it as a problem– (Pu; Wang 2018), at least three different perspectives have addressed how the BRI could affect the Global South –and Latin America, in particular.

For a group of academics, China recreates the well-known process of dependency in the periphery, positioning most countries as suppliers of natural resources in the global value chains (GVC) controlled by the Asian giant. This perspective is based on the revival of the imperialist/sub-imperialist/neocolonialist theories and points out that China can control strategic geopolitical resources for its future projection and build relations based on neocolonial dominance (Lumumba-Kasongo 2011; Stallings 2020). Furthermore, the BRI does not affect the link between China and Latin America but consolidates the peripheral condition of this region in the global economy (Myers 2018).

In line with the above-mentioned, the extractivist perspectives visualize Latin America as an “adaptive region”, rich in natural resources, that supports an accumulation model incapable of reversing exclusive and unequal historical patterns of capitalist accumulation and destined to exacerbate environmental deterioration and mono-production structures (Svampa; Slipak, 2018).

In contrast, other perspectives argue that the BRI represents a new “globalization model” that promotes unimpeded trade, infrastructure connectivity, and inclusive growth with mutual benefits (Ríos 2018). The BRI is interpreted as a new stage in the external insertion of China that proposes globalization with “Chinese characteristics” based on connectivity and inclusive development (Ramón Berjano 2019; Jabbour; Dantas; Vadell 2021). Consequently, China is promoting the emergence of a new international system, capable to overcome unilateralism (Malena 2018) and create a multilateralism led by the Global South, without global hegemony (Girado 2018).

These perspectives have an analytical “gravitational center” structured around the idea that China is increasingly leading the dynamics of the global system, having impacts on “the rest”. Thus, the integration with China is observed based on the Chinese centrality, evaluating how the Chinese logic of expansion, through initiatives such as the BRI, impacts the Latin American scenarios, and the Global South more broadly. However, these perspectives scarcely specify how different forms of regional autonomy could be built, and the required conditions to effectively create that autonomy. The autonomy approach recovers a proposal that aims to strengthen the margins of maneuver of peripheral countries and their regions in a way that avoids placing them as passive recipients, broadening their capacities and scopes of action when creating processes of integration with Asia and China. The possibility of achieving this autonomy is a condition to reconcile this integration and the projection of China in Latin America with a sustained and inclusive spatial and productive development of this region, as well as the reversal of its subordination and dependency ties that characterize Latin America international insertion from its postcolonial organization (Cardoso; Faletto 1970; Frank 1991).

Moving in this direction requires a careful and comparative evaluation of various elements that are present differently and unevenly in the trajectories and current realities of China and Latin America. From this comparative evaluation, a road map emerges for this region by considering those aspects to be strengthened and articulated in its growing and strategic link with the Chinese-Asian scenario.

Inspired by an adapted and updated Latin American structuralist perspective, based on dependency and autonomy theories, and in articulation with Arrighi’s version of the world-system theory, we carry out the comparative evaluation through the introduction of six interrelated elements that affect the conditions and forms of integration and development path of China and Latin America: 1) integration through autonomy; 2) integration

through strengthening the macro-regional integration; 3) integration through industrialization and the sovereign control of the financial and commercial capacities that define the appropriation of surplus; 4) integration through technological development and strategic control of the industrialization process; 5) integration through the inclusion of subregional scenarios; and 6) integration through strengthening the managerial and directive capacities of the State. It is worth noting that our proposal is mainly theoretical. This contribution has limitations regarding the nature of the research since it does not offer an empirical verification. However, it opens up the possibility for future works to confront the theoretical categories that we formulate with empirical approaches, e.g., case studies, and to enrich the discussion about the BRI's projection to Latin America.

Integration through autonomy as a central guiding vector

The proposal to deepen integration with China through the BRI needs to be analyzed in the framework of the current global restructuring process. The deployment of the BRI in the context of the current cyclical crisis of global hegemony means that the BRI should not be read merely as a proposal to deepen and qualify the globalization process, inspired by mutual agreement and mutual benefit, but as a broad strategy through which China pursues to recover its historical geopolitical and geoeconomic preponderance and to secure its economic and strategic interests.

The main challenge for the Global South when joining the BRI, and for Latin America in particular, is the capacity to establish the needed conditions for an insertion that contributes to promoting internal productive and institutional structures, jointly with a socially inclusive pattern and a reversion of spatial asymmetries. Latin American countries have not yet established preconditions or designed a joint strategy on how the mutual benefit will be part of the implementation of the BRI in the region. Furthermore, it is yet unclear how the enforcement of BRI's projects will set a scenario where local enterprises and societies participate jointly with Chinese counterparts. Thus, much of the implications of the BRI in Latin America depends on the extent to which the institutional mechanisms are adapted to promote interconnectivity and, subsequently, serve as drivers of economic development. In this endeavor, Latin America must define how the development process as a region, but also within its countries, will benefit from joining the BRI, and which are the main features of the Latin American "win" within this framework of cooperation (Gonzalez Jauregui 2020).

This requires the creation of spaces of elaborative and decisional autonomy. During the Cold War, Latin America developed the “Autonomy School”. Based on the contributions of Juan Carlos Puig (1984; 1986) and Helio Jaguaribe (1979), their proposals aimed to guide how to face the historical challenge of reversing the economic and political dependence of the region. Following these ideas, and Latin American structuralism, the virtuous link between international insertion and development requires, according to Jaguaribe, the need to articulate internal viability and external permissiveness (Jaguaribe 1979). The achievement of this goal and gaining autonomy is not merely a declaration of principles but an actual need to build a scenario that expands the conditions of internal socio-spatial reproduction and strengthens the ability to define the region’s international insertion. In geopolitical terms, this goes together intending to create a continental State (Methol Ferré 2013), which would start at the MERCOSUR/Rio de la Plata basin, and build up the capacities needed to reach relative autonomy, economic development, and State strength.

The feasibility of creating this institutional and economic autonomous scenario and making it compatible with the geopolitical and geoeconomic projection of and from Latin America in the “win-win” logic announced by the BRI, leads us to recover the proposal of an endogenous and dynamic accumulation nucleus with a macro-regional scope (Fajnzylber 1983; Fernández 2017). This proposal is also related to setting the conditions of a self-determined development, to be “self-conscious and proceed following own objectives and purposes, and free of external constraints” (Tokatlíán; Carvajal 1995, 8).

In contrast to Latin America, the rise of China is closely linked to its capacity of building political-strategic autonomy through the national and social revolution that began in 1911 and triumphed in 1949. China ended its “colony” condition, according to the definition by Sun Yat-Sen, and changed itself from a huge and plundered periphery, with large extensions of occupied territories, to a semi-peripheral country that in the early 1970s began to emerge as an important world power. These transformations are key to understanding the reform process led by Deng Xiaoping –which followed the guidelines of Zhou Enlai–, and how China took advantage of the hegemonic crisis of the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s and acquired a position of strength and political-strategic autonomy (Arrighi 2007; Merino; Bilmes and Barrenengoa, 2022; Kissinger 2012).

Since the late 1970s, China began a process of industrial relocation and productive transnationalization and became an important recipient of investment in low-complexity manufacturing. These reforms were driven by a

national development project which was never renounced. The Chinese State kept the lead in economic development through a model of public planning, which allowed some market dynamics, but retained control of the strategic cores of the economy. Also, the State increased its capabilities in science and technology, along with the renovation of the military-industrial complex, as well as raised its control of natural resources and the financial system (Rosales 2020).

Reforms in China included the ability to open progressively to the international market, following, though divergently, the developmental reforms that had been taken in East Asia during the postwar (Beeson 2018). These changes included establishing conditions for the entrance of external capital. Conversely, the neoliberal reforms that took place in Latin America since the 1970s forced dependency, dismantled the national development projects, weakened the State's capabilities, and resulted in a process of peripheralization. As result, the GDP per capita in the region changed from representing 38 percent concerning the core organic countries average in 1980, to 28 percent in 2002 (Solimano; Soto 2005).

Thus, the Chinese "four transformations" led by the "Reform and Opening Up" policy during the Deng Era kept and reinforced the relative autonomy of China. This process was lately consolidated through three national strategies: the Western Development Program (WDP), the China Going Global, (CGG), and the BRI (Ye 2020). All of them bring together the globalization insertion objectives at the external level, and at the same time, the market expansion and economic development objectives, at the internal level. Although the CGG and the BRI emphasize Chinese participation in the international market, the domestic priorities are equally important; the objective of continuing advancements in internal economic growth and national modernization and, in this context, accomplishing technological autonomy, is key (Ye 2020; Naughton 2021).

Intra-macro-regional integration as a platform for global inter-regional integration

The Latin American challenge of building a dynamic and endogenous accumulation pattern cannot be limited to a national outreach. Conversely, it requires a macro-regional scope that proposes an integration process that considers the failures that occurred before the global and Latin American crisis in the 1970s (Teubal 1968) and continued due to different obstacles (Briceño Ruiz 2007). It is important to point out that the requirement of

strong regional integration is not new, it was proposed by Prebisch and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) predates the European integration process (Krishnan-Kutty 1999). Previously, several sectors and schools with different thoughts proposed the need for a regional unit, starting with the Bolivarian proposal to create a Confederation of Hispanic American Republics or later the Latin American generation at the beginning of the 20th century. In this respect and when the processes were found in a bottleneck in 1951-1953, the Argentinian president Juan Domingo Perón rehearsed his proposal of the new ABC (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile) and in light of not having a sufficient level to get economic unity and autonomy.

The Latin American integration should be planned based on a multidimensional approach –social, political, and cultural– (Di Filippo 2007) but focused on the promotion of productive articulations controlled by the State (ECLAC 2014). This proposal should be associated with the feasibility of deepening and qualifying the interrupted process of regional and national industrialization –and, thus, of promoting inclusion and income distribution in the most unequal region of the world. It should also be thought of as a way to give geoeconomic and geopolitical muscle in light of the process of global integration.

While the first aspect was early argued and reaffirmed by Prebisch (1959), the geopolitical element was scarcely debated, due to the restrictions imposed by the Cold War and the regional alignment with the United States (Camarinha Lopes; Almeida Filho and Henrique Pinto 2018; Pollock 1978). This might be the reason why both economic and institutional regional integration has been historically and structurally weak. Based on this, a new proposal of regional integration should also include the category of “Industrial Continental State” developed by Methol Ferré (2013), also considering form a dependence approach to the role of powerful groups and social classes with renters’ internal behaviors and a subordinated integration to global geopolitical and geoeconomic processes.

In the current global scenario, integrative proposals with a focus on a joint geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics are particularly relevant because they offer bargaining capacities that promote the recovery of the industrial development interrupted in the 1970s, as well as the reversion of inequalities and exclusion that has advanced in the region during the neoliberal years (Portes 2003). To overcome the ruling atomization (Comini; Frenkel 2017) and to move forward to a regional interstate system, the deployment of a geoeconomic and geopolitical integration is vital, based on an intra-regional productive articulation.

As an example of the above-mentioned, at the beginning of the 21st century, in the framework of a “popular national” turnover in several countries in Latin America, there was a return to autonomous regionalism (Merino, 2017). New entities were created to strengthen the scope of MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market), such as ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America), UNASUR (Union of South American Nations), and ECLAC. However, the search for a “post-neoliberal” or “post-hegemonic” logic from a “productive regionalism” (Briceño Ruiz 2013, 22) or an autonomous regionalism was not achieved, and the regional integration was weakened. The emergence of the Pacific Alliance in 2012 reestablished the “open” neoliberal regionalism and exhibited a regional breakage, which showed a competition for political projects between countries in the region, as well as strong pressure from Washington.

These processes contrast with the strength and expansion of the integration logic in Asia (Beeson; Li 2014). Although not free from geopolitical turbulences, integration in Asia has been characterized by a growing Chinese leadership (De Grauwe; Zhang 2016), which is flexible and pragmatic, oriented to developmental regionalism (Wei 2018), as well as promoted by a State-led model that strengthens the strategy of global projection. China finds in the regional leadership a hub to protect itself from global financial crises (Beeson; Li 2014).

Since its role in the Asian Crisis in 1997/8, China enhanced regional integration based on “a new peripheral diplomacy” in Asia. Firstly, through its commitments with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and, later, by creating the ASEAN-China Summit, which established the basis for multiple cooperation in diplomatic and security dimensions, as well as people-to-people exchanges, among others. In 2003, the “Strategic Alliance for Peace and Prosperity” was launched, in 2008 a Friendship and Cooperation treaty was signed, and in 2010 the FTA was widened. This regional construction permitted, then, the BRI proposal, initially positioning Asian countries at the center, to integrate them later into the Asian Bank of Investment and Infrastructure, which was launched almost simultaneously with the BRI. These advances in regional integration also enabled the signing of the world's largest commercial treaty in November 2020, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). RCEP's creation contrasts with the unsuccessful attempt of Obama's administration to contain China through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (Merino 2018). Also, China together with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan consolidated in 2001 the Shanghai Cooperation Organization –core security, and cooperation institution in the heart of Eurasia. Far from improvisation, the

Asian regional integration under China's leadership finds its strength and anchor in a historical formation, before the European consolidation, based on the Chinese world's prevalence until the 18th century (Frank 1998; Arrighi 2008).

Integration from industrialization

The process of industrialization is central to the construction of autonomy. Industrialization, broadly speaking, involves the possibility of increasing the complexity of the productive structure, which should be articulated with trade structures (through the enlargement of intra-regional trade, the deepening of the customs union in MERCOSUR, the breakage of world trade monopolies, and the defense of raw material prices), as well as with financial sovereignty and an independent administration of regional savings. In this regard, the Chinese case stands out since its capacity of creating capabilities to disconnect from the global financial capital subordination (Petry 2020).

Therefore, the geoeconomic and geopolitical strength of Latin America to address the global change and integration with China in the BRI faces the challenge of making reindustrialization a reality but under an independent project, different from the dependent industrialization led by the United States multinational corporations, which was announced as a possibility for "development" in some countries in the region until the 1970s. The question is how to make this feasible with China as a counterpart, particularly considering that Chinese policy banks have provided Latin America with loans that lack policy conditions and have contributed to boosting public infrastructure projects. However, these loans include commercial conditionality: e.g., the promotion of Chinese firms, labor, and machinery (Kaplan 2021). These conditionalities pose a challenge for Latin America regarding industrialization, and development more broadly.

Positioned as a structuring vector of development in the initial formulation of ECLAC (Prebisch 1949), and later constituted the great field of social and political transformation of the region since the 40s, Latin-American industrialization was finally "incomplete" in the 1970s (Fajnsylver 1983), followed in the last decades of the century by an "early deindustrialization" (Palma 2019), encouraged by the liberalizing strategies of the Washington Consensus that dominated the region. Despite their differences, both the "incomplete industrialization" and the subsequent "early deindustrialization" occurred under an external insertion dependent on natural resources (Bresser

Pereira 2013). During this century, under the growing commercial presence of China in the region, a reprimarization of external insertion was consolidated (Jenkins, 2012; Gallagher & Porzecanski, 2010; Gallagher, 2016), paradoxically when the Pink Tide left governments once again highlighted the need and benefits of industrialization (ECLAC 2015). Certainly, the industrialization that contributes to development requires it not to be “any industrialization” but one that allows expanding regional productive chains to knowledge-based activities and assures that they acquire command positions inside the regional space the industrialization needed. This process of industrialization should take place jointly with sovereign control of finances and foreign trade to help build up an autonomous platform of accumulation (Fernández; Brondino 2019). This is a historical characteristic of the path to industrialization that differentiates wealthy countries from those that are not (Chang 2008) and shows the importance of the regional integration processes that have contributed to higher dynamism and successful positioning in the global economic networks (ECLAC 2014).

In contrast to Latin America, the dynamic process experienced by China (Li *et al.* 2012) gave continuity to the leadership that Japan had assumed in the postwar (Medeiros 1999), combining regional industrialization and integration mechanisms (Beeson; Li 2014). To achieve this, China has merged industrialization policies based on the control and allocation of investment in activities and strategic sectors with progressive control of the regional and global chains (Jian 2016). Invited by China to be part of these chains within the framework of the BRI and under a “win-win” scheme, the Latin American challenge is to define its “win” by resuming its path of industrialization and reversing its traditional pattern of primary global insertion (Jenkins 2015).

Integration through technological development in the industrialization process

The “technological gap” and its relationship with the industrialization process have been key in the analysis provided by the Latin American structuralist and dependency perspectives. According to these approaches, the main characteristic of the asymmetry in the center-periphery is the unequal appropriation of the technical process (Prebisch 1949; 1981) or the establishment of technological monopolies by countries in the center (Dos Santos 2002). This constant asymmetry, which is a result of a historical process, would find critical limits once industrialization was boosted (Hirschman 1968). For its part, the dependency theory emphasizes the value

transfer that this gap makes, as part of an unequal and combined dynamic.

The link between technological development and the creation and deepening of regional productive chains is essential to revert the heterogeneity and hipper specialization of the socio-productive structure that distinguishes the underdeveloped pattern of the region (Pinto 1976; Chena 2010). This pattern is the main cause of socio-productive asymmetries and, at the same time, leads to a weak, subaltern, and primaried international insertion (Cimolli 2005).

The connection between innovation, learning processes, and the control of strategic functions of the productive chains with the capability of extending and complementing each other regionally can contribute to increasing the productive density, developing, and qualifying employment, and improving income distribution. Likewise, this connection can contribute to gaining greater negotiation power on a global scale (with States and GVC), both by controlling those strategic productive chains and, therefore, the surplus.

To accomplish that aim, States in Latin America should not only increase investment in Research and Development (R&D) (López Aymes; Morales Fajardo 2018) but also enhance complementation with the private sector and the State-owned companies that develop complex activities. This involves breaking with the isolation of the scientific-technological systems regarding the productive structures that characterize the region (Confraria; Vargas 2019) and is rooted in a long historical trajectory (Sabato; Botana 1968).

In contrast to Latin America, China became an active leader in Asian regional integration by increasing the control of the State in knowledge and complex activities. Though China began this process by becoming a recipient of technological activities and intensive work, the Chinese trajectory has been marked by the development of the high-tech sector, as a result of promoting an efficient innovation system led by the public sector that has permitted China to control neuralgic activities in the productive chains (Zeng 2017). China's industrialization and its involvement with qualified scientific-technological development have allowed the Asian country to be one of the largest patent applicants in the world, as well as to control several core functions of the high-tech sector, combining a progressive and advantageous position inside GVC (Song et al. 2021).

The "Reform and Opening Up" policy sought to make an integral change in the science and technology sector; a conversion which was then extended to the rest of the so-called "four transformations", in agriculture, defense, and industry. Since then, the development policies in China concentrated on,

firstly, setting the country as a “recipient” of knowledge, through adapting its industrial productive structures, to then promoting China to become an “endogenous innovator.” It is worth noting that the creation of a development strategy linked to the industrial policy, which not only promoted tech catch-up but enhanced technological leapfrogging, started being relevant in 2006. This new strategy became a priority in national modernization in 2015, through the launch of the “Development Strategy Based on Innovation” (Naughton 2021). Some examples of this broad tech strategy are the specific tech plans such as the “Made in China 2025” and “Internet Plus”, both launched in 2015, and the subsequent programs for the development of “general-purpose technologies”, based on a “triangle” integrated by communications, data, and artificial intelligence.

In the case of China, endogenous innovation includes becoming a “pioneer” in the development of certain technologies related to the 5.0 “technological revolution”; technologies that are applied transversally to different strategic sectors (Naughton 2021). This policy is part of a design and implementation process that seeks the development and modernization of China and has been reflected historically in the Five-Year Plans. The Fourteenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) and the so-called “Long Term Objectives for the Year 2035”, integrated into the plan, reaffirm the importance of science and technological advances to the goal of turning China into an innovative economy and continuing the process of reaching the global leadership by 2049.

Integration through spatial inequalities reversion

Jointly with overcoming the socio-productive heterogeneity to achieve social inclusion and narrowing the inequalities that make Latin America the most unequal region in the world in terms of income (Bárcena 2016), other aspects of inequality are also relevant: e.g., space inequality (Kanbur; López-Calva and Venables 2005). Thus, the process of industrialization and technological development that aims to create and provide qualification to supra-regional productive chains requires, also, to extend spatial scopes and involves the progressive inclusion of the excluded intra-national territories, to avoid additional subalternities.

As part of the Latin American historical process, intranational socio-spatial inequalities were also considered in ECLAC's structuralist analysis in the 1970s, highlighting how they coexisted with the industrialization process promoted in the postwar period (Sunkel 1970). Far from being reversed, these inequalities were aggravated during the implementation of the Washington

Consensus (Fernández et al. 2008), coexisting with a process of spatial concentration in which “agglomerations without growth” (Polèse 2005) and intra-urban asymmetries were strengthened (Kanbur López-Calva; Venables 2005).

Spatial inequalities were also evident when China initiated the economic reforms since there was a restructuring of the industrial and urbanization dynamics. These transformations echoed in numerous academic works (Dunford; Li 2010), which sought to show how global forces, nation-States, and local factors interacted when understanding the uneven regional development in China. Such changes favored the development of coastal regions and provinces based on the growth of non-State-owned enterprises and export-oriented manufacturing, which functioned as structural forces behind the creation of regional inequalities at different spatial scales (Naughton 2007; Ye 2020).

Despite the existence of inequalities (particularly intra-provincial) and regional heterogeneities that entail a persistent challenge (Crane et al. 2018), two aspects are divergent when comparing the Chinese trajectory and the Latin American scenario. On the one hand, the Chinese convergence of spatial redistribution in industrial production. On the other hand, the planning actions made by the State to revert spatial inequalities. To do this, the State has deployed different ways of intervention that have been accompanied by heterogeneous but active engagement with peripheral regions. In China’s industrialization, gradual industrial/technological convergence has progressively added non-coastal regions (Lemoine et al. 2014), while achieving the progressive insertion of regions in value chains (Yu 2017).

The goal of integrating regional levels to achieve higher spatial asymmetry has led to proposals of new public policies “in favor of a more balanced development dates back to the late 1990s when the government launched the WDP, a program aimed at enhancing the economic development of twelve central and western provinces” (Lemoine et al. 2014, 10). The WDP encompassed fiscal transfers and tax preferences, measures to induce financial institutions and especially policy banks to increase loans to western regions development” (Lemoine et al. 2014, 10). The program aimed to reduce inequalities by investing in infrastructure, creating economic partnerships between the coast and the western provinces, and increasing the West regions’ ability to attract foreign investment (Sun 2013; Zheng; Kuroda 2013).

Despite the constant promotion of the development and industrialization of the western provinces in China -since the creation of the Republic in 1912, until the communist revolution and the Maoist period, and even during the Deng Era-, it was Jiang Zemin who implemented the WDP

program. Though the reforms launched at the end of the 1970s had permitted the development and industrialization of the east coast provinces, this was not the case for the central and western regions; their economic performance was much lower than the vigorous regions. Thus, the launching of the WDP in 1999 was a consequence of pressures by those regions' governments that claimed the central leadership for the delay in designing and implementing development and industrialization policies in their provinces. The WDP also sought a solution to the industrial overcapacity crisis that had irrupted in 1996 and had increased during the Asian crisis in 1997/8 (Ye 2020). Therefore, the WDP pursued the aim to overcome those crises, but also to respond to the underlying challenges of the reform of the State-owned enterprises due to the imminent entry of China into the World Trade Organization.

The BRI was launched in 2013, also in the context of an internal economic and political crisis due to the Chinese industrial sectors' overcapacity. The WDP was not removed but merged with the BRI to continue developing China at the domestic level. Thus, the BRI promoted the reactivation of the infrastructure construction that had been interrupted by the economic recession and the tightening of credit between 2010 and 2014 (Ye, 2020).

Actions to revert inequalities, enhance inclusion and improve well-being conditions and living standards in less favored regions in China were deepened; firstly, through the WDP, and, afterward, through the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan, which proposed policies aimed at integrating urban and rural areas and reducing the disparities between provinces through an integrated regional development (Aglietta; Bai and Macaire 2021). In addition to the reduction of territorial inequalities, the Chinese government sought to enhance social equity through the increase in per capita income, the provision of better and higher conditions of access to housing, health, and education, the improvement of the social security system, and the eradication of extreme poverty. The Fourteenth Five-Year Plan, approved in March 2021, proposes to move forward toward these goals.

Integration through creating integrated capabilities within States

The aforementioned elements converge in an integrated final point: the configuration and development of the organizational, functional, and spatial capacities of the State. These capabilities are a determining factor in the strength or weakness of each of the aspects analyzed above, as well as their articulation for the development of a common regional strategy.

But concerning this last element, the Latin American and Sino-Asian trajectories and realities are also different and unequal. The state formation in Latin America, relatively recent in historical terms, did not take place together with a correlative strengthening of the state capacities (Centeno 2002; Mazzuca 2021), in particular, those necessary to achieve sustained autonomy to direct the process of industrialization and the technological development necessary to overcome the primarized logic and specialization of the local dominant elites and to reverse a peripheral and dependent international insertion (Cardoso; Faletto 1970). These limited capacities, necessary to achieve a “structural autonomy” (Hamilton 1981), were the result of the inexistence of both external permissiveness imposed by global powers (geopolitical) and internal viability because of the power/interest of local elites (Jaguaribe 1979). This conditioned the possibilities of building state capacity to create industrial and technological regional integration.

The main historical conditions that affected the formation of the State in Latin America had their sources in the late integration -and subordination- to the dominant European interstate system, that preceded it for at least three centuries (Fiori 2007), as well as by the absence of many of those elements that distinguished the formation of the European state.

While the rise of Europe found in the self-reinforcing cycle between its capitals and its states, and the development of the interstate warfare system, the determining factors of its transoceanic dominance (McNeill 1982), Latin America had to deal with geopolitically and geoeconomically unskillful states to form an autonomous regional interstate system. Unlike those European states, their emergence was not a result of external military confrontations, which gave them bureaucratic, fiscal, and military power (Centeno 2002; Burke 1997), but organizations limited by the penetration and adaptation to the distant hegemonic interests and the power and strategies of the local dominant actors that preceded them.

As a result, they were also states based around concentric and port socio-urban formations, with little connection and articulation with subnational spaces, whose power and control were disputed by local caudillos. These different instances, poorly articulated, developed bureaucratic machinery affected by multiple training and operational limitations, in which patronage patterns and caudillista dominance stand out as a limit to political centralization (Pfoh 2005).

All this limited, downstream, the development of infrastructural capacities (Soifer; vom Hau 2008) that would allow a combined process of decentralization and national strategic centralization, necessary to reverse fragmentation and spatial inequalities. Upstream, this hindered the formation

of a macro-regional interstate system, essential to carry out a process of industrialization and endogenous technological development (Pastrana Buelvas; Alegria 2015).

Since the second half of the 20th century, the incorporation of urban subordinate classes, grown with industrialization, promoted a multiplication of State organizations and functions, although without displacing the presence and incidence of internal and external dominant classes. This fueled tensions that sought to be resolved within the state (O'Donnell 1973), encouraging its feudalization (Portantiero 1989) and capture (Oszlak 2020), and restricting its ability to direct the deepening of the industrialization process and form a pattern of macro-regional integration.

The above-mentioned internal and external constraints contributed to generating many of the subsequent crises that characterized Latin American statehood in the 1970s, as well as the creation and consolidation of periphery conditions. Afterward, in the framework of the Washington Consensus projection during the 1990s, a combined strategy of privatization and decentralization deepened the fragmentation and weakness of national States and made them functional with the strategies of global capital accumulation and the international financial institutions (Fernández 2002).

The political changes evidenced in the first decade of the 21st century could not revert most of those structural transformations. Although the pink tide expressions (Fernández 2016) or popular national governments under neo-developmental ideas (Merino 2017) claimed to promote industrialization and inclusive projects with regional scopes, the State's capacities remained limited to achieve these goals. As a result, a new conservative reaction arose, seeking to limit the capacities of the state to become involved in strategic areas linked to production and, at the same time, to reinstall a regional integration associated with the declining and financialized hegemony of the United States (Cannon 2016).

The state formation and state capacity development look different in the Sino-Asian scenario. Unlike both the European trajectory and that of Latin America and Africa, as Sugihara (2019) points out: "It is only since 2015, a reaction that tended to weaken previous achievements in terms of integration and Asia, that economic nationalism has embraced regional integration on a regional scale", and under that integration "there has been a dynamic relationship between the growth of intra-Asian trade and industrialization on a regional scale" (Sugihara 2019, 77). The projection of this integration continues until today, most recently in the framework of the ASEAN Economic Community, and despite the emergence of China as a hegemon.

This process has been supported by the creation of a millennial State

structure based on an innovative bureaucratic centralization that gave effective control over lands and was combined with different ways of decentralization that permitted, though not without conflicts, the generation of multiple local, national, and supranational bodies (Cao 2018; Wang 2019). The process of State building at a macro-regional level was composed, apart from China, of several powerful bureaucratic State agencies. It did not work through interstate military confrontation (e.g., between China and its neighbors) as it had occurred in the case of the West powers (Arrighi 2008), but through an emulation and learning process that inspired nearby States such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, together with other smaller political organizations (Huang; Kang 2022). Based on this trajectory, China reconstructed and enhanced its state capacity to build a “regional system” that must be read both in historical and current logic as a key instance between the global dynamic (Frank 1998) and the national exclusivity (Wong 1997).

The Chinese revolution that took place in the mid of the 20th century became core, not only as a way to remove the regressive local elite power (Wang 2019) but also to recover the statehood that combines centralized and decentralized processes. In this regard, the Chinese State leads different actions through which central and regional governments, national bureaucracies, private and public companies, public banks, small and big companies, and internal/regional and global/external markets are articulated. The capital and the markets, as well as territories, work from the bottom trying to boost their profits; at the same time, the State has an “ordering and geostrategic supremacy” that works at the top, shaping the economic behavior so that it is aligned with the objective of national modernization (Petry 2020). In contrast, and according to what has been said, exogenous subordination dominates the setting and involvement of the State in Latin America.

Unlike certain approaches that compare the Chinese State system to the Asian developmental States, the State capitalism itself, or even those that classify it as a strategic, coercive, and authoritarian unit, it should be noted that the Chinese State is composed of diverse agencies and power centers. Though the State is central, it is far from being a monolithic unit. Conversely, it is a multilevel system, integrated by powerful political leaders, national bureaucracies, State capital, and local governments with high influence, that interact in a complex way, with constant conflicts. Therefore, the implementation of national strategies is characterized by continuous clashes between multiple economic-politic actors (Jones; Zeng, 2019).

Despite the Chinese State being a three-parties system that is structurally fragmented, there is an element that integrates those structures: the ideological and organizational cohesion provided by the Chinese

Communist Party, which seeks to guarantee the global rise of China, as well as the Chinese social-economic welfare and the national modernization. On the path to realizing national modernization, economic growth stands as a priority. Economic growth not only gives legitimacy to the system but provides the necessary resources to face economic and social challenges.

The ideological cohesion that characterizes the Chinese State system is a result of ideas and preferences that have been accumulated during more than forty years of reforms. These ideas recover the postulates of Mao and even those of Sun Yat-sen. However, there is plurality, flexibility, and internal fragmentation within the Chinese State apparatus, since subnational actors and companies have “freedom” to choose how to interpret and implement the strategies that the central power elaborates, based on incentives and local needs that, in general, are different and sometimes adversarial (Ye 2020).

Conclusion

The ambitious project of the BRI and its progressive arrival to Latin America opens the debate about its scope, but also about its implications for development and structural change in Latin America in the current global scenario.

Though our proposal is mainly theoretical, and therefore has limitations due to the absence of empirical analysis that confront our formulations, it opens up the possibility for future systematic research, e.g., case studies research, that enrich the discussion about the BRI's projection to Latin America. The above-analyzed six elements, presented in the framework of an updated Latin American structuralist, dependency, and autonomy approach, in tandem with Arrighi's version of the world system theory, are not only relevant individually but also need to be observed in unison. Such elements seek to show the importance of initiating a process of building State capacity that is capable of encouraging the creation of autonomous regional space. This regional integration should be based on a process of industrialization and technical development, with financial and trade structures that facilitate the creation of regional productive chains and revert historical subnational inequalities.

Such elements can be understood as challenges and constraints that emerge when evaluating the extent to which the Chinese growing geoeconomic and geopolitical projection to Latin America, through the BRI, could contribute to developing the regional scenario.

The differences observed in the historical creation and consolidation

of such elements in both regional scenarios, with absences and weaknesses in the case of Latin America, and visible progress in the case of China, show structural divergences that have implications for future cooperation in the framework of the BRI. The probabilities of those inequalities in Latin America to be reverted mainly depend on two facts. Firstly, to elaborate policies that set ways for the region and its national spaces to develop those six elements. Secondly, to guarantee that China's BRI proposal opens up a joint debate with Latin American counterparts on how to implement the Initiative in the region in a way that long-standing challenges such as commodity dependence and deindustrialization are not intensified.

In the pursuit of impeding a subaltern interaction with China that derives in a non-imperialist neo-dependency, it is essential that the deepening of relations as a result of the BRI projection to Latin America is promoted based on a collective approach in terms of countries/regions. This collective approach must encourage joint actions instead of individual ones and enable the elaboration of strategies oriented to deploy equal and articulated interactions between parties in the six above-mentioned dimensions. The accomplishment of this objective requires realizing in Latin America an effective geopolitical economy based on the strengthening of autonomy and negotiating capacity on a global scale, achieved through a process of economic and institutional integration such as the one led by China in the Asian scenario.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the divergent perspectives that address the presence of China in the Global South through the Belt and Road Initiative, scarce approaches identify how Latin America could face that challenge to reverse its historical dependency and promote economic development. We address this question by recovering and updating structuralist, dependentist, and autonomist contributions developed in Latin America combined with an arrighian version of the world system. We compare the Latin American and Chinese trajectories regarding regional integration, productive and technological constitutions, spatial asymmetries, and state capacities. Finally, we propose how to forge a relationship with China that enhances Latin American autonomy.

KEYWORDS

Latin America; China; Belt and Road Initiative.

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FRAMING CONDITIONALITY OF FOREIGN AID: A CRITICAL APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION PROCESSES¹

María Eugenia Vega²
Oscar Parra³

Introduction

The way in which development expresses itself as international cooperation is through foreign aid. The intentionality of carrying the necessary programs to underdeveloped countries is far from being pure, i.e., development for the sake of development. On the contrary, several reasons and values are behind cooperation between states and foreign aid is a conduit for multiple political agendas besides development itself. In this work, foreign aid is treated as a reflection of international cooperation that is a theoretical controversy for scholars in political science, political sociology, and international relations. Even if foreign aid has its particularities, international cooperation shares with it the deepest symbolic and normative structure. Thus, what can be said about foreign aid is also referred to international cooperation.

Foreign aid has cemented itself as a mechanism of relation between countries through:

[...] a voluntary transfer of public resources, from a government to another

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² Public Administration program, Politecnico Grancolombiano, Bogotá, Colombia. E-mail: mevega@poligran.edu.co. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4376-2211>

³ Latin American Political Studies, Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Bogotá, Colombia. E-mail: oparrac@unal.edu.co. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3026-7964>

independent government, to an NGO, or to an international organization (such as the World Bank or the UN Development Program) with at least a 25 percent grant element, one goal of which is to better the human condition in the country receiving the aid (Lancaster 2007, 9).

This definition provided by Lancaster acknowledged by herself, is close to the definition given by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) about the Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁴, though distanced on three essential axis: the extent of the recipient countries, without leveraging solely the aid for the low income countries; the shift of terms from *development* to *human condition* as the objective of cooperation; the focus on the improvement of the human conditions as one of the mandatory goals for cooperation (Lancaster 2007).

The content of this definition is rich enough to open the debate around the intentions of foreign aid and the reflection of ideas in the cross-cultural promotion of knowledge because it deploys concretely the perceptions and motivations of development. The common spaces are forged to submit diverse symbolic referents and to negotiate through them. Before delving into the primary modes of execution, it is critical to recognize several factors of development that influence the application of foreign aid. In this sense, North-South Cooperation (NSC) and South-South Cooperation (SSC) are products of the historical narratives of development and balance of power.

International Cooperation must be understood through the lens of shared and intersubjective frames, which means that the involved states can affect the development of the interaction as different cooperative spaces are produced. These spaces are formalized as two modalities of foreign aid: North-North and South-South. Each modality operates following their own principles, relating its corresponding frames, and both cases display the divergent historical development that affect their effectivity and legitimacy.

Frames are useful to understand foreign aid deeply as they cover the cognitive and normative structures that activate and reproduce communication, understanding, and negotiation between actors, given some *conditions of possibility* that leave enough space for the deployment of specific interactions and forms of acting (Dux 2011). Frames as analytical categories underlying to the interactions between political actors, at the interpersonal or the international level, present a possibility of integrating new variables to study political action. In public policy, this concept obliges the visualization of

⁴ “Funds that can be counted as ODA are those applied to “the economic development and welfare of developing countries” as grants or concessional loans (25% or greater)” (SPRATT, 2018: 84, citing the definition of OECD’s DAC, 2010)..

identities and discourses within the decision-making process as variables that restrict or enable the negotiation around the procedure to formulate agendas, programs, and plans for the execution of concrete policies.

Framing as a mode of cognizing the political phenomena is useful for the understanding of the functioning of values and principles in concrete actions and policies. While framing foreign aid depends on the historical advancement of its discourse, the deployment of its modalities is the result of its conditions of possibility given by capitalism itself. The aim of international cooperation can be summed in the following way: keeping the economic relations between states flowing via foreign aid and establishing an international agenda inside the recipient states. In this sense, framing can be seen as a methodology that enquires the discursive analysis from the constructivist standpoint that historical values conform the political mindset⁵ (Klotz e Lynch 2007).

This study does not only aim to make a balance between both modalities of foreign aid, but to highlight that framing amplify the analytical possibilities in any instance of the bargaining process amid actors, emphasizing that actual discourses reflect the changes inside the social and cognitive structures: the assimilation of historical contingency as causal dynamics. Framing foreign aid requires the content analysis of official documents and academic papers as here these are considered as the source of this qualitative research technique because the examination of the text enables the apprehension of its meaning and mode of production. Namely, the text must be treated not only as signs that carry some known meaning, but as traces of the writer and the way in which he produces it (Krippendorff 2004, 36, cited in Vega e Lafosse 2018, 423). Nonetheless, the employment of this method is limited to a qualitative interpretation of discourses, and it does not intend to propose a systematical review of foreign aid cases.

In the first part the reader encounters that framing is presented as a constructivist concept which serves as a vehicle for the comprehension of international cooperation because it gives coherence between the cognitive and institutional structures. In the second part, NSC and SSC are framed comparatively to unravel the power relations in global cooperative interplay as they both share economic and political principles, values, and history in their own particularity. It should be warned that the concept of development is

5 Following the constructivist epistemology of psychologist Jean Piaget, the formation of the cognitive structure of the human mind as a result of assimilation and accommodation of knowledge in determinate individual experiences. It is also important to highlight the close relationship between this particular development of constructivism and structuralism, both in psychology and sociology.

essential to each cooperation, but it will not be submitted to further discussion.

The theoretical standpoint of this argument relies on the realist constructivist⁶ hypothesis that framing both foreign aid modalities does not change the underlying (geopolitical) relationship amid states and other groups of interest, though the processual construction of interests and ideals comes to be the condition of possibility to establish the normative and legitimate courses of action. According to International Relations theory, this approach conceals classical realism and constructivism in two ways: power as the main mechanism for structural change and particular interest as a precondition for state survival (Parra 2017, 40). In this sense, foreign aid is an expression of power and reflects the interests of donor and recipient states.

As its direct antecedent this article reflects upon the work of A. Maurits van der Veen given that its construction of foreign aid frames enlightens the interests of donor states to pursue this kind of cooperation. In a detailed way, van der Veen crosses two variables to amplify the explanation about the purposes of the foreign aid, the modes of cooperation and the recipients of the aid: the volume of the aid -size of the programs- and its distribution -who are the recipients. In accordance with this method, the author proposes a list of frames that can render valuable for the comprehension of foreign aid in general:

1. for the *security frame*, the increasement of the donor safekeeping through the widening of the security and defense regimes towards the allied and strategic states, in geopolitical terms.
2. for the *power/influence frame*, the cooperation would seek to reach a superior economic and political capability due to the relationship with allied states with economic or political potential and states that were once colonies
3. the *wealth/economic self-interest frame*) is centered on the advance towards the support of the exportation industry to favor the economic interests of the donor, in relation with the states that possess the economic potential to trade.
4. the *enlightened self-interest frame* is about the desire to assist the global common goods, alleviate the international vulnerability and tensions, with simultaneous self-benefit, and the target population belong to the unstable and over-populated states or to the states with abundance of natural resources.

⁶ See Barkin (2010) e Guzzini (2013).

5. the *reputation/self-affirmation frame* as the exploration to establish and expand a global identity helping recipient countries that are visible in the international system.
6. the *obligation/duty frame* is translated into the accomplishment of a historical role or the actual position in the international scenario via constant contribution to visible recipients, former colonies, or commercial partners.
7. the *humanitarianism frame*) fosters the human welfare in the poorest populations that have no satisfaction of basic needs (Van der Veen 2011, 10-45).

Furthermore, van der Veen highlights the importance of frames in the understanding of foreign aid, because they “shape the overall organization and quality of aid programs, but they also affect specific features, such as the total size of the aid budget, or the geographical allocation of aid” (Van der Veen 2011, 5). Consequently, for this argument, frames are understood as general conceptions around cooperation policies that impact over each aspect of it. These frames are the ideational roots of the political decisions, basic principles for the definition of national interest facing the negotiations of the aid (Van der Veen 2011). However, in the definition of policies prevails some dominant frames that provide of certain legitimacy for acting; political and economic elites dispose of a great capacity of mobilization of resources and political decision, implying specific practices and discourses that belong to a skillful technocracy, to an inconsistent bureaucracy or, both. This article goes in a different direction than van der Veen’s work as it delves deeply into the core principles and values that motivate the particular actors to engage in foreign aid. Instead of focusing on the action frames (Schön and Rein 1994), this article goes further to the construction of worldviews that structure normativity and action around foreign aid.

While NSC and SSC are not the unique expressions of foreign aid, for practical reasons Triangular Cooperation is not included in this framing exercise. Triangular Cooperation is an assemblage of both models that brings back the NSC conditionality principles and financial capabilities to the SSC horizontal technical assistance. Additionally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are not of main interest due to their early results and uncertain transformations that are produced in the international scenario, as was remarked by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this does not mean that these are not mentioned from an analytical perspective. The aim of the text is to establish through framing analysis whether foreign aid discourses are constructed to be applied on real development scenarios or are plain rhetoric

interaction to support the underlying power relations.

Framing as an interpretation toolbox

The formulation of any public policy brings along a series of ideological statements, moral thrusts, and conditioned identities to other actors. The spaces where the political practices are developed suggest that there are some possibilities of action that are not limited to the material capabilities, but to the historical and ideological position of each actor, which is simultaneously reflexive, in coherence with their cognitive and normative basis. This is where frames are exposed for the understanding of the structures that mobilize the possibilities of action. The centrality of frames, from the constructivist point of view, passes transversally through every public policy study, and as a medullary instrument of this international cooperation analysis.

An obligatory treatment of frames in the public policy field is the one proposed by Rein and Schön given that they open four possibilities to understand frames in practical scenarios: first, frames are dealt as a *scaffolding* that supports the cognitive structure⁷; second, as the delimitation, and simultaneous extraction of certain phenomena from their places (*picture frames*), separating what is on the inside of the frame from its outside; third, as an appreciative schema to interpret reality, organize experience, and also impact essentially on the courses of action; and fourth, as diagnostic/prescriptive stories or generic narratives (Rein and Schön 1996, 88). These conceptions are often taken as differentiated and disengaged frames of analysis. However, it is important to ask if these meanings should remain isolated and if their coexistence can be profitable to the analysis of public policy.

Frame is a constructivist concept when it shows in any form the cognitive and normative structures of actors in interaction. Thus, frames are continually constituted in the actor-structure interplay; it is vital to understand them as processes of structuration (Giddens 1998). Moreover, the relevance of frames analysis stands out when it opens the possibility of comprehensive and empathic communication to make of foreign aid a beneficial space whenever a conflictive situation requires it. Nonetheless, this preliminary characterization is insufficient to evaluate the different impacts that frames can have on the planning and execution stages of public policy⁸.

⁷ It is a necessity to mention the extremely rigid and almost unbreakable character of the structure, given that the regularity and its minimal adaptability to causal events persist.

⁸ Foreign aid is a relation between international actors that cross necessarily the state instances

Lacking conceptual articulation of the definitions exposed by Rein and Schön, it is crucial to find a coherence for defining frames and comprehending the interference of ideas, discourse and identities on the formulation and management of public policy. Surel makes an exhaustive comparative work among the Paradigms of Peter Hall, the Advocacy Coalition Framework of Paul Sabatier and the Référentiels of Bruno Jobert and Pierre Muller to highlight the multiple roles and layers of frames in public policy⁹. In principle, Surel distinguishes four main elements for framing: metaphysical principles (worldviews), specific principles (subsystems; general frames abstractions), forms of action (delimitation of the possibilities for the instruments of action) and the instruments of action (specification of the modes). This schema allows the display of an interdependency of those four levels in a hierarchical sense. Then, framing is ordered from the most invariant structures to the most flexibles to change.

The metaphysical principles, that would correspond to the scaffolding, are the guidelines of any type of social and cognitive organization; for example, these frames for Sabatier are called *deep core*, the most unwavering structures that contain almost irrefutable concepts and beliefs for the entire society, generally they are assimilated as prescribed. The specific principles¹⁰ are secondary frames and they are centered on the subsystems; Sabatier refers to them as *policy core* because they affect a specific community related to the topic of interest, and Hall takes them as abstractions of the paradigm. The forms of action¹¹ are associated with the construction of practices and attitudes linked to the most general frames; they open the possibility to act according to the material capabilities and strategic margin of maneuver. Lastly, the instruments are the direct delimitation of action since its specificity is conferred by the situation and the coherence given by previous frames (Surel 2000).

For this essay is enough to bring the *processual character of frames*, as actors are situated in specific social environments where they are exposed to constant negotiations with others (and themselves); they are faced to metaphysical social structures and to minor ones to construct from the

and the management of public resources. On consequence, it is part of the public policy as a source of resources and a platform to connect the domestic and international actors..

9 The way that Surel arranges frames for the understanding the public policy will be the theoretical basis for this text.

10 In relation to the text of Rein and Schön (1996), the specific principles resemble the picture frames given the thematic specificity and the extraction of a piece of reality.

11 For the forms of action, as for the instruments of action, fits the equating with the cognitive/appreciative schemas of interpretation because of the direction to define the courses of action.

categorical distinction and the (re)organization of concepts and experiences courses and modes of action. Furthermore, from the intake of Rein and Schön, the recognition of succinct patterns of interactions and actions is highly important for the reflexive hindsight or retroactivity of the social roles and their performance in front of the initial expectations.

Consequently, it is necessary to continue with an analysis of how frames can intervene and impact on public policy. Van Hulst and Yanow conducted a study of *framing*¹² as a never-ending reconstitution of frames, following Goffman to indicate the immediate and incessant qualities of framing as definition of the situations through negotiations led by the participants of the interaction. For Goffman, solely through communication the actors can recognize the principle of organization and subjective involvement; frames help the actor to perceive and represent himself in specific situations. Also, Van Hulst and Yanow recuperate the work of Rein and Schön¹³ to return to the public policy topics, as the actors name realities converting concerns into problems, selecting pieces of reality to highlight and tell the story to coherently justify their vision (*naming-selection-storytelling*) (Van Hulst and Yanow 2014).

Both analyses brought back by van Hulst, and Yanow seem to grant the actors involved in framing the possibility to apprehend consciously the worldviews and the capabilities of bargaining to define the joint situation. Although, and keeping in mind Giddens' structuration (Giddens 1993), the scaffolding frames exercise a social and symbolic influence over the action as they bestow it of elements that delimitate the possibilities of action. Thus, it is vital to follow the structures' rhythms of shifting after the action occurrence because despite all of them being present in the interaction, they are not equally sensitive to change, nor in the same proportion. Accordingly, the most deep-rooted structures cognitively and normatively, as Rein and Schön claim, do not vary, or are tested in specific moments (such as forums or multilateral organizations); these are concepts/values that are supposed as preconceived or natural, a priori to any interaction or situation.

In the case of the secondary structures, specific principles, and abstractions of the general structure, they are more susceptible to change, but while negotiating they maintain a state of relative rigidity. Empirically it is difficult to claim what is the interval of time in which the structural changes are produced, yet with certainty some frames shift faster than others, not only by their sensitivity, but because there are causal conditions that sustain their changing. In systems theory, communication enables the reproduction of any

¹² For framing, in relation with the definitions given by Rein and Schön (1996), the generic narratives allow the reflective exercise and the negotiation for the frame's structuration.

¹³ Specially Schön and Rein (1994), regarding the notion of frame reflection.

system, based on some conditions of possibility that allow the happening of a specific interaction. Therefore, Dux describes that:

The subject that we take to be the constructor of the demiurgic process in a historico-genetic theory is a subject that has always already been interconnected in communicative terms. Others are for each person who participates in the communicative process, (in just the same way as the pre-given conditions under which everyone acts) in a strict sense the condition of possibility. Nothing more and nothing less (Dux 2011, 203-204) ¹⁴.

In the same way, as Goffman claims, communication allows the involved actors to make part of the definition of the situation. Similarly, this bond demands the conditions of possibility to keep reproducing the systems, namely, to keep communicating. The same author adds:

Constructors in the demiurgic process are real empirical individuals, equipped with the specifically human capabilities of sociocultural organization that they have acquired. They are constructors, however, only under the condition of interaction and communication with others. The systemic organization of communication is a systemic organization that take place through the subjects (Dux 2011, 205)¹⁵.

According to Dux, if communication is the key for the same reproduction of the system, then subjects are responsible in practice of generating, or bargaining through the channels of communication: language. This means that the linguistic structures are prone to transform gradually along with the possibilities that the precise historical contingency grants them. Likewise, these linguistic structures are transversal across individuals, not just as a communicative channel, but as a translation of reality that observe and reflect; the linguistic changes, then, can be the reflection of any frames' alteration.

For his part, Bruner argues that language cannot be neutral as it contains sense and sensible postures, it is the transmitter of a specific reception of reality. This perception comes wrapped in a conglomerate of symbols, concepts and norms that mediate cognitively the human relationship with the exterior world; then, reality is made tangible as it acquires sense and

¹⁴ Original cursives.

¹⁵ Original cursives.

affirmation with these definitions and significance already incorporated in the interaction (Bruner 1982). For radical constructivists, language is capable of supplanting reality in the transmission, but according to this approach, language only mediates representation and reality serving as a rather failed communicative dimension. Overall, the structures that are submitted to change require of a precise conceptualization; the mutation of the structure does not occur by a linguistic shift, on the contrary, this complements it and fosters its diffusion.

This constructivist conception about the acquisition and reproduction of language asserts that its production happens in practice, in the contact with the social milieu. At last, to adopt the communicative dimension, the child requires a priori the participation in social interactions¹⁶. The format, as Bruner called it, is “the instrument of a regulated human interaction” (Bruner 2007)¹⁷. Consequently, without claiming that it is an entirely conscient process, negotiations about the structural turns happen through this format because of the conditions of possibility that permit, delimit, and structure it. In sum, for frames to change, they precise of concrete causal scenarios and, at the same time, formats for communication and interaction amid actors. Lastly, frames deprive reality of contradiction and lack, they serve as regulation of reality through sense and coherence. Reframing means the shift in symbolic horizon according to the material contingency, as they require a support within reality to organize experience and expectations. Framing is then an interplay of language, time, and signification.

The methodological function of framing for this text is the identification of symbolic and material structures for political action. Through the examination of the historical development of foreign aid, the cooperative framework becomes an interpretative schema of principles, values, and narratives that set-in motion the actual power dynamics of the state. The paradoxical positioning of cooperation discourses (and rhetoric) reveals that the self-interested state is oriented towards the other to reaffirm itself (and its own activity) as valid and significant. In this sense, the paradigm of development still *scaffolds* symbolically international cooperation, even if it is aimed at the state, the capitalists, or the humanity.

¹⁶ For this reason, for Bruner (2007), pragmatics “is a commitment of social interaction using speech” and thus “is necessarily related with the discourse and, at the same time, depends always on the context, of a shared context”. This commitment counts with three fundamental elements: “a set of shared conventions to establish the intention of the speaker and the disposition of the listener..., one share basis to exploit the deictic possibilities of the temporal, spatial and interpersonal context... and conventional means to establish and restore presumptions” (Bruner 2007, 178).

¹⁷ Own translation.

North-South Cooperation (NSC)

It is relevant to keep in mind the historical importance of development as a controversial concept for the interstate relations. Even though, in a logical sense, development is the liaison amid framing and foreign aid, it is not the core of this article and the theoretical or political discussions around it will not be reviewed further on. Today the normative expression of development is found in the SDG of the United Nations Program for Development (UNPD). Consequently, development is seen as a multidimensional concept rather than the classical economic conception.

Wide open, development is known as the boosting category of a great number of political actions at the domestic and interstate level. Its discursive power has enabled certain actors to carry out functional strategies for the reproduction of the economic model. Development is profoundly linked to the definition of foreign aid mentioned at the beginning of the text because it discursively aims to the improvement of the quality of life of the peoples, to alleviate the necessities and the catastrophes, and to provide the conditions for survival to the future generations. It has positioned itself as a high endurance frame; even with some reforms in the forms of action, it remains being an essential axis for any public policy, and definitively within foreign aid.

In the moment in which development became a privative characteristic of the Western powers, the immediate mandate was to disseminate the productive capabilities throughout the world to 'take-off' towards the economic welfare. Without much detail, Castoriadis points out that development's fundamental guidelines are the economic rationality and the omnipotence of the technique, additional to the self-sustaining growth that is required for the expansion of the model. The economic growth, the utilitarian thought, and the unstoppable advance of science have a privileged place to increase the quantity of production and make the national economy bigger. This is the image that projects Western development.

Consequently, it can be sustained with Escobar that the role of experts and organizations, that concentrate the interstate legitimacy, enable the symbolic positioning of development in (cooperation) praxis. Moreover, the author contributes that the intervention of technical knowledge has invigorated the concept in different historical moments, which has allowed development to survive as a discourse to critical transformations in polity and economy. Development has entered in a contradiction with its humanity redeemer discourse as the economic agendas of the financial international

organizations (World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank) and its multilateral exchanges (Doha rounds, G-7 summits, Free Trade Agreements) jeopardize the advancement of the most vulnerable social groups. These expressions of development do not foster the shift in the productive capacities of the recipient populations. On the contrary, they have brought unfavorable scenarios to the peoples, neither have included non-economic aspects into the interventions made; it seems that a development without development is promoted (Chang 2011).

The economic rationality which is employed to deliver the aid needs the elimination of cultural differences in the sense that the recipient accepts the ideological and economic conditions from the donor. For this reason, the discourse of development has survived beyond the historical changes -especially, with the transformative and multidimensional capacity of globalization- within international politics and particularly relating to the foreign aid.

Therefore, the relations amid northern and southern states are deployed in accordance with their position in the international system, so there is coherence in the attempts to consolidate multilateral organizations between southern countries to compensate for the imbalance of power. Furthermore, foreign aid includes the ideas and interests of those clusters of power that then define the way in which development is oriented. The roles that each of the international actors perform rely upon the identification of peers and contenders. It is central to understand that the North, as the South, subscribe to shared frames to exist and act as a unit. Though this duality does not necessarily end in conflict, the terms of interaction change significantly due to the comprehension of these frames; hereafter, it will be mandatory to conduct an illustration of the performance of those frames in the foreign aid platforms. The outcome of the paradigm of development for framing foreign aid is the abandonment of possible human interactions outside the economical calculations and the utilitarian logic of cooperation. Whether the state advances toward development or gets trapped in the impoverishment of the population and in the marginalization of global politics.

It is important to not reduce cooperation politics to a game of material bargain, as Whitefield and Fraser might do with the notion 'capital of negotiation'. This concept is understood as structural conditions (economic, political, institutional, and ideological landscape) that allow one actor to impose its rules over the other, as the amount of money, political influence, or institutional efficiency. For example, if during a negotiation actors balance their capital and preferences over public policies to arrange an agreement (that includes priorities, terms, and conditions of the aid), it results essential

to evaluate the weight of the conditionality exposed by the donor and the gauging for the recipient's participation or ownership.

NSC includes the greatest quantity of overall foreign aid. As its name points out, the cooperation occurs amid countries from the North with others from the South, in a unidirectional relation, in which the North is the donor, while the South is the recipient. Similarly, to the speech of development, foreign aid does not appear until the end of the Second World War; its objectives, ideas and forms of action have changes vertiginously during the second half of the Twentieth century and the two decades of the Twenty-First.

Officially, in the first stage of the NSC, the inception of foreign aid happens alongside the demise of the Second World War, the rise of decolonization, the creation of the United Nations, and the construction of the Bretton-Woods system. This was the time when cooperation took an impulse to bring development to the most vulnerable zones of the world. Afterwards, during the Cold War, both powers exploited this kind of cooperative mechanisms to tie down the so-called satellite countries. At this moment, the history of foreign aid reached its peak, considering that cooperation was the *soft-power* extension of the military race between the Americans and the Soviets. In consequence, foreign aid was prolific as it represents the victory of the developmental model preached by the US¹⁸.

The downfall of the soviet era and the demise of the Cold War reorganized outstandingly the relations among states and diversified the topics of interest. The political agenda of international organizations turned to the flows of capital in the less involved countries in the bipolar world. Since the World Bank produced the 1990 *World Development Report*, in which poverty was evaluated as the core theme of the development agendas, the objectives of the aid were redirected towards the sharpening of the *Good Governance* and the strengthening of the capabilities of the populations, so they can resolve their own vulnerabilities¹⁹ (Fraser 2009). Despite of the recent inclusion of the recipient states in the addressing of their development, the intentions from the donors to control the courses of the institutional reforms remained. As a reflection of this affirmation there are four principal policies that were applied to contribute to this readdressing of the NSC: 1. Result-based

18 Fraser (2009) summarizes the foreign aid history in the following phases: first developments of the architecture (1945-1975), the turn of the half of the 1970 decade (1975-1980), the early era of structural adjustment (1980-1990), the aftermath Cold War adjustment (1990-2000) and the era of association (2000-).

19 See Sen (1999), of how ideas in the construction of capabilities influenced in the new intervention approach of the World Bank and the NSC.

management; 2. Selectivity; 3. Sector-Wide Assistance Programs (SWAP)²⁰; 4. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) (Lancaster 2007).

In the Twenty-First century, the influence of the recipient countries has augmented in the NSC interaction. In 1996, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) posited within the document 'Shaping the 21st Century' that human development should be the core of the aid in order to increase the flux of cooperation²¹, for this purpose the coordination amid donor and recipient is essential. The critiques included in the document regarded that the high costs of transaction to fulfill the donor requirements in the end affected the quality of the aid; the inefficient expenditure of the donors; the unpredictability of the donation funds; the diminishment of the state; the corrosion of the democratic responsibility due to the bigger functionality of the aid to the donor than to the recipient; the high dependence of the aid to make a project sustainable; the corruption and search of private benefits in the management of projects (Fraser e Whitfield 2009). The framing of the late NSC already contained the difficulty of communication between the North and the South, but it is expressed in such a way that the North needs to condition the aid because the southern corruption and inefficiency waste the invested resources.

These initiatives opened the path for more engaged debates to change the course of the NSC, through the High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness (HLF)²². From the HLF of 2005 is produced the Declaration of Paris, of great importance given that it displays the intentions of the involved countries to increase the efficiency of the aid via five principles: Ownership, corresponding to an active participation of the partner countries²³ (before named recipients) through strategies of national development; Alignment, motto in which countries respect and support the national plans posed by the partners, also both countries conduct a joint diagnostic and evaluation for the programs; Harmonization, guideline raised in the HLF of Roma, that pretends to

20 Besides of the SWAP, currently there are modalities of aid that support projects and programs of aid, humanitarian aid, and technical cooperation. See Gibson, Andersson, Ostrom & Shivakumar (2005, 120-127).

21 Afterwards, these features were consolidated in the Millennium Goals of the United Nations (2000-2015) that served as guidelines for the channeling of developmental aid towards the strengthening of efficient social services for vulnerable populations.

22 Monterrey (2002), Roma (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Buzan (2011). For the purposes of this text, solely are considered Paris and Accra, with their respective documents. For more information, visit the OECD website: www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/thehighlevelforaonaideeffectivenessahistory.htm.

23 Euphemism used from the Declaration of Paris to give a horizontality sense to the NSC, but the term recipients state will be kept, since partner is only taken rhetorically.

channel the actions of the engaged states with transparency and mutual trust; Managing for Results, commitment to administrate resources focusing on the desired results; and Mutual Accountability, accord subscribed to oblige the donors and their partners to assume the commitments altogether.

With the Declaration of Paris, the HLF pretended to reinforce the participation of the recipient countries in the deployment of the aid agenda, across the development plans that are constructed from their own projections. The NSC strive for the complement of domestic policies through the reinforcement of the recipient's conception of development. Nonetheless, this movement of the Declaration reminds of the PRSP that were formulated in the nineties, as they maintained the conditionality of the aid. Contrarily, the concept of Ownership backs the possibility that the recipients have greater participation over the aid they are getting. In a certain way, the document discursively treasures the conditions of the North to reach lasting objectives; it seems more like an intention of safeguarding the continuity of aid flux to make it more effective. Furthermore, the accountability of the NSC is fundamental for the civilians and the rest of the international system as it is states in the Declaration of Paris.

Based on the Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) was signed aiming at the inclusion of the local authorities and civil society of the recipient state in the positing of national development plans, regarding the endorsement of the donor states. Within this Agenda conditionality is included, and it keeps being an obstacle to manage the NSC efficiently. Hence the deepening of the relationship with the recipient is proposed. The main objective of the Agenda is to elaborate a strategy called *identification of the country* to adequate the programs to the conditions and needs of the recipient population.

As companionship, it is desired to foster the technical assistance to potentiate the local development capacities, predominantly the referents to the public management; the construction of networks of association to improve the distribution of the aid, including the private sector; the invitation to the participants of the SSC to serve themselves of the accords made in the Declaration of Paris; and the reduction of the conditionality of the aid to enhance the identification of the country. Accra does not develop higher commitments on the donor side to reduce the mighty problem of the conditionality of the aid or to change steeply the utilitarian rationality projected onto the result-based management. On the contrary, the diversification of actors is desired as the definition of the negotiation shifts in such a way that it would become more profitable for the involved parties. Again, the manner in which NSC is framed after Paris and Accra reinforces the application of conditionality

over the domestic development planning, even looking for support of the civil society and the private sector using the scaffolding of the development discourses and the economic calculations to weaken the capital of negotiation of the recipient. It is a subtle way to convince the recipient, gaining domestic legitimacy and support through the argument of the shared goals, adequate procedures, and common interests.

As Sjöstedt asserts, conditionality can be seen in an intrusive form, an obstruction to trust; it also problematizes, or blurs, the political responsibility, keeping in account the negative consequences that aid can have over the population (Sjöstedt 2013). The intention is not to claim that NSC could not become into an efficient space to solve humanitarian issues, rather that there is an inner paradox between conditionality (as secondary frame) and ownership (as a form of action). In the first instance, the conditionality of aid has a conflictive orientation and proves a partial interest by the reality of the other. In the second instance, ownership requires of a rapprochement amid donors and recipients to pose a collective situation and a joint plan of action. Sjöstedt reflects about the contradiction that rises between the principles of Result-Based Management and Alignment: he points out that the obstruction of the NSC is partially due to the lack of clarity of how the cooperation programs will be pursued. Also, the failed communication about the ambitions of the donors and the coordination of the parties reflects the impossibility to sustain the institutional frames (Schöne Rein 1994) of NSC, mainly because this modality of foreign aid keeps trying to hide the unsustainability of conditionality to foster development according to the interests and values of the recipient²⁴.

In addition, there is an evident competition among actors -and agencies of cooperation- to achieve visibility through accountability. Sjöstedt describes that these actors stimulated an orientation of *doing the things right* instead of *doing the right things*, performing visible and quantifiable actions that put in risk the integrity of the aid programs. The rhetoric of ownership hides moderately the persistent inequality of conditions across North and South in the NSC (Sjöstedt 2013). The bargaining for the definition of an agenda puts on balance ownership versus conditionality: what and in which aspects are the northern countries prone to give up the application of convenient programs according to the southern necessities and proposals, without risking their premeditated intentions²⁵. Also, which is the potential of persuasion of the

24 According to Molenaers, Dellepiane and Faust (2015), conditionality today still seeks the recipient 'good governance' expressed in two main criteria: political selectivity and lever for political change.

25 Hassleskog (2022) asserts that the ownership principle is subsumed in practice, affecting

negotiating states to include their interests and discourses in practice. In the end, the dynamics of power pushes the recipient to adapt its behavior: from the nineties to the new millennium development and conditionality frames have not changed substantially, but the forms of action shifted from sector-directed programs to structured agendas to influence recipient policy planning.

Here, the selectivity of the aid is offered along with the multiple interests and identities of the parties; also offers forms of action that are by necessity present in the negotiations of the aid. Given that the discursive and relational processes are very divergent and at the same time highly influential, the duality Conditionality/Ownership is to be emphasized in the frames analysis. The development paradigm is also present in these categories as they relate to the expectations of the cooperative activities: how the donor will benefit itself from aiding the other to grow as economy, as society, as armed forces, as culture.

Those frames constructed by van der Veen have behind a wide research basis but are also girdled to seek the purposes of the aid of European donors. Hence, the limitations of these categories are principally the exclusion of other kind of donors and of cooperation. However, these frames still give account of the worldviews and the forms of procedure while implementing any foreign aid modalities. In consequence, the coexistence of these frames strengthens the explanations of the persistence of the aid conditionality and the simultaneous deepening of the ownership, as the specific bargains of the aid. First, the conditionality is present since the initial appearance of foreign aid until today; second, the ownership, and in fact any participation of the recipient states in the definition of the cooperation is inherent of the contemporary aid. The frames by van der Veen, correspond to clear postures that reaffirm the conditionality because they express the necessity of obtaining a profit, or a minimal insurance from the NSC. Since the 1970s, a shy response arises from the South countries against the aid conditionality, but only thirty years after the NSC acquires some participation commitments. At last, the NSC countries have clearly demarcated the intention of drawing on from any type of programs to help the development of other countries or to settle the humanitarian catastrophes in the South. The conditionality frame safeguards the utility²⁶ of the NSC and allows its reproduction: for this reason, it is still operative.

the search for equality in foreign aid relations.

²⁶ Utilitarianism can be comprehended within the metaphysical *frames*, as a cognitive and normative paradigm that provides the actors with an economic rationality of cost-benefit.

South-South Cooperation (SSC)

SSC is postulated as an alternative aid platform to the NSC as it presents proposals that pretend to eliminate the conditionality of the aid, then to focus on the development objectives of the southern populations. Even if the size of the aid is not that big as the one offered by the NSC, the impacts of the SSC to impulse the autonomous development of the South, based on the successful experiences or *good practices*, are certainly representative. The identification of the South is configured from the communion of the state and the non-state actors with an effective dependence from the North. Nevertheless, the definition of South is not limited to an uneven international system, as it is constructed in practice, in the formulation of policies, in the participation of South coalitions and in the social pressure of international organizations and forums. Policies, participation, and pressure are cemented from the shared identity and experience: the colonial past, the sovereignty dilemmas and the construction of the state, the condition of economic underdevelopment and more important yet, the quest of change in the dynamics of global power (Alden, Morphet and Vieira 2010).

Altinbas argues that the South responses and poses its stand towards eight different processes: the primary reaction is to modernity and civilization as they capture societies and cultures to propagate the hegemonic development. The second is to capitalism when it engenders underdevelopment and feeds from it. The third comes from hegemonic globalization, against the global asymmetries and mutual dependencies amid center-periphery. The fourth is to neocolonialism, embodied in the expansion of free market and its ideology, and in the concentration of the global economic power. The fifth is against imperialism, political coercion, and imposition to serve a foreign political and economic project. The sixth is towards unilateralism; the seventh is to foreign intervention in the domestic matters; and the eighth corresponds to the search of political independence (Altinbas 2013). Furthermore, the SSC advocates to manage autonomous development ways, make effective redistribution of global power, compromise for a solidary multilateralism and strengthen the regional bonds, as it responds to a recent and external positioning of the South in the world and to a desire of transforming the global inequalities. The current revival of populist governments is a display of how these discourses are instrumentalized to allegedly counterbalance the traditional elites, especially in Latin America²⁷.

27 For example, “[t]he rise of nationalistic populism and “my country first” movements has strengthened anti-globalisation and pro-national interest narratives” (Roberts 2018, cited by Chaturvedu et al. 2021, 2-3).

The first antecedent in the SSC is the Conference of Bandung (1955), where African and Asian countries gathered to discuss the role of the newborn states after the decolonization. There, it was stressed that they were looking for peace given that the present values in those places are divergent from the western ones. The Conference receives a strong and immediate influence from the Treaty amid India and China in 1954, known as *Panch Shila*, in which five principles were stated²⁸: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, no aggression, no interference in the domestic matters, equality and mutual benefit, and pacific coexistence. The results of the Conference of Bandung were the search of welfare of the involved countries through cooperation in consideration of the social, economic, cultural, and racial issues remnants of colonialism. In the same way, it was pretended to expand the pacific values throughout the world (Alden, Morphet and Vieira 2010).

As a product of Bandung, the first summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was celebrated (Belgrade, 1961). The general stance of the NAM supposed a neutral position in front of the two powers of the Cold War. This new actor also advocated for the defense of disarmament of the world powers, anticolonialism, opposition to Apartheid and to the Palestinian conflict²⁹. The reclamations and the pressures exercised by the NAM had a significative impact on the United Nations about the support to the Committee on Disarmament of United States and the Soviet Union (1961), to the review of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (1960) and to the evaluation, via a special commission, of the racist policies in South Africa (Alden, Morphet and Vieira 2010). By 1962, the Conference of Cairo occurred to discuss about the problems of the economic development. This one was centered on the cooperation among the developing countries, regional economic groups, economic aid, and technical assistance. In 1964, the G-77 was born as a scenario where the need of shifting the international economic regime was discussed and in which, years later, along with the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), will appear the proposal of a New International Economic Order (Alden, Morphet and Vieira 2010). The *scaffolding* of this phase of SSC could be horizontality as it is a reaction to global domination brought by the bipolar world order. As secondary frames, it could be argued that neutrality, autonomy, and tolerance (or coexistence). The main objective of this framework is to get

28 These principles are recognized, still in the actuality, as the Principles of Pacific Coexistence under which China performs its foreign policy.

29 In resume, “that aspired to establish a de-westernized, alternative international order” (Sosale and Rosas-Moreno 2016, 756).

independence from external powers³⁰.

The consolidation of the SSC will happen nearly ten years after. Between the decades of the fifties and sixties, the most aligid topics, as decolonization or war, gave place to coalitions of underdeveloped countries, organized to inquire about their position and the possibility of action in the international system. However, it is not until 1974, with the pressure of the NAM, that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) builds the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation and in 1978, was celebrated in Buenos Aires a conference about Technical Cooperation between Underdeveloped Countries. The outcome of this meeting is the landmark of SSC, the route to foster and conduct technical cooperation among developing countries, or as it is commonly known: the Buenos Aires Action Plan. This plan contains within its objectives: strengthen the capabilities of the recipients for development; exchange experiences and develop joint positions; identify problems and solutions as a team effort; amplify and improve the foreign aid; increase the access to technological possibilities for the development of capabilities; participate more actively in the commercial dynamics between developing countries (Tassara 2013). Besides it included the principles of “strict observance of national sovereignty, economic Independence, equal rights and non-interference in domestic affairs of nations, irrespective of their size, level of development and social and economic systems” (United Nations 1978).

Today, even though for the NSC the Declaration of Paris and the Accra Action Plan were remarkable, for the SSC the impact was not very representative. Although many South countries received the principles of Paris, in the procedures of the SSC did not have a greater effect. In fact, the repercussions of the *emergent donors*³¹ in foreign aid in general have grown in such an important way that through Accra, they were wished to join the Action Plan and to ratify the Declaration; specially, the North demanded accountability to prove the efficiency of the SSC. In 2009, the Task Team on South-South Cooperation (TT-SSC) was created to articulate both modalities of foreign aid. In the same way, the Triangular Cooperation has been propelled vigorously to include the *emergent donors* into the traditional system of aid. However, the SSC is maintained practically immutable regarding the Declaration of Paris and the Triangular Cooperation (Ayllón 2013). Probably, the countries with most compatible frames with the NSC are approaching the traditional cooperation, but some countries that resist to the hegemonic model would

30 See Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Tarifa (2018) to track how the responsive emergence of the global South requires of solidarity to resist the northern domination of cooperative relations.

31 This category utilized by the ODA puts to the test the similarity among the South countries, and it is threatening, at least discursively, to the horizontality of the SSC.

cede less easily because they possess some kind of power to influence the aid system (Ayllón 2013).

The SSC, then, underlines that the positions of the South that are engaged in horizontality and in respect of their autonomy and difference. Moreover, being the Technical Cooperation the maneuver par excellence of the SSC, sharing good practices allows the circulated knowledge to be used freely by the recipient. This platform brings friendly relationships amid partners and projections of joint ventures to favor development projects of their own. Ayllón affirms that SSC has three dimensions: political, that configures forms of making alternatives for the South countries; technical, contemplating the *know-how* as guidelines for the promotion of development of autonomous capabilities, that amplifies the relationship between developing countries towards some source of cooperation at a commercial and financial level, at the same time boosting regional integration³² (Ayllón 2013). In frames terms, the principles of the Buenos Aires Action Plan are referents to the specific principles, and Technical Cooperation could be seen as forms of action that enable to act differently from the NSC. Furthermore, in relation to the previous framing of the SSC, the current one is more related to the development paradigm, especially when the intentionality of catching-up with the North countries is made evident.

Other aspect of the SSC is the increasing relevance of the Middle-Income countries³³ and the emerging donors in dictating the course of the aid. While Triangular Cooperation had an obvious influence on the recent operation of SSC, the leading economies of the South are shifting the initial horizontality towards a geopolitical gambling. For example, in the 1980s, the 80% of the production of the NAM countries were concentrated amid Brazil, South Korea, India, Mexico, Argentina and Venezuela (Huitrón 2019): “SSC, as cooperation between developing countries lead by the Middle-Income countries, started to take two emerging pathways: one is subaltern and other is autonomous”³⁴ (Domínguez 2020, 47).

In some sense, the increasing influence of emerging donors and Middle-Income countries represents an anti-SSC, putting in danger its credibility, as

32 See Ojeda (2010) to review the relationship amid the SSC and the regionalization process in Latin America.

33 Domínguez (2020) clarifies through the concept of Middle-Income trap that the increasing inequality obscures the positive growth of developing countries, as the concentration of capital obstructs the development of the most vulnerable populations.

34 No original: “SSC, as cooperation between developing countries lead by the Middle-Income countries, started to take two emerging pathways: one is subaltern and other is autonomous” (Domínguez 2020, 47).

in a rhetoric relation (Huitrón 2019, 195-196). The Triangular Cooperation is perceived as a threat by these emerging actors (especially China, India, Brazil, Cuba, and Venezuela), eluding the concepts and controls imposed by DAC (Domínguez 2020). In some sense, the insufficiency of technical assistance, which promoted more horizontality, was inevitably replaced by reimbursable financial grants that bounded SSC to a political/economic condition. After the debt crisis in the 1980s, the CSS shifted the *self-reliance* principles for the neoliberal reforms and procedures: this meant that the concessional credit became the main cooperative channel (Domínguez 2015a). These are not mere donations but conditioned lending from Development Banks, that tied down the autonomous management of natural resources and exports.

South's heterogeneity is expressed in the SSC between emerging donors (e.g., BRICS) and poorer states of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Even if SSC maintains the Bandung principles, nowadays it is seen as a mechanism to gain power or leverage within the international system, pro or against it (Huitrón 2019). The clearest case of this balance of power challenge is China, not only because it has become one of the world leading economies, but also its predominance in the SSC is low-profile pragmatism in its foreign policy: willing to cooperate even with ideological disagreements, accelerated and long-term reformism, and 'seek truth from facts'³⁵ (Yuan 2020).). For example, in 2017 the New Silk Road was established as a financial and commercial mechanism between China and nineteen Latin American countries, and in 2018 an agreement was signed between the China Development Bank and Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Panamá and Mexico (Domínguez 2021). Without much detail, this geopolitical approach intensified the tensions with the Trump government as Chinese foreign policy (and aid) is strongly conditioning Latin America to a new set of rules.

Unlike the strong association of the NSC to *soft-power* and unequal distribution of power and wealth, within the narratives of the SSC are found solidary bridges of communication to widen the search of possibilities of development; a sort of companionship between the South countries (Hirst 2010). This does not mean that South countries are disinterested in acquiring power; on the contrary, having a powerful state as an ally is desirable due to the development and the utilitarian (self-interested) scaffolding.

The reception of the idea of the South in different countries varies according to their specific conditions of underdevelopment, dominant ideologies, political cultures, and relationships with other countries. This implies a possibility of alignment with one political project or another, either

³⁵ A traditional Chinese attitude derived from the Book of Han that comprises a result-based learning. The allocation of aid resources is strategically done according to viability and efficiency.

liberal or socialist, but in the SSC these differences are exploited to support the underdeveloped South. This does not mean that South countries are philanthropists *per se*, as they can be found within the frames posed by van der Veen, the functioning of the SSC does suppose a more compromised attitude with the human development than the NSC³⁶, or more precisely a quest for power that is open to explore different pathways for development. These states pretend too to promote regional integration on commercial, infrastructure or communication terms; they look for self-affirmation of the international role that they desire to exhibit; they aspire to protect their sovereignty and avoid the alignment with the *West*; they find greater influence on international organizations; and they self-legitimize as part of the South (Robledo 2015). One of the cores of this discussion is that efficiency and innovation of the SSC happens due to the removal of the conditionality and the invigoration of friendly relations amid the South countries, as they use the platform for self-benefit.

The example of Venezuela after the presidency of Hugo Chávez is the convergence of the high prices of oil and the antiimperialist project that led the government to consolidate a counterhegemonic uprising (Giacalone 2013). In this quest, Chávez looked for regional allies to strengthen the Bolivarian ideology and political agenda; one channel found was the regional integration driven by the SSC that was financed by oil profits. In sum, the economic grown experienced by Venezuela allowed the government to design a scheme of oil diplomacy in the form of energy cooperation (Ramos, Santiago y Vega, forthcoming). Chávez government's key strategy was a *soft balancing* utilizing the oil leverage to connect the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA), Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to BRICS (Domínguez 2015). From the arrival of Chávez to power in 1999, Petroleum of Venezuela (PDVSA), Venezuelan Economic and Social Development Bank (BANDES), Bank of Foreign Trade (BANCOEX) and Bank of ALBA have granted multiple non-reimbursable and concessional credits to its Latin American partners. However, this strategy of CSS still conditions the recipients to follow the ideological guidelines of the Bolivarian project and favors the internationalization of PDVSA, with the agreement of PETROCARIBE (Domínguez 2015).

South countries address their national interests, revisioning their history, values, and interactions towards constructed goals in their domestic processes and international relations. Thus, they bargain their position in front of the SSC (Mawdsley 2012). As Bandung principles are overall

36 Ver Quadir (2013) como exemplo das projeções dos interesses da China, Índia, Brasil e África do Sul ao utilizar a CSS.

nationalist, consequently the construction of the SSC is coherent as the China and Venezuela examples display. Their SSC shows a genuine effort to aid poor countries, but still following their national interests. Furthermore, the financial cooperation reflects their ambition to influence the international politics modelling others' behavior towards their antiimperialist or balancing aim.

Conclusion

Framing serves as an exercise to display the underlining structures of the debates around applied knowledge that sociology, psychology and political science have brought to light. International cooperation has been an object of study for international politics scholars as it remains a mystery to the advocates of *Realpolitik* because it is counterintuitive for the logic of the self-interested/egoist state. Although, the construction of shared narratives and normativity has led the relations between states to an exploration of mutual interests and goals. Framing foreign aid unearths that cooperation is both a conservation of self-interest and a recognition of own limitations to develop in isolation. In consequence, states seek through cooperation the increasement of economic and political profit even in the most horizontal relationships possible. At the same time, conditionality does not refute the cooperative and humanitarian features of foreign aid.

Framing has revealed the symbolic nature of the construction of the cognitive and normative structures and is highly functional for the organization of experience and actions in a coherent way. This comprehension of social structures is necessarily reflected in the interactions, according to its conditions of possibility. Framing conveys the importance of values and principles in the sense that communication appears as possible, not only by the convergence of the social construction of meanings, but by the negotiation (authorization) whereby conflict appears. Accordingly, concrete framing is the resolution of historical conflicts that can be placed in action through the self-consciousness of beliefs and culture.

Nowadays, the pursuit for development is multidimensional in accordance with the domestic needs of the states and furthermore, their international position, which is relative to the other actors. Development can be found across the discursive spectrum of foreign aid not only because it corresponds to the capitalist scaffolding of this international cooperation, also it relates to the utilitarian mindset that actualizes in the value of cooperative relations among states.

One of the main issues for NSC is conditionality as it shortens the trust amid donor and recipient because it limits the aid endeavors to cost-benefit analysis and it keeps promoting a paternalist attitude in relation to development. In this sense, development is directly related to the conditionality frame of the NSC as the guarantees for the economic investment are assured in the recipient's behavior. Thus, efficiency is closely linked to the conditionality of aid and to the power relations of the modern state, and its symbolic vessel is the idea that capital can be employed and enjoyed by everyone. For example, the principle of Ownership reflects the contradiction for the South that is need and growth.

For instance, the SSC tries to resolve the capitalist contradiction of conditionality through horizontality. In practice, it has a reactive nature and does not have enough material capabilities to support further developments. The primary framing of SSC turns into the idealist projection of the unconditioned interstate relationship that is horizontality, expressed in autonomy, non-intervention, and distribution of power. In other words, South states look for the development and the gaining of sovereignty as the North countries do. The inner contradiction for the SSC is that the horizontality frame, as political and economic independence, cannot overcome the development paradigm.

Ultimately, the NSC signaled a clear intention to exploit economically and politically the humanitarian and development aid, so cooperation expresses itself as *soft power* (Nye 2004) to induce the recipient states into the reforms that favor the international trade and diplomacy. Simultaneously, the SSC subscribed its discourses around the construction of horizontal relations that mutually support the developmental goals of the parties. Hence, in practice the strength of the conditionality frame keeps shaping the aid, even at its most altruist and horizontal pretention. In conclusion, it is necessary to avoid the idyllic and romanticized views around the SSC as conditionality remains as its *scaffolding* because its historical power relations determine the construction of international cooperation and condition the production of discourses and practices related to the development of humanity.

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of foreign aid within International Relations is found intrinsically related to the concept of development. However, this one has transformed over the last decades but what remains intact is its conditionality. It is convenient to put foreign aid under an uncanny descriptive scope and content analysis as the development discourses are still changing, but the real underlying motivations of the states continue to be the same. From a realist constructivist approach, this text aims to study critically the forms that foreign aid has taken, especially through two main modalities: North-South Cooperation and South-South Cooperation, though this time framing is employed to study the construction of interests in foreign aid. The text is structured in the following way: framing is located as a constructivist theory in psychology and sociology that gives a logical order to the interpretation of political realities; then, the history of both foreign aid modalities allow to examine the conditions of conditionality; finally, a conclusion is drawn from the framing assessment in relation to the power relations and the construction of global development discourses. This article proposes that both North-South Cooperation and South-South Cooperation still displays the self-interested drive of the modern state.

KEYWORDS

Framing analysis; foreign aid; international cooperation; development; conditionality.

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ARTICLES

WHEN THE EARTH IS NOT ENOUGH: THE ROLE OF OUTER SPACE IN CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY

Paulo Afonso Brardo Duarte¹

Neslihan Topcu²

Daniel Santos³

Introduction:

Space has traditionally been a field of curiosity, as well as the last frontier which humanity has tried to overcome. This has been a common concern for both State and non-State actors, as attempts from Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Richard Branson can attest. When it comes to China's Space incursions, many studies have given them close scrutiny, namely in comparing China to other Space powers (Reddy 2017; Lele 2018; Davis 2019; Khan and Khan 2019; Rose 2020). Other works have analysed China's Space policies (Li et al. 2017; Khan 2020) and Space capabilities (Cliff et al. 2011; Stokes 2020). These studies have placed China's policies within the framework of Space purposes (Drozhashchikh 2018; Goswami 2018; Hilbourne 2020; Julianne 2021). At this point, the security dimensions (Bommakanti 2018; Lambakis 2019; Liu et al. 2019; Yuan and Peeters 2019; Cheng 2020) of China's Space goals are among the most prominent ones. When looking at Space, competition is most evident in its militarisation through the dual-use architecture of the assets in orbit, or the possible weaponisation of said assets into passive or active systems (Sariak 2017; Davis 2019; Khan and Imam 2019). Finally, while other studies have stressed the connection between the Belt and Road Initiative and

¹ Integrated member of CEAD and collaborating member of CICIP, Universidade do Minho. Braga, Portugal. E-mail: pauloduarte@eeg.uminho.pt. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1675-2840>

² Selçuk University. Konya, Türkiye. E-mail: neslihan.topcu@outlook.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0822-0062>

³ Universidade do Minho. Braga, Portugal. E-mail: dnrds@gmail.com. ORCID: not found

China's Space interests (Assef 2018; Lele and Roy 2019; Nie 2019), current literature has not sufficiently addressed how Outer Space could be viewed in a realist approach as a way for China to achieve more power within the International System itself. Therefore, based on such a gap, this article aims to assess China's Space achievements in light of the realist school, which argues that States compete in order to achieve greater power and influence in an anarchic system. We believe that a realist approach to assess China's Space achievements makes sense especially if we take into account the Chinese *modus operandi* when it comes to certain borders and geographies of national interest, such as the South China Sea. In practice, Outer Space provides us with a logic of continuity of a similar assertive and pragmatic stance that already characterises China's revisionist posture both in the South China Sea and in the Senkaku Islands (in East China Sea). We, therefore, argue that such a revisionist and a realist stance fit well into China's gradual move towards a flexible perception of borders, despite being a Westphalian State. In fact, instead of the Western concept of the nation state with fixed borders, China's view of borders points to an expansionist concept of sovereignty according to which territorial boundaries expand or contract "in accordance with a nation's power projection" (Ikegami 2011, 93).

We will start off with E. H. Carr's recognition of the cause-and-effect mechanism behind historical progress and the fact that practice ends up creating theory, and not the other way around (Carr 2016), both of these notions make it relevant to explore the historical path that China has taken in Space. In addition, Morgenthau's theoretical depiction seems to better codify some of the reasons behind China's inclusion of Outer Space in its Grand Strategy thinking. Not only are States locked to the natural human instinct of the *animus dominandi* and its unending desire for power (Morgenthau 1946), so is China as it asserts its Great Power identity. Through such a path this State will need to find a balance between its military and non-military power, as direct confrontation between nuclear States is not feasible (Morgenthau 1964) and would certainly derail its growth outcomes. Keeping with this logic, the more China asserts itself abroad thereby struggling for power, the more it will strive to establish a balance of power with its direct competitors to secure some stability to its rise, and thus stave off conflict (Morgenthau 1958). Outer Space is not only a newer geography for this State, when compared to the United States and Russia, but also another realm where parity may further grant such balancing of power. After detailing the conceptual lenses underpinning this article, a definition of Grand Strategy is warranted. For this, Brands' definition entails that "grand strategy is the intellectual architecture that lends structure to foreign policy; it is the logic that helps

states navigate a complex and dangerous world” (2014, 43). Additionally, Gaddis’ (2017) definition reminds us of the need to match aspirations with real world capabilities if one wants its grand strategic thinking to be plausible and practical versus an aimless pursuit of unattainable political objectives. Thus, when we combine both authors’ conceptual framing of Grand Strategy, we get that its effective application provides a supportive structure that better promotes the successful achievement of foreign policy goals. This allows us to differentiate between mere political narrative and effective political strategy.

This being said, how do realism and Grand Strategy intersect in our analysis? The expansionist understanding of borders as being flexible enough to accommodate the interests of States is rooted on a realist approach of International Relations, which views the exercise of power as a legitimate means to achieve its goals. That cannot be separated from a State’s Grand Strategy which lies precisely on the combination of instruments that a country estimates to best enable it to reach its goals. Another interesting complementarity between Realism and Grand Strategy points to the various fields of operation – land, sea, air, digital corridors, and even Outer Space – which provide a holistic and hybrid essence to the set of methods pursued by a State to pursue interests that are vital to him. What is more, in Realism as well as in a Grand Strategy there is no real distinction between domestic and abroad, between soft means or hard power, as at the end of the day what counts is to survive, compete and fulfil one’s objectives. Once presented the interplay between Grand Strategy and Realism, we aim at answering the following research question: What role does Space exploration play in China’s Grand Strategy and what does it represent for China’s competitive outcomes in terms of military power and even as a source of political prestige and narrative? The time frame spans from 2003 (when China completed its first crewed Space flight) until November 2022 (when China’s Tiangong Space Station assumed its L shaped form).

This article begins by providing the background needed to understand the essence and contours of China’s Grand Strategy. It then presents China’s main breakthroughs in Space development and exploration. Finally, the article analyses how China has been investing in its Space policy to catch up with its main international competitors and, in some cases, even surpass them. The conclusion summarises the main findings.

Setting the Stage: A Roadmap to China’s Grand Strategy

A Grand Strategy is a vital element as it provides a roadmap for States

to shape both their domestic and foreign policy. A Grand Strategy can be defined in terms of: the goals, which have to be in line with national interests; the means, which is to say, the instruments a country can actually use to achieve its goals; and the policies, here meaning how a country mobilises its resources towards a specific end (Rossotti 2018). If such requirements are met, it is possible to formulate a Grand Strategy. The latter comprises both national interests and all the strategic reasoning that a State needs to implement to achieve these interests (Zhang 2012).

To understand the Chinese Grand Strategy, it is necessary to first analyse Chinese national interests and then the strategic options that originated from them. Chinese national interests are based around the central idea of making China a global hegemon by 2049 (Bodansky 2018). At this point, Medeiros (2009, 13) lists China's three long-term and enduring diplomatic priorities as follows: sovereignty and territorial integrity, economic development, and international respect, and, finally, status. China has been promoting regional peace and stability, neighbourhood diplomacy, economic support to foreign States, commercial relations, culture, and soft power, all as steps to fulfil its national interests (Rossotti 2018; Zhang 2018; Danner 2019). All these strategic steps are in line with the core concepts of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

As a matter of fact, China's BRI encompasses ambitious plans to broaden and deepen China's ties to Europe, the Persian Gulf, Africa, Asia and more recently Latin America⁴, by developing multidimensional transport corridors, interconnected logistics and communications networks, and closer interstate policy coordination across Eurasia (Leverett and Bingbing 2017; Lu et al. 2018). In line with this reasoning, the BRI has come to the fore with land, sea, and digital corridors (Lele and Roy 2019; Dutta 2020), and more recently Space exploration. Thus, a brief review of what the BRI aims to achieve through these routes can be useful to understand the Chinese Grand Strategy.

The BRI encompasses the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. In this context, the BRI pursues five goals: policy coordination, cultural exchange, financial integration, trade and investment, and logistical connectivity (Acclime China 2017). As can be understood

4 Although later than in the case of Africa, in September 2017, Foreign Minister Wang Yi declared that "Latin America [was] the natural extension of the twenty-first-Century Maritime Silk Road, and the Belt and Road Initiative has become a new opportunity for current China-Latin America cooperation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC 2017). Three months later, China managed to extend the BRI to Latin America, through the inclusion of Panama in the list of countries embraced by its Initiative (Ferreira-Pereira and Duarte 2023).

from the BRI's aims, China also created a communication infrastructure. The rise of a few Chinese internet giants in both the domestic and global markets has added impetus to the policy discourses on building the 'Digital Silk Road' (Lele and Roy 2019, 15). The speech that Xi Jinping made at the National Congress of the China Association for Science and Technology, in 2016, supports the Digital Silk Road. He claimed that China should establish itself as a leading innovator worldwide by 2030 (Bianji 2016). Undoubtedly, China's development in the digital sector generates positive externalities that affect its Outer Space development. In the White Paper published by the Chinese government in 2016, China states its goals towards Space under the Belt and Road Space Information Corridor (SIC). The latter includes Earth observation, communications and broadcasting, navigation and positioning, and other types of satellite-related development; ground and application systems construction; and application product development (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2016). This third component of the BRI project follows on from the other two implementations and opens wide-ranging plans of cooperation to further development with other States (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission 2019, 368) while gathering international prestige. Nevertheless, this also positions China as an international provider of Space access. Such a positioning does appear to have an Astropolitical nature turning China into a sort of gatekeeper. As Dolman (1999) recognised that Space exploration would probably entail some sort of international cooperation, so may China take advantage of its Space prowess to accumulate international Space partners dependent on its launch capabilities.

China's Grand Strategy is like the U.S. Grand Strategy in some respects. First, we can say that China's 21st Maritime Silk Road is inspired by Alfred Mahan's maritime doctrine. Secondly, China, which is improving its digital services and goods, wants to upgrade its soft power effectiveness as first defined by Joseph Nye (1990). What we get when we look at the BRI's Spatial Information Corridor is a distinct notion that China wants to integrate Space as a core strategic interest. Or, as Trefor Moss (2016) - one of the Wall Street Journal writers - described it, China's Space Initiative is the "digital glue" that will hold the BRI together. We can go one step further and argue that China's Space strategy is central to the implementation of its Grand Strategy.

The Ultimate Frontier: The Contours of China's Space Achievements

Space has sparked States' interests since the Cold War. Thanks to the development of the required technology, the way has been cleared to explore Space and thus create Space programs. Many States, especially the US, Russia, and China, have competed for a place in this realm. When we look at the reasons for such a Space race, we arrive at the conclusion that States see Space as another realm in which to compete. Problems such as global warming, the possibility of a big meteor hitting the planet, the decrease in the availability of water resources, and the gradual rise in the world population – and consequently the increased pressure on scarce resources – are signs that life on Earth is affected by competitive demand. Therefore, as time passes resources tend to dwindle and international stability has somewhat been put in jeopardy, States have looked beyond Earth to secure the means to keep pursuing their interests.

If information is the basis of 21st century power, Space is the domain through which information will flow (Davis 2017). In November 2009, the Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, General Xu Qiliang, said that “Space is the new commanding height for international strategic competition...[and that] means having control of the ground, oceans, and the electromagnetic Space, which also means having the strategic initiative in one's hands” (in Cordesman 2016, 4).

China, one of the countries directly competing in Space, pursues several goals in this new frontier. As conditions in Space are considerably different from life on Earth, China, a somewhat recent newcomer to this realm, endeavours to expand its ground-based initiatives and strategic thinking towards Outer Space. Thus, this section highlights the steps that China has been taking in order to take advantage of Space.

China came up with the idea of the Space Information Corridor (SIC), born as an extension of the BRI. The BRI uses communication, remote sensing and navigation satellites as the main body of its SIC. This coupled with Space-based information resources and ground-based information sharing networks are then combined to achieve co-construction and sharing of Space information tailored to specific regions (Jiang 2019). But China's interest in Space began way back, when Mao declared (on May 17, 1958) that China should have its own satellite (Lele and Roy 2019). Dongfanghong 1 was the result of this will and was the first Space satellite successfully launched by China (South China Morning Post 2020). Following this success, a manned Spaceflight was carried out with the Shenzhou 1 test capsule in 1999 (Space News 2004). Later, in 2003 China's first crewed mission achieved orbit, while China's first lunar orbiter, Chang'e-1, reached the moon in 2007 and China's first Space station, Tiangong-1, established its orbit around the planet

in 2011 (Howell 2018; Ouyang 2010). In 2013, China deployed its first lunar rover with the Chang'e-3 mission (Jones 2020a). The Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) launched the Dark Matter Particle Explorer (DAMPE), which is a powerful Space telescope for high energy gamma-ray, electron and cosmic rays' detection, in 2015 (DPNC, n.d.). In 2016, Tiangong-2, a Space lab developed by the China National Space Administration (CNSA), was launched into Space. Additionally, in 2019, Chang'e-4, which is a follow-up to Chang'e-3, was sent to the Moon to explore its far side and made history by taking the first photos on this unknown region (Jones 2020b). More recently, China keeps accumulating milestones. The Chang'e-5 lunar probe successfully brought back 1,731g of lunar sample material (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2022) while the Tianwen-1 mission to Mars has successfully landed its rover on the surface of the red planet and has started transmitting photographs in 2021 (China National Space Administration 2021). Finally, China's Tiangong Space Station has completed the final assembly of its core modules with the arrival of the Mengtian module that joined the already orbiting Wentian and Tianhe modules (Beil 2022). What is apparent is that even though China was a late comer to Space, it has quickly caught up and has even been capable of feats of innovation when compared to its direct and more established Space competitors.

By implementing a Space Information Corridor in 2016, China has taken its Space strategy, capable of providing significant strategic profits (USCC 2019), to the next level. Such profits can be extracted by having satellites in Space for mobile communications and exploration of natural resources through remote sensing (Acuthan 2006). China is trying to develop its Space market by stimulating growth in its high technology markets, increasing the development of "spin-off" civilian technologies, expanding the use of satellite application technologies and by exporting satellites and commercial launch services (Pollpeter et al. 2015). China's production of lower cost satellites and Spacecraft is a pragmatic choice when compared to other market actors. Its low costs of production can be explained by its access to cheap labour and materials (Drozhashchikh 2018). This in turn allows it to tap into lower income countries and also aggregate market demand, thus capturing a significant slice of said market and increasing its competitive advantages vis-à-vis its main competitors. China's BeiDou navigation system (BDS) covers 30 countries, including BRI partners. Pakistan, Laos, Indonesia, Arab and African countries are some of those who have opted to use China's GSP. The BeiDou system has the potential to play a critical role in the communication infrastructure of BRI countries. The BeiDou satellite constellation sits at the core of what the Space Silk Road is and, once fully deployed, it will arguably

achieve many strategic milestones, such as reducing China's dependence on the other Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) and substantially increasing China's influence across the nations that are signing up for this project (Assef 2018). Not only is the BDS important for China to become independent from the US based GPS, but also to guarantee higher shares in the growing GNSS market (Ibold 2018).

China currently uses Space technologies for meteorology, communication, and natural resources management. Nevertheless, Asian countries are gradually beginning to realise the benefits of Space technologies in different living areas, from medicine to entertainment. China, Asia's rising star in Space, is in the midst of developing initiatives related to Space tourism. With 2023 set as the deadline for its first test flights, China is, yet again, catching-up with its direct international competitors (Reuters 2022). In the past, there was no progress to be had in this area, as China had not taken any step towards this goal and, in addition, there were no private sectors such as SpaceX, Blue Origin, and Virgin Galactic in China (Lele 2018). But now, with the establishment of a cooperation agreement between CAS Space and a subsidiary of China Tourism Group, a State-owned company, (Reuters 2022) it is safe to say that Space tourism is firmly set in China's development radar. China's goals for its Space-based economy are to place satellites, develop information technology, discover, and explore the Moon and later Mars, and to conduct research in the fields of energy and habitat creation in these new geographies.

The political sphere is also relevant within China's Space derived development targets. This field may stand to benefit from Space's merits both at the national and international levels. Nationally, a modern and expansive civil Space program remains a totem of international prestige. Furthermore, the prestige of the State cannot be separated from the prestige of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). With this in mind, when we look at the report resulting from the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China we can notice that Space developments allow China to perceive itself as part of a select group of innovative countries (Jinping 2022). Additionally, the Party views a successful Space program as another way through which it can emphasise its legitimacy not only abroad, but also domestically (Cordesman 2016). This not only displays its prowess, but also allows China to compete with other international Space powers despite the late blooming of its programme. The CCP's achievements in Space harness a nationalistic and patriotic attitude from the Chinese people, while it ensures their continued trust and support for the Party. In fact, Lewis (2014) argues that the major motivation underlying China's Space program is political, in that it aims to consolidate the legitimacy

of the CCP. In practice, Lewis defends that development achieved in Space is instrumentalised by the Party to show to the Chinese people the progress that their leaders have reached as to improve China's global position. In this sense, Lewis (2014, 7) estimates that "President Xi's attention to and support of the Chinese manned program is unlikely to decrease because it forms a useful counternarrative for the image of the party, which has been harmed by widespread corruption and public failures in environment, urban planning, and transportation". Having lost, in large part, its mobilizing function, the Party merely assumes, today, a role, essentially, of regulation and distribution, and, on the other hand, its nature became more State-centred than just partisan (Duarte 2017). Another factor that undermines the CCP's credibility regards the sociological shift coming from its inside. Indeed, if once the party was seen as the vanguard of the peasants and the proletariat, currently it has become a heterogeneous and strangely ambiguous set to, from now on, be able to incorporate, also, the ruling classes, often seen as parasitological and outrageously corrupted groups. In order to overcome the roadblocks that threaten the future of the Party, some strategies have been adopted. They aim to overcome the domestic discontent, through an 'ideological' job, by catechizing the spirit. In other words, instead of concentrating the motives of discord in the Party, they are rather replaced by 'noble' ideals, such as the Space race, Taiwan, and the Olympic Games (Duarte 2017).

Abroad, Beijing sees its Space program as key to raising its leadership profile in terms of international Space collaboration through the BRI and establishing a dominant position in the commercial Space industry (USCC 2019). Under the BRI, China cooperates with over 70 countries and institutions. This collaboration has also been pursued in Space, namely with the Space Information Corridor which encompasses fields such as communication, information, assistance, and navigation. Through the Space Silk Road, China strengthens its relations with other States whilst using a soft power based on cooperation and interdependence.

Military innovation is also among China's development targets in Space. From the mid-90s on, Chinese military experts and authorities had already drawn the conclusion that China fully understood and appreciated the wide array of military advantages offered by Space (Imran 2010). China relies heavily on Space-based capabilities for both its nuclear and conventional missile targeting systems, which are viewed as instruments of compliance with its core national interests (Cordesman 2016). China's military Space component is controlled by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA continues to play a central role in China's overall Space activities, managing both manned civilian and military efforts, while the CNSA handles unmanned scientific

projects and international collaboration (Logan 2008). In 2020, there were 2,666 known satellites in orbit, 13.6 percent of which (363 satellites) belonged to China (China Power 2020). This enables China to employ a mix of targeted military reconnaissance, navigation, and communication satellites (Pilsbury 2007). These satellites save lives, strengthen the economy, and provide invaluable support for the military and intelligence services (Black and Butt 2010). Moreover, they provide location and timing data to diverse military operators and enable precise weapon systems' deployment, targeting and terminal guidance (Logan 2008). China utilises its Space assets for military purposes as force multipliers, which also enables further modernisation of its military forces and capabilities, one of China's central hallmarks within its national rejuvenation goals (China Power 2021). So much so that the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China directly mentions the will to

establish a strong system of strategic deterrence, increase the proportion of new-domain forces with new combat capabilities, speed up the development of unmanned, intelligent combat capabilities, and promote coordinated development and application of the network information system... improve the command system for joint operations and enhance our systems and capacity for reconnaissance and early warning, joint strikes, battlefield support, and integrated logistics support (Xi Jinping 2022, 48).

Although Space is not directly mentioned as a vital aspect to conduct all of these developments, none of them can be effectively implemented without a strong Space presence and capabilities. Logically, it is undeniable that the State's survival, and that of the Party, as well as the capacity of continued pursuit of national interests, feature as the main drivers behind the military component of China's Space development.

At this point, it is worth mentioning the Fengyun satellite series and China's anti-satellite program (ASAT). The Fengyun satellites are equipped with high-precision sensors, enabling missile targeting capabilities at sea and underground sites. In addition, the series also carries sensors for gathering meteorological data in any weather conditions (Drozhashchikh 2018). Aside from that, this series provides a basic military mapping and reconnaissance capability (Hunter 2019). Therefore, China considers that it has proven military capabilities in Space through the Fengyun systems. Beijing has invested significantly in expanding its military capacity, including its ASAT capabilities, to provide it with an active defence strategy. US (and its allies) dependency on the Space domain for maintaining a military-technological

edge over their adversaries is now also being explored by their biggest competitor, China, in a manner that threatens to shift the militarisation of Space into a weaponization of Space (Davis 2019). Having said that, the Chinese government is developing its military capabilities in Space mainly for deterrence. In other words, the idea of a brief war in Space may be viewed as a way of preventing a larger, more violent, and bloody contest with the US on Earth (Lambakis 2019), bringing Outer Space into the military dimension of the Chinese Grand Strategic thinking.

China attaches great importance to its energy sources in order to sustain its economic growth, thereby maintaining the status of world leader in terms of industrial production (West and Lasang 2018). China carries out specific activities for energy development in Space as a complementary strategy that suits the competitive tendencies that States display in the international environment. Given the instabilities created by the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the energy sector, such a strategy seems to be not only relevant, but also logical and central to ensure that China's international power projection does not suffer due to a loss of its industrial production capability, through which it has built its economic might. Additionally, Space serves as an important asset for the energy sector by providing predictive information on renewable energy sources through weather and output prediction. NASA's Prediction of Worldwide Energy Resources (POWER) project is centred around this concept of gathering data from Space to use in the renewable energy sector (NASA Prediction of Worldwide Energy Resources 2021). Moreover, there are intergovernmental organisations dedicated to the renewable energy market and its transition that use Space collected data to spur this movement. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) is such an example, that in 2020 published a Brief around the concept of "Advanced Forecasting of Variable Renewable Power Generation" (IRENA 2020). On its side, China has kept nurturing its civil and commercial satellite sensing capabilities. Aside from the previously mentioned Fengyun meteorological satellite series, this State has further expanded its Space infrastructure and assets in this area with the additions of the Haiyang, Huanjing, Ziyuan/CBERS Earth Resources, Gaofen, Beijing and Jilin-1 series of satellites (Smid 2022). The Jinlin-1 series are by far the backbone of the biggest commercial constellation of Chinese remote sensing satellites (Jones 2022).

More recently, China has launched a Yaogan-34 series, marking the 100th satellite developed by the 509th Research Institute of the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology, that can provide crop yield estimation and disaster prevention services (Anqi 2022). In turn, this type of sensing technology is key to boost efficiency, facilitate energy transition strategies and

support policymakers while they develop, implement, and monitor various energy related policy areas (Kerstens et al. 2019). Illustrative in this regard, Space is energy dense. The Moon is rich in aluminium, titanium, iron, calcium, and silicon, while iron is almost pure on the Moon (Dolman 1999). Moreover, Space has a great potential to contribute to industrial capabilities by hosting raw materials such as Helium-3 (He-3) that are not easily found on Earth. Therefore, as Kopanja argues "Space is becoming a catalyst for the rise of the economy with its wide range of raw material possibilities" (2017, 7). China's energy program encompasses a long-term economic Space resource strategy (USCC 2019). In 2019 China moved forward with the creation of a deep Space exploration mission revolving around near-Earth asteroid 2016HO₃ and main-belt comet 133P (China National Space Administration 2019). Recently this mission has had some developments by including Russia as a partner providing payload instruments and also establishing 2024 as the launch date (Jones 2021). While at the moment asteroid mining is not an attainable prospect for the Chinese Space strategy, it shows how China is laying the groundwork for such a possibility in the long-term. Sensing and probing missions, like the aforementioned one, are the first step - in a long journey - in cataloguing the available mineral resources in our solar system that may one day be available for extraction as technological innovation allows its reasonable implementation.

Chinese Space studies focus mainly on the southern craters of the Moon, cast in permanent shadow, that are home to plentiful deposits of water ice, which could be used to sustain humans and also as a transitional energy source. The water reserves of Earth's natural satellite can be broken down into oxygen and hydrogen, which can provide a simple, powerful and clean fuel (Kluger 2019). Furthermore, China has stated an intent in executing more lunar exploration missions using the Chang'e lunar probe series. At the basis of this lunar exploration strategy are the three concepts of orbiting, landing and return, which have all been achieved with the past Chang'e-5 mission, and that has the ultimate objective of establishing an international research station on the Moon (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China 2022). Lately, although no concrete step has yet been achieved, China endeavours to be the first country to launch power stations – able to capture the Sun's energy and beam it back down to Earth – into Space. This novel idea would offer a more stable and reliable energy source than Earth-based stations, as it could avoid output fluctuations stemming from weather, seasons or day-night cycles. A facility to test the concept of the solar plant project is already under construction in Chongqing, in central China. The country expects to build a series of small to medium-sized stations, that

orbit 36,000 kilometres above Earth, between 2021 and 2025 (Cyranoski 2019).

China's Comprehensive Approach to Space

Fulfilling China's Grand Strategy largely draws upon successful achievements within Space exploration, in which the militaristic aspect of Space cannot be neglected. As previously mentioned, Space is the realm through which information flows. Its sensing and monitoring services are instrumental in realising Sun Tzu author's slogan of knowing both yourself and your enemy. Logically, Space plays a key role in amplifying and multiplying military power and effectiveness. Indeed, surveillance carried out in outer Space can detail an enemy's precise positioning and actions, while Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) provides troops with higher coordination, as well as targeting information for weapons deployment by employing real-time updates, thus increasing situational awareness (Lee and Steele 2014).

Space not only lifts the fog of war from the battlefield, but it can also increase the accuracy of remote and surgical strikes. By taking a closer look at Drone operation and strike capability, we observe that any ground station control requires satellite uplink as soon as the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) leaves the station's line of sight to successfully complete any given mission (Cuadra and Whitlock 2014). Moreover, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has expanded Space's role in a conventional warfare scenario. SpaceX's provision of internet access to the Ukrainian forces through the Starlink constellation permits the accomplishment of both intel gathering as well as the precise and surgical strike tasks through drone operations. Ultimately the regained access to the internet, previously cut off by Russia, has proven fundamental in everyday operations and became both the backbone and the lifeline of the Ukrainian operations (Miller, Mark and Scott 2022). These examples, along with the ones previously provided, further illustrate that modern-day military operations rely heavily on Space-based assets to be carried out. This also further develops the notion that Space is becoming the centre stage where States compete to maximise and ensure the persecution of their interests.

Still, one cannot dismiss this approach just yet. In fact, the US interests in the deployment of an advanced Space-based Ballistic Missile Defense, revolving around a Space Based Laser Missile Defense System (Clark 2020; Tucker 2019), reveals that same notion: that Space is crucial in terms of hard power projection. Such a system allows for boost-phase denying capabilities,

which in turn results in direct negative consequences for the efficiency of nuclear deterrence strategies, such as the well-known Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) strategy. China's interest in continuously developing its ASAT technology (Erwin 2020; Office of the Secretary of Defense 2020) is then critical to its capacity of denying uncontested access to Space's multiplying effect and thus allowing it to better implement its political agendas without the threat of being encircled from outer Space.

Returning to Space's economic aspect, by closely attaching its Space program to the BRI cooperation framework, through the creation of the SIC, China stands to cash in the profits of becoming a major Space technology supplier. It also crucially positions itself as a provider of affordable Space-based technology and services (Jiang 2019). This has the immediate benefit of strengthening bilateral relations with its BRI partners, but also of alleviating the economic burden that Space technologies' development exerts on the Chinese budget (Peter 2006). It is helpful to know that Space investments have prohibitive costs associated with them, along with the reality of there being few States with Space programme budgets that exceed the USD billion threshold (Seminari 2019). As an illustrative example, in the GNSS category there are only four systems capable of worldwide positioning, with the BDS being one of them (Choudhary 2019), while at the same time, China is one of those few states with a budget that surpasses the aforementioned threshold (Goswami 2018). This, in turn, allows us to conclude that cooperation with the top players may be the only option for States without the capacity to autonomously sustain significant Space programs, while at the same time, China holds a top position in the Space domain. Through this reasoning, China's SIC strategy to facilitate access to Space-based information services, along with cooperation in establishing a ground information sharing network (Jiang 2019), seems to be tailor-made to address the needs of States with limited Spacefaring capacity. All these circumstances will stimulate the development of an overreliance and dependence on China, which in turn may render Beijing as a possible gatekeeper when it comes to accessing this new field of possibilities. This will ultimately allow Beijing to determine those who do or do not have access to Space, thus limiting the competition on this new realm and allowing for rebalancing strategies back on Earth.

Finally, when looking back to China's accomplishments in outer Space, there are three distinctive steps taken to cast aside any sign of inferiority and gaining parity with its main rivals. First, China has managed to successfully orbit, land, and return from the Moon with sample material. If this accomplishment wasn't enough to establish itself on equal footing with the US and Russia, China is taking one step further and is willing to

innovate by establishing an international research station on the Moon. This desire is inching ever closer to being manifest, as in 2021 China released the “International Lunar Research Station: Guide for Partnership”, in conjunction with the Russian ROSCOSMOS, outlining and detailing the roadmap to implementing such a project (China National Space Administration and State Space Corporation 2021). At the same time this guide is laying the groundwork needed for a continuous presence on the Moon, a first for any Space faring nation. Secondly, China has successfully landed a rover on Mars and transmitted video and photographic material from the surface of the red planet. This has made this State one of only two nations, the first being the US, capable of such undertaking. Thirdly, China has finished its Space Station. Even though its station is only a quarter of the size of the International Space Station (ISS) (Beil 2022), this project showcases China’s capacity to independently implement and sustain such burdensome and technologically advanced accomplishments. In fact, all of these three deeds bolster China’s internal and external prestige, while casting an image of a State powerful enough to not only catch-up with the US, despite its late arrival to Space, as well as to surpass it with its Moon ambitions and independently run Space Station. More broadly, the technological necessities behind Space travel and exploration allow China to build an even more unique picture of its power in the international scene. At a time when the US is only regaining the capacity to independently launch resupply missions to the ISS, through a private company such as SpaceX after relying on the Russian Soyuz platform (Roulette 2020), China stands out by matching previous US Space accomplishments - on the Moon and Mars - and even building its own Space Station.

Conclusion

Drawing on the tenets of political Realism, this article has attempted to shed light upon the role that Space exploration plays in China’s Grand Strategy and what it represents for China’s competitive outcomes in terms of military power of the People’s Liberation Army and even as a political narrative. With this in mind, we have found that, even though China is a latecomer to Space exploration, Beijing has found its way up the ladder and now stands on par, or even further along, with other States regarding this new realm. This article has also demonstrated that, as recent conflicts showcase, Space not only affords great security prospects, but is also becoming a centre stage and an indirect operational theatre for international conflicts to unfold.

Firstly, China’s Grand Strategy – sovereignty, international respect, and status – can be better attained through Space Exploration. By implementing

its Space Information Corridor along with the establishment of its Space Station, China is capable of on-orbit direct competition with its rivals, as well as of implementing a selective denial strategy with regards to its Space assets. Beyond developing a strategy of dependence with its infrastructure directed at non-Space faring nations, through its ASAT capabilities China retains an effective and directed denial option towards competing powers' assets. The final outcome allows China to possibly contest the development of Space-based technologies - such as the Starlink constellation -, but also allows it to multiply its combat effectiveness back on Earth. Additionally, said program is now laying the groundwork for future innovations and the possibility of resource extraction through sensing and sampling missions, thus generating the possibility for even greater benefits for Beijing.

Secondly, with the instability experienced in the international energy markets, China may now aim to further develop its ambitions for energy extraction in Space as a complementary option to conventional sources. Although no clear evidence has yet to be found in this regard, the statements made by Beijing around orbiting solar stations may yet become the focus of further development. It is certainly something to look out for in the future.

Thirdly, when it comes to military innovation, proposed by China as one of its development targets in Space, the Fengyun satellite class, along with many other platforms being developed and orbited, has allowed for the targeting of missiles (at sea and underground), while also providing a military mapping and reconnaissance capability. Hence, China is aware of the wide array of military leverage offered by Space exploration and is fully invested in taking advantage of it. Lastly, in the political sphere, the main source of recognition and status lies in the development of a modern and expansive civil Space program, something impressive both nationally and abroad. These lighting-speed Space exploration achievements are, and will be, used as a totem of prestige for the Chinese Communist Party. Logically, such impressively fast developments necessitate unparalleled levels of technological innovation as well as economic power. In turn, this is a significant source of internal as well as external legitimacy, increasing the CCP's international power projection and allowing China to not only establish a balance of power with its direct competitors, but also cast the image of being able to push further ahead than the US.

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ABSTRACT

This article assesses China's Space achievements drawing on realism. Outer Space provides a logic of continuity of a similar assertive stance that already characterises China's revisionist posture in the South China Sea. We argue that such a realist stance fits well into China's gradual move towards a flexible perception of borders, despite being a Westphalian State. We aim at answering the following research question: What role does Space exploration play in China's Grand Strategy and what does it represent for China's competitive outcomes in terms of military power and even as a source of political prestige and narrative?

KEYWORDS

China; Space; Grand Strategy

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UNAVOIDABLE CLASHES: EXPLORING THE IMPLICATIONS OF A CHINA-RUSSIA ALLIANCE ON GLOBAL GEOPOLITICS

Sanjar Yakhshilikov¹

Introduction

The first conflict between China and Russia is over Central Asia. One of the main programs of China's Belt and Road Initiative includes its inland Silk Road crossing Central Asia. Russia never lets China have dominance over post-Soviet countries. The next confrontation is the economic interests of Russia in Southeast Asia. Russia's profitable energy interests in Southeast Asia may bother China to have dominance over the South China Sea. The third issue is that Russia keeps selling military armaments to India and Vietnam that causes a threat to China as China does not get along well with neither of them.

Relations between China and Russia had entered a new stage. They both chose a rapprochement policy toward each other. Since 2014, the strategic partnership has been steadily strengthened. US primacy in the international order was seen as contrasting their national interests, and US foreign policy towards China and Russia was accepted as a threat to regime survival to the autocracy of both China's President Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin. The US offshore balancing strategy makes the case easier to cooperate. NATO's expansion towards Russia and Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy towards China created a chance for another cooperation. "Economic synergies – China wants Russia's energy resources, Russia seeks Chinese investment – is another important driver in the relationship (Storey, 2021:3)". Additionally, the personal affinity of Xi and Putin, the Russian leader, led to closer relations between governments. Since 2013, both leaders have met more than 30 times.

¹ Department Of Working With International Rankings And Indexes, Jizzakh State Pedagogical University. Jizzakh, Uzbekistan. E-mail: yakhshilikov@jdpu.uz. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2950-263X>

The Chinese leader called Putin his “best friend”². In 2019, Vladimir Putin said that the two countries “enjoy an unprecedentedly high level of trust and cooperation. This is an allied relationship in the full sense of a multifaceted strategic partnership.” Then he revealed, “We are now helping our Chinese partners create a missile attack warning system. This is very important and will drastically increase China’s defence capability. Only the United States and Russia have such a system now”³.

Officially, Russia and China refer to their relationship as a comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation. While some observers have described Sino-Russian relations as an alliance or a *de facto* alliance, Moscow and Beijing scrupulously avoid that term. Their joint statement on 28 June 2021, marking the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation, stressed that Russia-China relations do not constitute a Cold War-style military and political alliance (Storey, 2021:3).

The Russian Foreign Minister also confirmed that “neither Russia nor China is planning to create a military alliance”⁴.

Sino-Russia relations are rich in mutuality, and they feel supportive of each other, but they do not have a clear intention to ally. The reason why is the research question of this paper. Why is it impossible for China and Russia to ally? What are the sources of confrontations? Why are these conflicts inevitable? The answers to these questions thoroughly explain the true nature of Sino-China relations. In addition, this research paper analyses how much the strategic interests of the states match with each other. By answering these questions and analysing the nature of Sino-Russian relations we will be able to evaluate the prospects of this cooperation.

The topic is not new and there is a significant number of scholars and research papers on this topic. Some scholars are defining Sino-Russian relations as a security cooperation. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) reflects the security priorities of the states for Eurasia.

Not only is China unable to contest Russia’s status as a prominent player in

2 See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/25/why-are-russia-and-china-strengthening-ties>

3 “Valdai Discussion Club session,” President of Russia, October 3, 2019, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61719>

4 “Russia, China not planning to create military alliance, Lavrov says,” TASS, November 2, 2019, <https://tass.com/politics/1086469>.

security matters, but Beijing also shares common concerns with Moscow on security problems in Central and South Asia, including extremism, terrorism, illicit trade, gun-running, and drug smuggling. Given the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) coalition's planned withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan and the reduction of US security cover in Iraq and Syria, China and Russia have intensified their dialogue on security cooperation (Arduino, 2019).

The next group of scholars argues that Sino-Russian relations are based on a trade bloc rather than on alliances or security cooperation. They believe that China and Russia are economically interdependent with each other and must maintain cooperation for their own sake. "China and Russia are major economic partners, increasingly linked by trade and investment: in 2017 Chinese-Russian trade rose 20.8% to more than \$84 billion, and China had been Russia's biggest trade partner for eight years running (Xia, 2018)". These relations are going smoothly without interruption, but as mentioned, they are not thinking about fully allying.

Other research papers have analysed some confrontations in Sino-Russian relations. However, all conflicts that hinder allying have rarely been discussed in one a single paper. In particular, the recent world affairs connected with Russia and China are affecting their relationship and the conflicts are seemingly forgotten, but they are still among them as inevitable issues. The paper will discuss those issues and analyse why they are inevitable and how they hinder the process of allying. The issues that will be discussed in the paper are Central Asia and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the strategic interests of Russia in Southeast Asia, Russia's economic relations with India and Taiwan in terms of exporting military armaments and border conflicts, and so on.

Although Moscow and Beijing may have overlapping interests and objectives, they also possess distinct national interests and priorities that can give rise to instances of discord and antagonism. A potential area of contention between Moscow and Beijing pertains to their individual relations with the United States. While it is likely that both nations perceive the United States as a significant strategic adversary, it is plausible that each of them holds divergent perspectives regarding the most effective approach for confronting American hegemony. For instance, the prioritized objective of Moscow appears to lie in diminishing the influence of the US within Europe and the Middle East, while Beijing directs its attention towards establishing its position in the Asia-Pacific domain and challenging American predominance on the global economic stage.

In conjunction with their distinctive approaches towards the United States, Moscow and Beijing may possess divergences with regards to other regional and global concerns, including territorial conflicts, commercial strategies, and geopolitical affiliations. Russia and China have a well-established historical record of diplomatic frictions regarding their territorial border and may hold divergent perspectives on the optimal approach required to manage the current turbulence in Syria or the prevailing circumstances in North Korea. The collective perception from Moscow and Beijing may suggest that the United States serves as a shared opponent; nevertheless, their respective individualistic national interests and priorities may, at times, generate discrepancies and even friction between them.

There are several reasons why Moscow and Beijing would be at odds. Initially, the two have historical and cultural differences. Russia and China possess different historical and cultural heritages that potentially influence their perceptions and preferences, leading to distinctive worldviews. An illustration of the distinction between Russia and China in terms of their cultural and political traditions is noteworthy given Russia's prolonged exposure to European influence and consequent perception of affiliation with the Western world, unlike China which has evolved a distinct cultural and political identity independent of Western influence. Russia has a substantial and enduring legacy of European cultural influence that can be traced back to its infancy as the nexus of the Eastern Slavic social order during the medieval period.

Throughout its history, Russia has undergone significant transformations under the influence of diverse cultural and political factors. These have included the Mongol Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Orthodox Church, among others. Throughout contemporary times, Russia has developed a multifaceted affiliation with the Western world, engaging in a cyclical pattern of adoption and dismissal of Western ideologies and establishments. During the 18th century reign of Peter the Great, Russia experienced a significant process of Westernization. Conversely, in the course of the 20th century Soviet regime, the country embraced an unequivocally anti-Western stance. China, conversely, is characterized by a distinct cultural and political heritage that has developed independently from that of the Western world. The history of China spans over five millennia and has been moulded by a diverse range of philosophical and religious traditions, notably Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. China is renowned for its rich legacy of centralized governance and hierarchical societal formations, both of which have had a profound impact on the nation's political and economic frameworks. The divergent worldviews and priorities between Russia and

China are occasionally attributed to the distinctive historical and cultural disparities between them. As an illustration, it is plausible that Russia perceives itself as an integral component of the Western realm and places emphasis on fostering collaboration with Europe and North America. In contrast, China could possibly consider itself as a separate civilization with its exclusive identity and interests. These divergences may become visible in domains including global diplomacy, fiscal strategy, and local safeguard concerns, subsequently resulting in possible contradictions or strains in the relationship between the political establishments of Moscow and Beijing.

The next conflict arises between their strategic interests. Although Russia and China may perceive the United States as a strategic adversary, their approaches to counteracting US power and influence may diverge, as mentioned . The primary strategic concerns of Russia are directed to sustaining its standing as a prominent global power, safeguarding its geographical sovereignty, and fostering a dependable security framework in its proximate vicinities. Russia, throughout its history, has endeavoured to exercise its authority and control over adjacent territories and demarcated regions, including Ukraine, Belarus, and Central Asia, as a means of achieving its objectives. Russia endeavours to sustain its military presence in regions such as the Middle East and Europe, with the aim of asserting its capacity to exert both power and influence.

In contrast, China's foremost objective is focused on sustaining its economic expansion and securing the availability of essential resources and markets across the global arena. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China is deemed to be an integral component of its strategic interests. The primary objective of this initiative is to establish a vast network encompassing both trade and infrastructure projects that will serve as a conduit for connecting China with key markets in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. China's strategic objectives encompass the safeguarding of its territorial claims within the South China Sea, alongside ensuring stability on the Korean peninsula.

Although Russia and China consider the United States as a strategic adversary, their discrepant strategic objectives can occasionally result in discord between them. For instance, the already mentioned goal of Russia to sustain itself as a dominant global entity may lead the country to attribute higher priority to Europe and the Middle East instead of deeper cooperation efforts with China in other geographical regions, specifically in Asia. In a similar way, China's emphasis on attaining economic expansion may prompt a preference for prioritizing economic linkages with the United States as opposed to strategic collaboration with Russia. The impact of strategic interests on the dynamic of Moscow-Beijing relations is significant. Although individuals or

groups may possess certain common interests, their varying priorities and objectives have the potential to result in divergent policy decisions, and in some cases, even lead to conflict.

Central Asia and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Central Asia is one of the main reasons why Russia cannot ally with China. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, post-Soviet countries, namely, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, have been under the influence of Russia. Russia has so many strategic interests in the region. "Russia's fear of China's economic dominance in Central Asia, where Moscow tries to maintain its influence and its privileged role, has now become a well-established fact (Ferrari and Ambrosetti, 2019)".

The Chinese influence on Central Asia began in 2013 when the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was launched. The only thing that kept the countries from direct and tough conflict is that the interests are a little bit different. Russia seeks only its political dominance in the region. As the countries are underdeveloped and developing in economic terms, Russia is not able to obtain significant profit from these countries. However, China came up with its BRI, the region is economically attractive to China and China's influence is increasing step by step. Therefore, the confrontation is present but not so critical. Nevertheless, this conflict is becoming increasingly tougher. China's influence in the region is growing and its economic influence is impacting the political and social sectors of the region.

Both China and Russia officially state that there are no conflicts over Central Asia. Russia's top diplomat, Sergey Lavrov, said, "We do not consider China a competitor. We are strategic partners, and the plans of Russia and China regarding that region (Central Asia) and overall, regarding the Big Eurasia do not contradict each other"⁵. The academic literature highlights both parties' interests to find common ground and resolve conflicts. Although it is acknowledged that Russia has been forced to give up some of its influences in Central Asia to China, the dominant narrative about the Russian and Chinese presence in the region is based on the underlying premise that the two countries have divided the functions equally in which China focuses on economic pursuits and Russia serves as the region's security provider (Wilson, 2021). Even though, there are few signals of official discontent between Russian and Chinese authorities over their dealings in Central Asia, time is running out for Russia.

⁵ See "<https://tass.com/economy/1043332/>"

With fewer alternatives, an increasingly defensive Russia faces a surging China. Russia may theoretically choose to link itself more closely with the West or at the very least strive to heal tensions.

China's economic interests in Central Asia have become increasingly multifaceted. Access to Central Asian energy and raw materials and minerals is an important goal for China, as indicated in the pipelines that transport oil from Kazakhstan, and gas from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Additionally, Central Asia is viewed as a strategic and vital corridor for the transmission of goods from China to Europe within the BRI, which has led to Chinese interest in a number of infrastructure projects in the region, including the construction of roads and railways (Wilson, 2021).

The economic impact of China is now seen in the amount of debt that the five countries received. "Increasing volume of debt in Central Asia is an important political problem as indebtedness increases political dependence on creditors. China remains the main source of loans in the region. Its share in the external debt of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan equals 45% and 52%, respectively, or more than 20% of their GDP. The situation is better in resource rich countries. Loans from China account for 16%-17% of GDP of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, while the indicator of Kazakhstan is the lowest and equals 6.5%"⁶.

China's role in the import and export of the region has increased significantly. China is the number one trading partner of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and two of Kazakhstan in terms of imports. As mentioned at the beginning of the section, China's dominance in the economy is acceptable for Sino – Russian relations. What made the relations tougher is the increase of China's political and social influence.

China's military and security-related activities had begun to upset Russia's dominance. Central Asia is a market for both China and Russia when selling armaments. They also have joint military activities in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This same organization provided China with the opportunity to conduct military and security-related activities. "The system college of the Shanghai Participation Association (SCO) was propelled in 2010 as another stage for collaboration in the field of training and work force trade (Sulimanov and Beloglazov, 2018)". Although Russia was the main seller of arms to Central Asia until 2010, this number began changing

⁶ Ver "https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/the-risks-of-the-high-government-debt-for-central-asia/"

gradually to China's side. "China provided 1.5 percent of Central Asian arms imports between 2010-2014, this figure had increased to 18 percent of the total in the 2015-2018 time periods. While Uzbekistan purchased more arms from China than from Russia during the entire 1991-2018 period, between 2014-2018 both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan bought more arms from China than Russia (Wilson, 2021)".

China's increase in the military sphere in Central Asia can be explained not only by numbers but also by the quality of the arms. China exports more advanced military technologies than Russia. China creates an opportunity to intervene in its military to the region for the purpose of protecting its firms, infrastructures, and others. The social life of the population of Central Asia has already been deeply linked with China. The technologies, networking, telecommunications, and all mechanisms of factories are designed with Chinese products. In this field, Russia has already lost Central Asia to China.

Therefore, the next step for China is to fully decouple Russia from Central Asia, and Russia never would never agree with that. So, the confrontation emerges as inevitable, and the future of Central Asia is highly dependent on this rivalry.

Strategic interests of Russia in the Asia-Pacific region

One of the reasons for the Sino-Russian rapprochement is the security concerns of both countries in the Asia-Pacific. Both China and Russia have many strategic interests in the region, and they have a mutual enemy – the United States. The Asia-Pacific area is the epicentre of the rising imbalance between China and Russia. The impoverished and sparsely inhabited Russian Far East collides with an increasingly powerful growing China here. Other but equally informative instances of how a variety of practical concerns are addressed between the two nations may be found in bilateral relations. "Its main interest in the region appears to be avoiding antagonizing China and protecting this bilateral relationship (Rumer, 2017)". Since the mid-2000s, Russia has attempted to extend its position in the Asia-Pacific region.

The objective is to boost Russia's dominance in the area, which it regards as the world's future economic and political focus. This aim may also be regarded as a response to the United States' regional rebalance and China's rise. The main goal of the Russian strategy in the Asia-Pacific area is to maintain its national security. In comparison to China, Russia's enormous, sparsely populated Far East is a disadvantage. China has never been formally identified as a security threat by Russia. However, it is a component of the

Russian mentality, as evidenced by military assets prepared to confront a large opponent. Russia as a country has a Western orientation. Russia's ability to expand its influence is hindered by the Asia-Pacific environment. Like in other regions of the world, Russia has experienced difficulties in making and retaining allies in this region. Russia's foreign policy in the area is mostly focused on bilateral ties with other major nations, especially with China.

The environment in the Asia-Pacific region is very similar to that in Central Asia in terms of Sino-Russian relations. The confrontation is growing with the rising influence of Russia in the region. This rising influence is seen in arm sales. Since 2000, Russia has become the region's largest arms supplier with sales valued at US\$10.66 billion (the United States is second at US\$7.86 billions)⁷.

Although China is increasing its market share of defence sales in Southeast Asia, it remains far behind Russia. Between 2000 and 2020, China's defence sales to Southeast Asia were valued at only US\$2.78 billion. In the regional arms market, Russia has two distinct advantages over China. First, Russian defence companies have a better reputation than their Chinese counterparts for the quality and reliability of their weapons systems, as well as after sales services such as technical support, maintenance, and the supply of spare parts. Second, regional states with maritime territorial and jurisdictional disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea – Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia and especially Vietnam – have avoided procuring arms from China (Storey, 2021)

China's strategic interests in the region are much greater than those of Russia. The core of all territorial disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea is strategic interests. After a "century of humiliation" during which external forces controlled the Asia-Pacific area, China is re-emerging as a major power. China has grown increasingly assertive in its pursuit of historical claims, notably in the South China Sea, since 2007. It is critical for China to maintain its image as a peacefully emerging power and "responsible stakeholder." Southeast Asian countries as well as Asia Pacific countries feel Chinese primacy as a threat, and in most cases, they must cooperate with the US. The only thing that alleviates the tensions with Russia is that China is feeling the pressure of the US. Nearly all countries in the region are balancing with the US and China needs someone to be supported by or at least there is no need for another enemy at this right moment. However, Russia is the main arm supplier of India and Vietnam and states in the South China Sea.

⁷ See The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

While there are several territorial disputes with these countries, it is natural that China-Russia relations face conflicts. These conflicts are inevitable until Russia stops arms deliveries, which would be very harmful to its economy.

Conclusion

Sino-Russian relations are in a new stage, and all tensions and confrontations have been neglected by both sides. They feel that they need more support rather than additional foreign issues. Neglecting is seen as good relations to scholars and world leaders. In fact, those neglected tensions and confrontations in Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region never allowed the countries to ally. They would not have cooperated if there had not been a mutual enemy. The world community may witness another big conflict between China and Russia for regional hegemony.

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ABSTRACT

The current relations between China and Russia are the result of the rapprochement policies of both countries. Shared fears about US hegemony, mutual economic benefits, and strong links between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin escalated Sino-Russia relations into a new stage. Russia needs regional security in Southeast Asia, and even though the strategic interests of China and Russia do not match over the region, they are both eager to contain the US. Recent Russia – Ukraine border issues are well-matched with China – Taiwan issues that also make the states feel mutuality between them. The results of the two issues may be the same. Moscow is making sure as time goes by that rapprochement with the West is impossible, Russia is going to suffer from economic sanctions, and the West has already begun decoupling. Despite all the partnerships and mutuality, China and Russia are still not allies. The inactive confrontations between the two outnumber all of the abovementioned positives.

KEYWORDS

Rapprochement policy; Regional power; Alliance; Conflicts; Strategic interest

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THE BLIND SPOT OF THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE OF AFGHANISTAN RELATION WITH INDIA: THE SECOND REIGN SINCE AUGUST 2021

Mohammad Khalid Khawrin¹

Introdução

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is the name of the current Afghan government which is popular with the name “Taliban” also, who defeated NATO with its allies, and is currently controlling, administrating, and governing Afghanistan for the second time since the 15th of August 2021. The Taliban’s relationship with India is a blind spot for both parties for different reasons. One of the main reasons for the strained relationship between the Taliban and India is and was the fact that the Taliban was seen as being supportive of Pakistan, India’s archrival. The Taliban had close ties with Pakistan. In addition, the Taliban’s strict interpretation of Islam and its treatment of women and minorities rights were also sources of tension with India. The Taliban impose strict sharia law in Afghanistan, including measures such as the prohibition of women’s education and employment. These policies were opposed by India and many other countries. Overall, the relationship between the Taliban and India was marked by no communication, no specific path in international relations, and controversial policies with its neighbor’s region.

Afghan history is largely characterized by war and combat, from civil wars to engagements with foreign troops. The IEA adopted a plan to take part in the state’s physical presence of the administration (Akhtar and Khan 2021). In Afghanistan, a paradigm shift is taking place because the international world did not foresee the outcome. The IEA is to blame for the tremendous

¹ Department of Judgement and Prosecution, Kunduz University. Kunduz, Afghanistan.
E-mail: mk.ahmadzai786@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3313-2061>

but precarious development accomplished by the Afghan people over the past 20 years (K R and Durairaj 2021).

The IEA's oppressive tactics and total reliance on "state-making" through "war-making" demonstrate how challenging it is to convert an insurgent group into a state structure. The main governance framework that the IEA could set up was a two-track system. The military-political organization created by the IEA, however, lacked statehood in all three areas of legitimacy, authority, and ability, according to the assessment of the IEA's institutional and functional capabilities (Ibrahimi 2017). Hardly, there is information available about the Taliban or the IEA state. This study pinpoints the blind spot via establishing healthy international relations, through the prism of human rights, and state-making.

The Importance of the study

There are many reasons to postulate that it is very important for the IEA and India to clarify its bilateral relations, transaction, protection, and benefits to one another. Some prominent scholars such as Bose & Panda (2016) had discovered that Afghanistan is becoming more significant for India for a variety of economic and security concerns, despite previously not being the main priority of either state's foreign or security policy. Furthermore, Nath (2019) argued that understanding international relations in the areas of India-Afghanistan ties and Afghanistan's importance to India's foreign policy concerning Central Asia and Iran is relevant.

On the other hand, new commercial prospects have forced Afghanistan to leverage its proximity to India to counter its excessive reliance on Pakistan, while Nepal has strengthened its collaboration with China to overcome its dependence on India, creating a new geopolitical dynamic within South Asia (Bhatnagar and Ahmed 2021). Even though, this study would also reveal the paths for balancing relations, internal politics and policies, and the international socio-political environment for both countries.

Methodology

An inductive research method was used in this study. Inductive research is a research approach that involves starting with specific observations and using them to form a general conclusion or theory. It is a bottom-up research approach, in which researchers begin with specific observations and

work their way up to more general theories (Birkinshaw, Brannen, and Tung 2011). This approach is often used in the social sciences, where researchers may observe individuals or small groups and use those observations to make inferences about larger populations.

The inductive research process typically involves several steps as it is explained by some research:

Observation: Researchers observe and collect data from specific examples or cases.

Classification: Researchers group the observations into categories or themes.

Induction: Researchers use observations and categories to form a general conclusion or theory.

Testing: Researchers test the theory through further observation and experimentation to see if it holds up (Birkinshaw, Brannen, and Tung 2011; Chatfield 2020). Inductive research is useful for generating new ideas and theories.

Data collection

The qualitative secondary data was collected from open sources. Open-source qualitative secondary data refers to non-numerical data that is available to the public and can be accessed and used by anyone without any restrictions. This type of data can include text, images, audio, and video. Open-source qualitative secondary data is often collected and made available by government agencies, research institutions, and other organizations. Data from this research is used as open-source qualitative secondary data in this study to support my findings and start pinpointing areas for further research (Chatfield 2020).

There are several advantages to using open-source qualitative secondary data in research. First, it is typically free to access, which can save time and resources compared to collecting and analyzing primary data. Second, open-source data is often collected and analyzed by experts in the field, which can add credibility to the research. Finally, open-source data is often collected on a large scale and may include a diverse range of participants, which can provide a broader context for the research.

Data analysis

Open-source qualitative secondary data is analyzed through narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method for data analysis that involves examining the stories and experiences that are conveyed in the data. In the context of open-source qualitative secondary data, also examine the narratives and accounts of people's experiences that are available in public records, online forums, or other sources. For conducting narrative analysis, data was broken into smaller pieces, and examine the content for common themes, patterns, and trends, and its interpretation reflects larger social and cultural trends with interpretive approaches (Chatfield 2020).

Pre-revolution era of India-IEA relations

The relationship between India and Afghanistan has been complex and varied over time, with both cooperation and conflict. In recent years, India has been a major partner of Afghanistan in its efforts to rebuild and develop, providing financial, technical, and training assistance, as well as contributing to infrastructure development and supporting Afghanistan. India has also been involved in regional efforts to promote stability and peace in Afghanistan. However, the relationship between the two countries has not been without challenges, such as border disputes, cross-border terrorism, and competition for regional influence.

The impact of India's expanding ties with Afghanistan, Iran, the Central Asian republics, and all Muslim nations (Wirsing 2007) needs to be understood. To contour its rival, New Delhi must keep Afghanistan and the Taliban at the forefront of its mind (Fair 2011). Moreover, the article by Pate (2018) explained how India's soft power influence in Afghanistan has grown significantly between 2014 and 2017. Nath (2019) also argued that India's approach to Afghanistan is a prime example of a soft power strategy with a long-term objective via India's foreign policy and international relations concerning Iran and Central Asia. On the other hand, factors are pushing India to take a proactive approach towards Afghanistan, and the success of this policy would impact India's ability to become a regional security provider in South Asia (Pant 2010). Motafaker (2018) found that the post-Taliban leveraged racial, religious, and sectarian tensions as well as historical inconsistencies amongst ethnic groups to create new social structures in Afghanistan.

The Current state of India-IEA political and diplomatic

relations

The IEA interim government that was appointed early in their tenure is still in place, and the group has not yet established a permanent governing structure. However, the Taliban quickly reinstated many of their strictest regulations, excluding women from public life and tolerating no criticism. The Taliban administration is described by USIP's Andrew Watkins, along with who is actually in command and how the Taliban have responded to threats to their dominance (Watkins 2022). For the first time since the Indian Embassy in Kabul was evacuated in August 2021 as a result of the Taliban's entry into the Afghan capital, India has dispatched a large team of top diplomats to Afghanistan. Suhail Shaheen, head of the Taliban's political office, told *The Hindu* that the Taliban demanded that India restore its embassy in Kabul during negotiations with the Indian delegation on Thursday. J.P. Singh, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs' Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran division, is in charge of leading the Indian delegation (MEA) (Bhat Tacherjee 2022b). Media reporter Basu (2022) said that the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said its diplomatic presence in Kabul was keeping in mind the "historical and civilizational relationship with Afghans." India has increased its assistance to the nation in its war-torn region. However, the promise of wheat delivery from Pakistan with the aid of a transit facility showed that Delhi is leaning more toward engaging the Taliban covertly through international agencies like the World Food Program (Bhat Tacherjee 2022a).

Concerning trade and economic ties, relations are ongoing. Afghan business goods are exporting to India. India has provided duty-free access to its market for Afghan exports and has signed a bilateral trade agreement with previous Afghan government to encourage trade and investment between the two countries (India 2010). India has also established several economic and business partnerships with Afghanistan, with Indian companies investing in various sectors of the Afghan economy, including energy, telecommunications, and infrastructure. Despite these efforts, the economic and trade relationship between India and Afghanistan has not been without challenges. Some Afghan businesses have complained about the lack of access to the Indian market, and there have been concerns about the balance of trade between the two countries (Wani, Mir, and Akhter 2017).

Afghanistan's geopolitical interests and strategic considerations

Regarding geopolitical interests and strategic considerations, Afghanistan is a strategically important country at the crossroads of Central, South and West Asia and has been subject to significant external influences and regional dynamics throughout its history. Fair (2010) argued that India's interests in Afghanistan are not just related to Pakistan but also, and perhaps more importantly, to India's goal to be perceived as an extra-regional state advancing toward great power status. For energy security, regional security, and domestic security, India's strategic considerations take Afghanistan's connection to Central Asia and Iran into account (Nath 2019).

According to Saqib (2019), three main factors have affected India's engagement with Afghanistan: first, finding a balance between relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan; second, domestic political changes and the preferences of Afghanistan's internal political parties; and third, shifts in the global political landscape. Moreover, the study argues that this new cooperation can be attributed to geopolitical causes related to India's ascent, accompanying changes in economic interests, and the shifting security environment in the Middle East and Afghanistan (Siyech 2020). However, some authors claimed that India and Pakistan take advantage of their landlocked neighbors to advance their national interests. This claim is based on an analysis of historical, economic, and geopolitical issues (Bhatnagar and Ahmed 2021).

The economic and security interests of India and China have sought to shape regional dynamics and influences in Afghanistan, competing for influence with other regional powers such as Pakistan, Iran, and Russia. This has raised concerns about the potential impact on the balance of power and stability in Afghanistan. Some authors conclude that the internal problems that are part of Afghanistan's current political system led to and are related to the country's current foreign policy (Daurov and Sazhenov 2020).

Challenges in Afghanistan

Afghanistan faces several significant domestic challenges that have had a major impact on its development and stability. One major challenge is the ongoing conflict and insurgency in the country. The conflict has resulted in widespread violence and instability and has had a negative impact on Afghanistan's economic and social development. Another major challenge is the lack of economic development in Afghanistan. A third major challenge is the lack of political stability in Afghanistan. Other challenges facing Afghanistan include a lack of basic services such as education, healthcare, and

electricity, and widespread human rights abuses, including violence against women and children (Bagai 2014). Girls and women no longer have the right to an education or a job, and many of them are forced into sexual slavery after becoming married to Taliban soldiers. Sikhs and Hindus from Afghanistan have started emigrating to India to avoid persecution (Chellaney 2022).

Afghanistan faces several significant international challenges that have had a major impact on its development and stability. One major challenge is the ongoing conflict and insurgency in the country (Geneva Academy 2022), which has attracted the attention of various international powers, who have sought to shape the outcome of the conflict and protect their own interests in Afghanistan. The conflict has also had a negative impact on Afghanistan's economic and social development and has fueled regional instability. Another major challenge is the lack of international support and engagement in Afghanistan (The World Bank 2022).

A third major challenge is the threat of cross-border terrorism in Afghanistan (Syed 2022). Afghanistan has been a major hub for terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda and the Taliban, who have used the country as a base for operations against neighboring countries and the international community (Guha 2022). This has had a negative impact on regional stability and security and has fueled international tensions. Addressing these international challenges will require the cooperation and support of the international community, as well as the commitment of the Afghan government and people to building a more stable, prosperous, and inclusive society.

International recognition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) poses another challenge. Strong political and economic ties will attract international investment, boost regional trade, and ultimately increase much-needed government revenues. The Taliban want to eliminate any challenge to their authority. They specifically do not want any regional power to help Afghans who oppose their regime militarily and financially, as India, Iran, and Russia did in the 1990s. The Taliban also believe that international acceptance and strong relations, particularly with Western donor nations and organizations, will bring the nation humanitarian aid and developmental aid. The Taliban government has often requested diplomatic recognition from the world community, claiming that it has met all requirements for this.

These talks were supposed to clear the way for India to reestablish diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. India's Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement on June 23 that New Delhi has sent a technical team to its embassy in Kabul to closely supervise and organize the distribution of humanitarian aid (Shah 2022). India has seen a significant development

of think tanks in recent decades and is now like China in terms of sheer numbers, while America has more than 1800 think tanks. However, neither the American nor the Indian think tanks were able to foresee the developments in Afghanistan or push for policy changes promptly (Singh 2021). Ironically, the Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) has been filling voids left by the Taliban as the latter works to transition from an insurgent and terrorist organization to a state and political system that seeks recognition abroad (Taneja 2022). These are new emerging challenges that brought obstacles in the IEA government's recognition process.

There were concerns about regional security, militancy, and transnational terrorism, and some criticized India for its involvement in Afghanistan. In addition, the ongoing violence and unrest in Afghanistan has complicated the country's military and security cooperation. Both Afghanistan's existence and India's security are at risk, so the two nations should not hesitate in forming this alliance (Nazami 2015).

Conclusion

As a conclusion for this article, we indicate that the IEA has its internal issues and deficiencies, such as power transformation, lack of security assurance to the neighbors, vague rules and regulations, and unclear laws, rules, and treaty enforcement organizations that are a blind spot for outsiders and other countries and could not have normalized diplomatic relations. Even because of these issues, the IEA could not get diplomatic recognition. The IEA has its internal disintegration and is unskilled and inexperienced in the state-making approaches such as unclear power transformation, unclear future responsibilities as a state, and unclear law enforcement. Which leads to unclarified geopolitical strategic considerations and no economic treaty and transaction on state levels.

Due to this as implications for future India relations with Afghanistan, we should mention that India has a long and complex history with Afghanistan, with India seeking to influence the country's development and shape its future. The future of Indo-Afghan relations will depend on several factors, including the outcome of the ongoing conflict and insurgency in the country, the economic and political developments in Afghanistan, and the strategic interests and priorities of India. If Afghanistan can achieve stability and development, it could potentially serve as a bridge and seek to expand its economic and trade ties with Afghanistan and promote regional integration. This could lead to increased cooperation and collaboration between India and

Afghanistan and could potentially contribute to greater stability and prosperity in the region.

However, if Afghanistan remains engulfed in conflict and instability, it could potentially become a source of competition and tension between India and China, as both countries seek to protect their interests in the country. In this scenario, Afghanistan could become a flashpoint for regional rivalries and tensions, which could have negative implications for stability and development in the region. Overall, the future of Indo-Afghan relations will depend on the ability of all stakeholders to work together to address the challenges facing Afghanistan and promote stability and development in the country.

As recommendations, this article indicates that several areas could be the focus to remove the blind spot in international relations, including: it is highly suggested that the IEA frame out and codify its internal and external politics, policies, reassuring Islamic human rights and the state's responsibility. Building strong and accountable institutions in Afghanistan, and the potential for improving the transparency and accountability of the political process. The role of the private sector, the impact of international aid and investment, and the potential for regional integration. The role of regional powers and other stakeholders in the conflict, and the potential for a peace settlement. Codification of these issues would remove the blind spot to everyone, which paved the way for other countries and stakeholders to deal with transactions, understand future responsibilities, decision-making, power transformation, successor, and rule and responsibilities enforcements bodies.

Overall, future research on Afghanistan should seek to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the country and should seek to provide recommendations for addressing these challenges and promoting stability and development in Afghanistan.

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ABSTRACT

India, from a humanistic perspective, has significantly contributed to Afghanistan's development and aid. The inductive research method was applied in the study. The nature of the data was in qualitative form in the secondary mood. The data was analyzed through the narrative analysis technique. The results showed that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is in the state-making process. Afghanistan is complicated and unstable and how it develops politically will determine how India and Afghanistan will interact in the future. It is recommended that the IEA clarify and formalize its internal and external politics, policies, commitment to Islamic human rights, and responsibility to the state.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Indo; IEA; Taliban; Diplomatic recognition; Afghanistan.

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THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE AND THE FATE OF PRESIDENTIAL MEGA INFRASTRUCTURES IN AFRICA

Amabilly Bonacina¹

Mamoudou Gazibo²

Introduction

Sino-African relations are not new (Snow 1988). But from 2000 onward, following the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), these relations became institutionalized and soared so rapidly that China became Africa's largest partner in many domains. Among these domains, infrastructure, which has long been an important component of China's presence on the continent since the Mao era, is of particular importance.

In this context, the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping, adds up as a new investment mechanism in infrastructure development on the continent. In China's current foreign policy, the importance of the BRI is undeniable, whether due to its political or economic character (Johnston 2016; Visentini 2014; Bhattacharya 2016; Pautasso 2016). The BRI had also become central in the Sino-African cooperation agenda, overlapping FOCAC and becoming a joint commitment between the African and Chinese parties (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation 2015). In the first two years, the African continent was still secondary to the BRI, with only six countries among the first to join the initiative. As of 2015, the initiative gains strength, and by 2022 approximately 46 countries on the continent have signed memoranda of understanding (Addaney 2021;

¹ Department of Political Science, Université de Montréal. Montréal, Canada. E-mail: amabilly.bonacina@umontreal.ca. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9517-9303>

² Department of Political Science, Université de Montréal. Montréal, Canada. E-mail: mamoudou.gazibo@umontreal.ca. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6694-8596>

Breuer 2017). Therefore, most African countries have endorsed the BRI very enthusiastically.

Because most of the literature on China-Africa relations adopts either a positive or negative view (Gazibo 2022), BRI projects tend to be analysed with the same lenses. The positive perspective on China-Africa relations (for example Li 2022) consider that it is a win-win relation, especially given the gap between the demand on the African side and the opportunities of funding provided by the West. Indeed, by 2017, Beijing had built in Africa around 6,200 km of railways, 6,500 km of highways, 20 seaports, 20 bridges, more than 80 power plants, more than 200 schools and 80 stadiums, in addition to several special economic zones, industrial parks, among others (Aiping and Zhan 2018; Krukowska 2016). On the other side, many sceptics point out that the BRI is just another chapter in Africa's longstanding history of exploitation and useless and white elephant projects. Both perspectives put the emphasis on the external aspect of the relations and therefore, pay little attention to several other variables among which the variety of situations and the domestic factors within African countries that contribute to shaping their relations with China.

This article adopts a more nuanced perspective by putting the emphasis on African agency. In fact, despite this overwhelming positive trend and the obvious need of investment, some countries have gone against the wave by halting or putting an end to some BRI projects. One case is Sierra Leone, which canceled the construction of the Mamamah Airport in 2018, and another is Tanzania, which suspended the construction of the Port of Bagamoyo in 2019. These two cases are particularly interesting because of the scope of the projects and the longstanding relations with China. Tanzania for example, along with Zambia, has benefited from the 1860 km TAN-ZAM railway back in 1975 (Snow 1988, 154). The question therefore is why such a country (as well as Sierra Leone) interrupts a BRI project carried out by such an old partner. In the search for an explanation of the reasons that led to these interruptions, we found that these two projects share the common characteristics of being very ambitious in terms of size and cost; of having been decided discretionary by the sitting president and at the same time, of being not so useful or profitable. In these projects, the political factor becomes more decisive than the economic one, although the latter is the official justification. Thus, we verify that the dynamics of domestic politics do have an influence on whether these agreements are maintained.

The article is organized as follows: part 1 presents the conceptual framework to understand why these projects have been abandoned. We suggest the concept of *presidential megaprojects* which comes out of the adaptation of

the idea of *white elephant* projects used in the infrastructure literature to the literature on neopatrimonialism. Part 2 presents a brief overview of how BRI projects are framed in order to understand both why they can be decided on a personal basis by a president and interrupted by another. Part 3 presents the case studies, and the conclusion summarizes our main findings.

Neopatrimonialism, White Elephants and Presidential Megaprojects

In this article, we propose the concept of *presidential megaprojects*, which refers first to the idea of *white elephant*, “a metaphor used to describe an object, construction project, scheme, business venture, facility, etc. considered expensive but without equivalent utility or value relative to its capital (acquisition) and/or operational (maintenance) costs”³.

However, the expression *White elephant* itself does not capture what is specific to the projects we study in this article. Although this expression is mostly used in the infrastructure literature, it is also applied to new and not yet clearly understood projects and mechanisms such as the financing of the energy transition or carbon market in the developed world (Theys 2016). *White elephants* are maybe more widespread in Africa, which has a long history of costly and useless infrastructures, built especially in the first 3 decades after the independences. The most known are probably the *Basilica of Our Lady of Peace* built in Côte d’Ivoire in the village of the first president of Côte d’Ivoire, far from the densely populated areas like Abidjan; or the *Hassan II Mosque* in Casablanca (Elleh 2002).

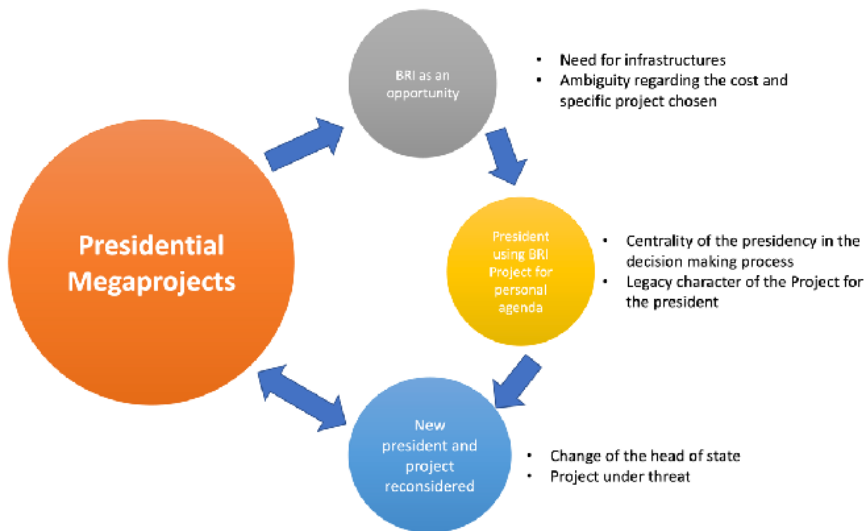
To better understand the projects studied here and their fate, it is necessary to see the idea of wide white elephants in the context of neopatrimonial politics which is not specific to Africa whatsoever (Bach and Gazibo 2011), but nonetheless deeply entrenched in the continent. Neopatrimonial governance has many characteristics such as the confusion between public and private resources or the pervasiveness of corruption. But in the cases studied here, the most consequential aspects are the weakening of institutions, *big man* rule and the arbitrary nature of decision-making processes (Medard 1991). These have important implications in terms of public policy. One is that decisions are made not necessarily based on bureaucratic and technical advice, but on political considerations. Another is the overwhelming domination of the Executive, and especially the President, who is unlikely to involve the

³ Available in: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_elephant, consulted on March 9, 2023.

parliament or the civil society in decision-making processes.

This brings us to the concept of presidential megaprojects. By encompassing the idea of white elephants and the characteristics of neopatrimonial rules, it provides a framework that improves our understanding of the growing complexity of Sino-African relations and the impact of African domestic political dynamics on the evolution of this cooperation. As Bratton and van de Walle (1997, 84) rightly warned, in a neopatrimonial system, “power is so concentrated that the disposition of the regime is synonymous with the personal fate of the supreme ruler”. Because the projects studied in this article are the result of the personal decision of the sitting Presidents who devise them without broad technical and political consultation for sociopolitical and personal purposes, they lack political consensus and legitimacy and are vulnerable in the event of a political change.

Figure 1: Presidential Megaprojects



Source: The authors

Technical Aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative and Projects

For Africa, the Belt and Road represents a shift in emphasis in Sino-African relations: the resource-swapping trade of the 2000s loses ground

to connectivity and industrial cooperation and the promise of investments in large infrastructure projects (Johnston 2016; Vieira 2019). Some projects overlap with planned regional projects (as was the case with the Port of Lamu-South Sudan-Ethiopia transport corridor) and/or are multi-country (case of the Ethiopia-Djibouti railroad, delivered in 2017) (Breuer 2017). The BRI, in this sense, intersects with African regional ambitions, among them Agenda 2063 and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). Therefore, it is an opportunity for African countries and leaders to operationalize their national and regional strategies (Chen 2018; Lisinge 2020, Gazibo 2022).

Moreover, it is important to note that, in need of financing to develop infrastructure, Africa finds in China a partner with the interest and capacity to mobilize the necessary resources. In 2018 the African Development Bank estimates that the need for investment and maintenance stands at \$130 - \$170 billion a year (African Development Bank 2018). Crucial sectors for the development of African countries, neglected by traditional partners, have allowed China to find room to invest in Africa. Chinese projects are less bureaucratic, faster, and cheaper and in return, Africa provides the resources necessary for its domestic demand - in a *resource-for-infrastructure* model (Cheru and Obi 2010; Johnston 2016; Lisinge 2020).

The Belt and Road Initiative is a global multibillion endeavor which focuses mainly on Africa, Asia, and Europe and, according to the Chinese government, ambitions to achieve “policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure, unimpeded trade, financial integration, and closer people-to-people ties”. The Initiative has proven to be versatile, as it is easy to label the projects of many participating countries as “BRI”⁴, which encourages their adherence. Because it is a broad and flexible initiative, it is difficult to define precisely when a project does or does not belong to it⁵. The problem with this is that there is no official centralized data collection and no rigorous synchronized dissemination, for example, between policy statements and development bank communiqués and reports (Hurley, Morris, and Portelance 2018).

4 BRI projects begin with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). MoUs are documents signed bilaterally at the government level. Although there is no official database, in 2019 the Chinese government published “The Belt and Road Initiative Progress, Contributions and Prospects” presenting data showing that 173 cooperation agreements have been signed with 125 countries and 29 international organizations (Office of the Leading Group for Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative 2019).

5 There is no general constitution treaty, no adhesion protocols, and few formal international law mechanisms exist (Wang 2019 cited in Martinico 2020).

The projects start with a less formal approach that allows for an individualized and contextualized agreement between China and the investment recipient country. From the initial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a “cascading system” is created, generating declarations and documents and “a legally hybrid jungle” (Martinico 2020, 133). Ultimately, while important to the implementation of the BRI, these documents are not legally binding, making it easier to suspend and cancel them.

In addition to the MoUs, the countries involved sign performance agreements, which are secondary agreements, such as contracts. The secondary agreements concern the implementation of the project, dealing with public-private partnerships and financing - in general. They are hard law agreements, which are more complex and long-term (Wang 2021).

To be classified under the BRI in this research, a project must comply with two criteria, namely (i) the signing of the MoU between the country and China took place after 2013; and (ii) they are connectivity and logistics infrastructure projects. The projects discussed in this work fall within this context, even though the idea for the developments appears before the official launch of the BRI. However, despite the general positive trend, these projects have been interrupted. The two cases were at the stage of secondary agreements: the Mamamah airport project in Sierra Leone was beginning to be implemented, which implied the signing of the binding agreement, and the Bagamoyo Port stalled in negotiations on the terms of the investment, construction, and operation of the port. Both interruptions happened after the President who initiated them left office. What is also interesting is that in one case (Tanzania), the new President who suspended the project had come from the same party as his predecessor while in the other (Sierra Leone), the alternation took place between two Presidents coming from two different parties. This difference is important because it means that the reason for the interruption is not ideological. Rather, the reason seems to be idiosyncratic.

In general, there is constant secrecy about agreements between African countries and China. It is also not common in recipient countries to declare the details of the project; to overcome this, we develop the case studies in two stages: (i) pre-agreement analysis, with the collection and analysis of project information in the planning and signing phase of the MoUs and (ii) post-agreement analysis, with the collection and analysis of information on the evolution of the agreements.

Case Studies: Belt and Road Projects Interruption in Tanzania and Sierra Leone

The BRI projects in these two countries are different in nature (port vs. airport), but they share many similarities, beginning with the context for the expected start of construction in both countries. In Sierra Leone, the symbolic “foundation stone” was laid a few days before the election, and in Tanzania two months before the election - which put the projects at the center of the electoral debate. Another similarity between the projects is their centrality to the government’s development agenda. They are *presidential megaprojects*, with strong political appeal; on the one hand, the new “state of the art” airport that would be named after Koroma, and on the other, the mega port of President Kikwete’s hometown.

Another similarity between the projects is that both were intended to displace existing (and reformable) infrastructure. Building from scratch was a political choice of the governments; this, coupled with the domestic context, is a source of weakness precisely because of the legacy factor: these projects are more vulnerable to changes in domestic politics. Interruptions, in this context, occur shortly after changes in the head of state; with the change in political will to advance projects, as well as new government priorities. Thus, Mamamah was cancelled in 2018 and Bagamoyo entered a succession of renegotiations, resulting in the suspension of the project after 2016.

The Tanzanian Case

We examine the Bagamoyo port case in this section, which was suspended indefinitely in 2019. The partnerships between China and Tanzania are primarily commercial now, but Tanzania has historically been a significant political ally of China on the continent. Despite not being the focus of Chinese investment, Tanzania’s infrastructure industry has exploded recently, making up roughly 15% of the country’s GDP in 2016. The Magufuli Government (December 2015 to March 2021) has committed a sizeable portion of its budget to infrastructure development despite the nation’s budgetary difficulties. To consolidate the Initiative, the government has sought finance from both established and new partners (Kim and Tuki 2018), concomitant with China increasing the number of MoUs under the BRI.

Tanzania is presenting itself, not just for China, but for other nations, as a candidate to attract more and more investments in connectivity and logistics infrastructure due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean and its role as the main gateway for several surrounding nations without access to the sea. Considering this trend, the government of Jakaya Kikwete (December

2005 to November 2015) conceived the Bagamoyo project and found in the Chinese partners the willingness to invest in the Port and Special Economic Zone project in Bagamoyo, the president's hometown (Makundi, Huyse, and Develtere 2017).

Bagamoyo's project design

The idea for the new Bagamoyo Port emerged in 2007 in a study funded by the World Bank (Hönke 2018). This study indicated the difficulties faced by the port of Dar es Salaam⁶ and possible solutions to the issue. Dar's physical expansion capacity is limited and, as a result, its inefficiency has cost the country and its neighbors about US\$2.6 billion (Kim and Tukic 2018). In this context, the government chose to build an additional new port at Mbegani in the Bagamoyo region (Ministry of Industry and Trade 2011; Kim and Tukic 2018).

Making the area a regional marine hub was the goal of the proposed port, which would be among the largest in all of Africa. The port is a component of a broader proposal that also entails the development of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which was motivated by the industrial complexes that were built in coastal areas like Dubai and Shenzhen. The Bagamoyo SEZ includes a canal, a port construction, a logistics park, and an industrial free zone (Shaw, Botes, and Buck 2018; Ministry of Industry and Trade 2011).

Considered by the Kikwete government to be the centerpiece of the country's industrialization in the 21st century, the Bagamoyo SEZ, located 60 km north of Dar (see figure 2) and it was expected to overtake Dar in cargo volume by 2020 (Ministry of Industry and Trade 2011).

Figure 2 – Localization of the Tanzanian ports

⁶ Dar responds for 95% of Tanzania's maritime traffic and is responsible for shipping production from Zambia, Malawi and Burundi and a large share of goods from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. In 2011, according to information disclosed in the Integrated Industrial Development Strategy 2025, demand for cargo handling have been increasing by 13.1 percent per year (Ministry of Industry and Trade 2011).



Source: BBC (2015)⁷

The memorandum of understanding between the governments for the development of the project was signed in early 2013, during Xi Jinping's visit to the country. This opportunity marked Tanzania's entry into the Belt and Road Initiative. This represents a shift in China-Tanzania relations, as since 2006, cooperation between the two has been primarily focused on agriculture (Cabestan and Chaponnière 2016). The Bagamoyo port project, with an estimated US\$10 billion budget, has been intended to be developed as a public-private partnership (PPP), at little or no expense to the government. Additionally, several advantages for SEZ investors have been disclosed, including a tax exemption for 10 years and an automatic visa quota for five foreign workers with specific skills (The World Bank 2018; The East African 2013).

The construction was intended to begin in 2014, but the opposition was successful in delaying it. However, the project gained momentum after the Oman State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) and China Merchants Ports (CMPorts) signed a development deal in October 2014, bringing the Arab nation into the project (Cabestan and Chaponnière 2016). At that time, the date set for the start of construction was July 1st, 2015.

Bagamoyo after the elections

⁷ Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34554524>

The election of John Magufuli in 2015, whose priority was the fight against corruption, resulted in some adjustments in the ties with China, albeit indirectly⁸. Additionally, despite belonging to the same party, the new administration didn't prioritize Bagamoyo as much as its predecessor did.

Due to concerns and criticism regarding the port project's construction, particularly in relation to its size and location, away from the new gas deposits, the beginning of its construction has been postponed once more and it was reported that construction would not begin until after the elections, scheduled for October (Honan and Ng'wanakilala 2015). Yet, during the election process, construction began, marked by the speech in which Kikwte declared that the work would be an "industrial revolution" for the country (Global Construction Review 2015; Daily News Reporter 2015; The East African 2015).

The project's first setback under the new administration occurred in January 2016, when it was put on hold for additional research for a period of six months. The Magufuli administration had also indicated that it would concentrate on modernizing the port of Dar es Salaam, with funding previously authorized by the World Bank and coming from the Bank of the United Kingdom, and TradeMark East Africa Bank, totaling US\$596 million. It is important to keep in mind that the opposition had condemned the project during the elections as a waste of public money and for not consulting parliament beforehand (Hönke and Cuesta-Fernandez 2018; The Citizen 2015; The East African 2016). Thus, the suspension has also become politically strategic.

The Magufuli administration had not completely ruled out the Bagamoyo SEZ (including the port). The project's progress (although delayed) was briefly described in the Government's Five-Year Plan, which was unveiled in June 2016. It should be emphasized that the new port in Bagamoyo is still seen in that document as a crucial project for the development of Tanzania's Central Corridor. Nevertheless, the commencement of construction has once again been delayed.

The end of the chapter of Bagamoyo (for now)

AAfter more delays, the Government of Tanzania was prepared to negotiate a revised investment proposal made by CMPorts and SGRF of Oman in June 2017 in accordance with the current government policies for

⁸ One example is the limitation of external travel for government officials, which consequently led to a reduction in employee training in China. In addition, the President was absent from the 2015 and 2018 FOCAC summits, sending considerably smaller delegations than in previous years (Makundi, Huyse, and Develtere 2017; Kim and Tukil 2018).

private sector development investments (Ministry of Finance and Planning 2018). The project would begin operating between 2020 and 2021 and be finished by 2022, according to an announcement made by the Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment in late 2017 (Hönke 2018; The Citizen 2017a; 2017b).

As of 2018, there hasn't been any work on the port project. In late 2018, during the FOCAC Summit in Beijing, ironically the Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa stated the nation's intention in increasing its participation in the BRI (Xinhua 2018). The Initiative's first project in the nation was precisely Bagamoyo and it was never started. Majaliwa claimed that throughout the conversations, the administration remained interested in talking about the project, which would be crucial in assisting Tanzania's economic development (Machira 2018). Despite the optimistic atmosphere, the negotiations went on without making any significant progress.

The disagreement between the parties involved in negotiating was again highlighted in the media in 2019. Both parties made public accusations regarding the negotiation, and the project's steps continued ambiguously between moving forward with the work or continuing to renegotiate. Shortly thereafter, President Magufuli suspended the construction of the port indefinitely, stating some of the terms: *"those investors are coming with tough conditions that can only be accepted by mad people. They told us once they build the port, there should be no other port to be built all the way from Tanga to Mtwara south"* (Mwangasha 2019). The President also revealed some of the clauses of the contract, a maneuver to put pressure on the Chinese: *"They want us to give them a guarantee of 33 years and a lease of 99 years, and we should not question whoever comes to invest there once the port is operational. They want to take the land as their own, but we have to compensate them for drilling construction of that port"* (Mwangasha 2019).

Answering these claims, CMPorts accused the Tanzanian government of leaking false information about the causes of the delays in the negotiations; the company announced that it had not received any documents containing the new demands and accused Kakoko (director of Tanzania Ports Authority, who, according to the company's representative, was not at the negotiation meetings) of fabricating information, as the parties had already reached an agreement on the 33-year concession (The Citizen 2019b; The East African 2019).

This shows that there was less political will in the Tanzanian government to negotiate the deal, contrary to the personal investment of Kikwete, who saw the development of his hometown as a source of political capital (Kim and TukiC 2018) and expressed the commitment that he will do

everything to assure the take-off of the project (Ng'wanakilala 2014).

The Sierra Leone Case

In Sierra Leone, China has become an important bilateral partner in recent years, investing heavily in high-deficit sectors such as civil construction. Sierra Leone's government, like Tanzania's, is committed to advancing the country's political and economic development. The launch of the Agenda for Prosperity in early 2013 created new opportunities to expand partnerships with China and President Ernest Bai Koroma announced in July 2013 that he had signed with them agreements to build infrastructure worth approximately \$8 billion, including the new Mamamah airport (Datzberger 2013; Jalloh 2021).

In general, Chinese construction firms entered the Sierra Leonean market in the 1980s, with a brief pause during the civil war (1991-2002). With the loss of most infrastructure due to the war, the country suffers from several deficiencies in the sector. In this context, China has built several public buildings, bridges, and dams, in addition to the National Stadium and the University of Sierra Leone (Centre for Chinese Studies 2006).

The Mamamah airport

The Mamamah airport project was initially negotiated with China in 2011⁹ with funding from the Chinese Eximbank and would be built by the China Railway Group (CRG). However, this first attempt, planned against a backdrop of Sierra Leone's 17 percent annual growth, was postponed due to declining commodity prices, and diminishing resources available in the country (Global Construction Review 2016; Koroma 2012). In 2013, the Sierra Leonean government released the Third Generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2013-2018), also known as the Agenda for Prosperity. Its goal is to make Sierra Leone a middle-income country by 2035, with 80 percent of the population above the poverty line. The construction of the Mamamah Airport (and the surrounding administrative town) is listed in the document as an important element in achieving this. The overall goal of the project

9 According to Kamara (2018) however, "the Mamamah Airport is an idea that was first conceived in 1973 by the government of the then Prime Minister Siaka Stevens of blessed memory after extensive engineering studies done proved that Mamamah area will be best suitable for the airport. In 2009 and 2010, another study was done, and the conclusion was the same. Therefore, the decision for the airport was never motivated by any political consideration but was informed by a series of aerodrome engineering advisory opinion". <https://sierraexpressmedia.com/?p=85824>, consulted March 9, 2023.

is to improve the country's international competitiveness, which has been experiencing constant economic losses due to poor infrastructure (The Government of Sierra Leone 2013).

The airport project has become one of the major infrastructure projects of the Koroma government (Awoko Newspaper 2013); according to a publication from the Ministry of Transport and Aviation (2016), the project would attract investment and expand economic activity in the country, in addition to improving competitiveness. It is important to note that an airport near Freetown and in the mainland as Mamamah would solve the current mobility issues at Lungi International Airport¹⁰.

Figure 3 – Airport issue in Freetown, Sierra Leone



Source:CNN (2018)¹¹

To increase the revenue generation outside of the aviation industry, the project also involved building a commercial and administrative city. The project was expected to cost \$318 million as of 2016 (the first phase was valued at \$200 million) and was supposed to be finished in 4 years (Ministry of Transport and Aviation 2016). The concessional loan for its construction was

¹⁰ There are currently two travel options between Freetown and Lungi: a 4+ hour drive or at least a 30-minute ferry ride across the estuary. The ferry is often delayed, for example due to increased rainfall (Lu 2020, 20; The East African 2018b)..

¹¹ Available at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/11/africa/china-africa-sierra-leone-airport-intl/index.html>

approved by the Chinese Eximbank and the new bilateral agreement between the Chinese government and the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) was signed in 2015.

After the deal, the cancellation

In July 2015, it was announced that the Chinese company responsible for building the airport was already on site waiting to begin construction. Construction was supposed to start in 2014 but was delayed by the Ebola epidemic (Awoko Newspaper 2015b). At a meeting between Presidents Koroma and Xi Jinping in September 2015 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, the Sierra Leonean president asked the Chinese president to help prevent the project from collapsing and left with assurances that work would return as soon as possible (Awoko Newspaper 2015a; Lamin 2016).

In April 2016, the local Awoko Newspaper reported that the project was struggling to get off the ground, due to pressure from the International Monetary Fund (that already had concerns about the economic feasibility and has had the study reconducted), which led to the delay in signing the final agreement. The China Railway team had already been in the country for a few years, having cleared the area, taken soil samples, set up the work camp and installed the weather station (Awoko Newspaper 2016a). In 2016, in December, during a visit to China, Koroma reinforced that both governments wanted to continue the Mamamah project. The President expressed his intention to expedite the signing of the final agreement and begin construction quickly (Awoko Newspaper 2016b; Sesay 2016). In 2017, further delays were attributed to discussions between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance with the World Bank and IMF, on how to finance the work (Awoko Newspaper 2017; Thomas 2017).

The project did not actually begin until March 2018, just days before the elections. European observers reported that the APC party used campaign space to make official announcements of the incumbent government, including the Mamamah Airport advertisement – which had been criticized in the local media outlet The Sierra Leone Telegraph (Thomas 2018). According to the EU Election Observer mission (2018, 22), the President commissioned the airport in party colors (rather than national colors) and stated in a State House press release that the new airport, “his dream project”, would “take the country to the next level”. In fact, as an observer remarks, after he got the assurance from his counterpart that China will fund the project in 2015, President Bai Koroma was “obviously in jolly mood and smiling from ear to ear”. He went on to add that “the airport will add to the magnificent legacy of national developments that President Koroma will leave Sierra Leone when

his term expires”¹².

Even having the project started did not prevent it from being cancelled a few months after the new President and opposition candidate Julius Maada Bio took office (Al Jazeera 2018). The current government’s focus would be on renovating the Lungi airport (which has a loan of about \$200 million negotiated with the World Bank) and building the Lungi bridge project (estimated at \$1 billion to \$2 billion). Bio criticized Mamamah’s project during the campaign, calling it fake and promising to cancel the construction if elected (The East African 2018; Reuters 2018; Awoko Newspaper 2018; Quirke 2018; Thomas 2018).

Despite the cancellation (and criticism to China), the Bio government has not distanced itself from the Asian giant, and the reversal of the project has not compromised Sino-Sierra Leonean relations. During a September 2018 visit to China for FOCAC, President Bio even proposed that the new Lungi Bridge be built by Power China International Group (Reuters 2018; Awoko Newspaper 2018). This new move may well be the first of new *presidential megaprojects* under the leadership of President Maada Bio, who decided in addition, in favor of the extension of the Lungi airport. According to a former MP under the Bai Koroma administration, this extension was surrounded by controversies and while according to the Constitution, “no loan shall be raised by the Government on behalf of itself or any other public institution or authority otherwise than by or under the authority of an Act of Parliament”; the supposed contract between the [Bio] government and SUMMA Group was never made public neither ratified by parliament”¹³.

Conclusion: Megapresidential Projects, BRI Projects and the Future of Sino-African Relations

Sino-African relations are not static, and they are not just positive or negative for the continent. Our efforts were aimed at understanding the nuances and how these relations have evolved and been adapted to the new realities and needs of partner countries. The African continent is diverse in many ways, with different political systems and economic agendas. Therefore, each country develops its own relationship with China. In this context, we must recognize, also, the role of domestic dynamics during all phases of

¹² Available at <https://cocorioko.net/president-ernest-koroma-delighted-that-mamamah-international-airport-project-remains-on-track/>.

¹³ Available at: SUMMA group is a Turkish construction company.<http://owlpress-sl.com/lungi-airport-extension-project-a-testament-of-slpps-failure-in-fighting-corruption/>.

major projects. Different actors are (or want to be) involved in the processes of negotiation and implementation of projects, from civil society to political parties.

We have attempted, in this article, to explain why some African countries, in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, decide to halt a project after signing a cooperation agreement. The initial hypothesis was that internal political dynamics and changes in African countries, explain the termination of signed cooperation agreements. The cases examined also show that there is room for African actors to express themselves, and that domestic politics have a significant impact on agents' attitudes toward cooperation agreements, which contributes to their interruption or maintenance.

In Tanzania and Sierra Leone, the context of the two countries in relation to the expected projects is similar. They are at the heart of their governments' development programs. In addition, the two case studies represent a certain type of project, namely the "*presidential megaprojects*". These projects, as our data suggest, have a strong link with the Presidents who idealize them, acquiring a "legacy" character. Therefore, these projects are ambiguous, as they are perhaps necessary, but raise doubts, such as the choice of location (Bagamoyo), the cost or the need for a second infrastructure for the same purpose (Mamamah). For these reasons, they are more likely to be impacted negatively when there are changes in domestic politics, notably a presidential turnover.

Finally, the results found in this work propose a research agenda for the future, to compare with other mega infrastructure projects on the African continent that have not been cancelled. Even if our attempt at generalization is ultimately limited to these cases, it is possible to argue that African countries share the need to strengthen their agency in the face of asymmetric relationships and to learn from their experiences. Reducing the vulnerability of these agreements to major infrastructure projects ultimately benefits both China and African countries.

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to analyze the Sino-African relations and in particular the Belt and Road Initiative investments through the study of deviant cases. Using the cases of interrupted cooperation agreements in Sierra Leone and Tanzania under the initiative, this article argues that the interruption is caused mainly by the nature of the projects which make them vulnerable to changes in domestic politics. To explain this, we propose the concept of *presidential megaprojects*.

KEYWORDS

Belt and Road Initiative; Africa; Presidential megaprojects

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A TALE OF TWO JIHADS: UNRAVELING THE ATROCITIES OF THE ISLAMIC STATE IN THE GREATER SAHARA (ISGS) AND JAMA'AT NASR AL-ISLAM WAL MUSLIMIN (JNIM) IN THE SAHEL

Frederick Appiah Afriyie¹

Introduction

The Sahel is a large area that borders the Sahara Desert. It includes Chad, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania. Over the years, the Sahel is gradually being referred to as “the latest front in the war on terrorism” by the US military, according to the International Crisis Group (2005). Terrorist attacks within the Sahel region have increased nearly sevenfold in the last three years, according to Zenn and Clarke (2020) of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. In reality, Islamist militant groups spread unprecedentedly in 2019 in the Sahel and West African regions. The spread began in 2012 within Mali as an Islamic insurgency and progressed subtly across the region, first to Niger and then later to Burkina Faso. Concerning the orchestration of terrorist attacks in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, the United Nations data estimated that about four thousand people were killed. Niger, in particular, recorded a quintupled figure in 2019 against the 770 people killed in 2016.

Furthermore, although extremist violence killed 306 people in Burkina Faso in 2018, 1,853 people were killed in 2019, representing a 506% rise over the previous year. A phenomenal deadly wave of attacks struck the Sahel at the end of 2019. Over 70 people were assassinated in pursuance to a military base attack in Inates, Niger, in December, while 39 gold miners were killed in a Burkina Faso ambush in November. Additionally, the Mali

¹ Researcher at Research Center for Analysis and Security Studies (RECASS). E-mail: kaaf0712@gmail.com. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6594-0816>

attacks in November of that same year (2019) recorded the killing of some 49 persons (Moody, 2020). Notwithstanding the operations undertaken by diverse militant groups in the Sahel, the two most prominent perpetrators of attacks in recent years have been the Al Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State (IS)-affiliated Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (Moody, 2020).

Although the two militant organizations operate in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, the activities and operations of the JNIM have been broadened to Algeria, Mauritania, and Chad (CISAC, 2018). On the flip side, the Islamic State of Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) are both fighting for supremacy in the Sahel region. Their rivalry is becoming increasingly deadly, and civilians are trapped in the middle. Consequently, the area is experiencing an influx of refugees. As a result, the Sahel now has 3.1 million refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and stateless residents, with the number increasing. The number of internally displaced people in Burkina Faso has more than quadrupled since June 2019, rising from 193,000 to 848,000 at the end of April. As a matter of fact, if the issue continues, the Sahel's deteriorating condition may have significant ramifications for West African countries. Undoubtedly, Islamist extremist groups like ISGS and JNIM, which operate in the central Sahel (Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso), are presumed to create and establish offshoots in neighboring states like Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire. The May 2019 kidnapping of tourists and the murder of the accompanying tour guide in Benin while on tour to the Pendjari National Park raised eyebrows. What makes it more alarming is that this atrocity is alleged to have been perpetrated by Islamist extremists in a country (Benin) where the activities of Islamist extremists were initially unheard of (Moody, 2020).

Consequently, the primary goal of this paper is to investigate Jihadism's trajectory in Africa's Sahel, as well as the rise of Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). In addition, it investigates the coordinated activities of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and of the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). Furthermore, it will look into the clashes between the Islamic State of Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM).

Methodology

The content review method was adopted to gather information from extant literature and other secondary data of prime essence to conduct this

study. This research relies heavily on government reports, journal articles, reports from NGOs, knowledge from online media, and committee and expert reports, among other sources. Using the extant literature, data gathered were carefully studied and critically analyzed in order to arrive at a clear content conclusion (Carter et al., 2014). Per the aim of the research, that is, to comprehensively unearth the dynamics underpinning Africa's Sahel's seemingly uncontrollable and overfamiliar political crisis, it will undoubtedly enrich the debate and shed considerable light on the topic. The study would also promote a level of understanding that would enable stakeholders to formulate effective countervailing measures to return Africa's Sahel to its halcyon days.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

There is no precise or clear conceptualization of the term terrorism. Considering the differences in contextual usage between institutions, states, and even research communities, there seems to be a lack of a single definition (Tuman, 2003). Attempts to proffer a definition for the term 'terrorism' differ in many contexts per its usage (i.e., amongst researchers, states, and other specialized institutions). Owing to the absence of a clear definition and the varying perspectives (political, personal, and even emotional) ascriptions to 'terrorism' it makes it problematic and nearly impossible to reach a point of unanimity in identifying who a terrorist is and the tenets that constitute terrorism. The effect of this uncertainty creates the possibility for a hero in a particular jurisdiction to perhaps be [mis]construed as an insurgent in another. With the principles governing the activities of the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) insurgency as foci, the study explains terrorism as "the use of force or threat of the use of force to invoke or provoke a political change." Besides, from a religious viewpoint, our research describes terrorism as political violence that is faith-driven or believed and pursued as an aspect of some form of religion. Terrorist groups usually pledge allegiance to certain faith-based tenets by which they pursue inhumane terrorist activities in the name of and promotion of such faith doctrines.

With faith as the premise, terrorists believe that by carrying out such atrocities, some form of clemency would be bestowed unto them in the life hereafter and even be recompensed for their unwavering support for upholding such faith. Martin (2015) advances that as long as a religious system sees the perpetration of violence as being in the deity's will, it could

succinctly be deemed an explicit authorization of violence by that religious body. Arguably, religion, in one sense or the other, fuels terrorist ideologies and pursuits. Furthermore, Jeffrey Seul (1999) contended that conflicts labeled as religious conflicts do not necessarily stem from religious matters but often have nonreligious origins. These conflicts are referred to as religious conflicts because religion acts as the binding and rallying identity. Seul's viewpoint is that religion should not be seen as the root cause of these conflicts; instead, it often serves as the boundary where intergroup identity and competition for resources converge.

With narrowed foci on the ISGS and the JNIM, this paper, as far as possible, examines how the activities of terrorists are rationalized and authenticated by religious beliefs. In this pursuit, the work is anchored in the deprivation theory espoused by Gurr (1970). This theory would be adopted to clarify the dominance of the ISGS and the JNIM revolts. Inference from Gurr Ted Roberts's (1970) concept of deprivation implies that when the citizenry is bedeviled with issues of scarcity, denial of legitimate entitlements, or starvation, there is a high propensity for disruption and termination of stability in a country. The fact remains that when citizens compare their condition of life to that of others, thereby recognizing the gaps and unfairness, they are inclined to become enraged and feel compelled to express their rage through illegitimate means such as violence. Gurr (1970) further advances that the measure to which group members feel deprived [degree of relative deprivation] nurtures a breeding ground for collective violence to sprout. He attributes this condition to people's eagerness to transcend their social means, so they also exhibit their asphyxiation and annoyance with systems whenever they encounter insufficient foundations to advance or realize their hopes.

Furthermore, Gurr (2005) asserts that structural poverty and inequality within nations serve as fertile soil for the emergence of violent political movements in general and terrorism in particular. By examining his research on relative deprivation and conflict in Northern Ireland, Birrel (1972) argues that tensions among groups arise due to the disparity between the desired "ought" state and the actual "is" state of fulfilling collective values. Similarly, Davies (1962) contends that political violence emerges from the overwhelming disparity between individuals' desires and actual attainments, highlighting the contrast between expectations and satisfaction. According to Davies, this divergence creates a profoundly unfortunate encounter of such magnitude and concentration that it can lead to either rebellion or revolution (Davies 1962). The underlying essence of these works revolves around the notion that acts of violence thrive within an environment marked by persistent grievances resulting from a sense of relative deprivation. To this end, the

deprivation theory's assumptions duly pre-empt and offer practical analogies as to why terrorist groups exist and operate, aside from the religious reasons earlier alluded to. Given the inequitable situation that led to the formation of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), our research appropriately utilizes the theory of deprivation as the conceptual and theoretical framework undergirding this work.

How did Jihadism gain a foothold in the Sahel region of Africa?

Liptako Gourma, um território nas fronteiras do Mali, Burkina Faso e NígeLiptako Gourma, a territory on the frontiers of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, has become a hub of Jihadism in the Sahel. The terrorist groups associated with this savagery are the Jamaat Al-Nusra Al-Islam Wal Muslimin (JNIM) network in Mali, shaped by Al-Qaeda of the Maghreb (AQIM), Katiba Macina, Al-Mourabitoun and Ansar Dine; the Islamic State of the Great Sahara (ISGS) in Niger, connected to Daesh, and Ansaraoul Islam in Burkina Faso, which has a cozy relationship with the JNIM, In truth, less than 15 years ago, there was no fear of Jihadist terrorism in this area, and one of the key reasons for this is that the predominant Muslim tendency is Sufism rather than Salafism. Despite the fact that neither current is more predisposed to violence than the other, the Sufist tradition cultivates a personal relationship with God and is considered more mystical than the Salafist. The latter is more conservative, focusing on re-establishing the Islamic vision practiced by early Muslims. In the heterogeneous society of Liptako gourma, the Sufi trend can coexist with some customs of traditional African religions and even adopt some methods. The people who became Jihadist leaders were Sufist Muslims, heads of their communities, and traditional religious leaders (Beatriz de León Cobo, 2020). However, two historical events must be considered in order to comprehend how jihadist groups were initially formed in West Africa.

The first is the Algerian Civil War, which began in 1992 when the military attempted to execute a coup in order to prevent the Islamic Party from winning national elections, resulting in anarchy. The Islamic fighters eventually departed the nation, seeking sanctuary in a remote region of northern Mali, where they proceeded to rebuild, engage in criminal operations, and form alliances with local rebel organizations. The overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011 was another momentous event. He was slain in an ambush by a local militia in his hometown of Sirte as the

Arab world's longest-serving tyrant (France24, 2011). Gaddafi's rule was a huge help to northern Mali, where the inhabitants felt abandoned by the Malian government in the south, and the pastoral industry had been ravaged by drought. Therefore, when the Gaddafi regime collapsed, northern Mali lost its prominent economic supporters, while fighters and weapons from Libya flowed into the region.

These two events triggered what happened next. In March, a month-long military coup created a power vacuum that allowed the insurgents to occupy large areas of northern Mali. Since then, the insurgents have been hijacked by Islamic radicals. The French army intervened within a few days and regained the north from the jihadists, but they did not defeat them. In Burkina Faso alone, 500,000 people are currently displaced, and the recent surge in violence has forced thousands to flee their homes. Although some of these groups have adopted the brands of international terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State or Al Qaeda, they are still very localized organizations. This is one of the reasons why these organizations have been so successful.

The emergence of the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin(JNIM) and of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara(ISGS)

In the Sahel, the JNIM coalition began with four al Qaeda-linked Islamist militant organizations: The Macina Liberation Front (FLM), Ansar Dine, al-Mourabitoun, and al-Qaeda the Islamic Maghreb's Sahara Emirate (AQIM Sahara). The merger was announced in a video published on March 2, 2017, including the four organizations' leaders declaring the formation of the JNIM. Amado Diallo, also known as Amadou Koufa [MLF commander], b) AQIM Sahel chief and deputy, Djamel Okacha and Abderrahman al-Sanhaji, respectively; c) AAD leader Iyad Ag Gali (Abu al-Fadhel), and finally d) Muhammad Ould Nouini, deputy leader of al-Mourabitoun, affirmed the foundation of the JNIM (under Mukhtar Balmokhtar). The composition of the organizations was crucial because the respective heads represented Arab jihadists from the Maghreb and Sahel, Fulani, and Tuaregs. The diversity of ethnic and regional representation has established the illusion of one community with far-reaching effects.

In fact, each of these component groups has its own set of interests, regional influences, and sources of inspiration (Thurston, 2020). The JNIM is currently driven by Ansar Dine's Iyad Ag Ghali and the FLM's Amadou Koufa and Katiba Serma, a less dynamic FLM branch-off led by Abu Jalil al-Fulani.

Iyad Ag Ghali, the founder behind Ansar Dine, is the emir of the JNIM. He founded Ansar Dine in 2011 after the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), a Tuareg separatist movement in northern Mali, refused to name him its leader. Ag Ghali, an Ifoghas Kel Adagh Tuareg, hails from the Kidal Region of northern Mali, where he participated in Tuareg rebellions beginning in the 1990s. As commander of Ansar Dine, he formed an alliance with AQIM and MNLA in 2012 and declared northern Mali an Islamic State in May. By July 2012, Tuareg separatists had been defeated by Ansar Dine and the AQIM Sahara in Kidal and Timbuktu, respectively. For most of 2012, ultra-Islamic factions dominated northern Mali before advancing south into the more populous central provinces (Eizenga & Williams, 2020). Thanks to a French-African military operation (Operational Serval) launched at the request of the Malian government in January 2013, the insurgents were spread throughout the countryside, where they took refuge in northern Mali's difficult and wide terrain. Ag Ghali employed Ansar Dine fighters to construct a political enclave in the north of Mali and among the country's numerous armed groups since then.

Amadou Koufa began preaching radicalism in central Mali after Ansar Dine was dispersed following Operation Serval. After meeting with Pakistani preachers from the Dawa sect in the 2000s, Koufa, a Fulani from Niafunké, Mali, is reportedly radicalized (Le Roux 2019). Koufa used local concerns exacerbated by Fulani pastoralists to rally support while simultaneously pushing for the establishment of an Islamic theocracy. With the help of local relatives, Koufa successfully cultivated a following in central Mali in 2015. As the leader of the FLM, Koufa launched the deadliest rebellion of all JNIM parties in an attempt to destabilize established conventional experts and spread his Sharia-based ideology into central Mali. The activities and presence of the FLM spread to northern Burkina Faso through its association with Ansaroul Islam, a radical Islamic group in Burkina Faso founded by one of Koufa's disciples, Ibrahim Dicko.

After Dicko died in 2017, radical Islamist militants used existing criminal networks to expand operations on the Burkina Faso-Niger border. As the FLM moved south from central Mali into northern and north-central Burkina Faso, other remnants of Islam Ansaroul reintegrated into it. FLM has had significant success in these heavily populated locations, benefiting from a greater pool of potential recruits and sales. Experts believe that JNIM-affiliated groups earn between \$18 and \$35 million per year, mostly from extortion of transit routes under their control, communities engaged in artisanal mining, and, to a lesser extent, ransom kidnappings (Nellemann, Christian, et al., 2018). Despite the JNIM having ties to the AQIM, the AQIM could never

build up a significant local support system in the Sahel. Its regional relevance is also fading, even in Algeria, where it originated (Porter 2019). Al Qaeda-affiliated leaders like Abdekmalek Droukdel (AQIM), Djamel Okcha and Ali Maychou (AQIM Sahara), Mohamed Ould Nouini (al Mourabitoun), and others definitely expedited the decline of any direct influence the global al Qaeda network may have had over JNIM-affiliated fighters.

Meanwhile, uncertainty regarding the current status of AQIM Sahara and al Mourabitoun highlights a crucial role for JNIM. The JNIM coalition creates the appearance of cohesion, command, control, and invulnerability by putting up a united front that hides the numerous setbacks each of these factions has endured. Since 2016, the number of violent incidents and related fatalities in the Sahel has nearly doubled annually, contributing to this misperception. But FLM is almost entirely to blame for this. As a result of the FLM's affiliation with the JNIM coalition, foreign and regional forces are less likely to pay the group any attention despite its growing notoriety (Eizenga & Williams, 2020).

ISGS, on the other hand, was formed in 2015 by Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi from the merger of pre-existing radical Islamist groups. However, French forces have recently killed Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, head of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISIS-GS), in a drone strike, the French government declared on Thursday, September 16, 2021. At a press conference, Florence Parly said Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi surrendered to his injuries, experienced in a strike on a motorbike conveying two individuals during a French-led air and ground operation in Mali, French minister for the armed forces. The activity occurred between August 17 and 22, 2021 (Joseph and Saskya, 2021). However, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi was born in Laayoune, the controversial capital of Western Sahara, in 1973 (counterextremism, 2022). He is the grandson of a Saharan chief, and his family is considered well-connected and wealthy.

In the 1990s, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi was resettled in a Saharan exile camp in Algeria. Around that time, he joined the Polisario Front, a movement for the liberation of the Sahara, which aimed to end the Moroccan presence in Western Sahara. Al-Sahrawi's whereabouts in the 1990s and 2000s are largely unknown. He most likely navigated between the nascent factions of militant Islamist groups forming in the porous region between the Maghreb and the Sahel. Additionally, he traded with Tuareg militants from the Azawad movement in northern Mali. Around this time, in 2011, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) was founded (Le Roux, 2019). While the three founders were previously members of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), they wanted to create a *katiba* (military unit)

composed of Arab fighters from the north of Mali. MUJAO's ideology drew on references to Osama bin Laden, former Taliban leader Mullah Omar, and historical figures such as Usman dan Fodio (founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, 1804-1903), El Hadj Umar Tall (1797-1864) and Seku Amadu (who helped establish the Macina Empire in Mali, 1818-1862).

Al Sahrawi is believed to have joined MUJAO in 2012 and has served as the organization's spokesman since then (Thomas and Caleb, 2016). The al-Mulathameen brigade, led by Algerian militants closely associated with AQIM, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, and MUJAO, represented by al Sahrawi, announced the merger on August 22, 2013. Al Sahrawi has become a key leader of the new group al Mourabitoun. Al Sahrawi unilaterally proclaimed al-Mourabitoun's allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) commander, in 2015. Belmokhtar rejected this allegiance and, a few days later, reiterated al Mourabitoun's loyalty to al-Qaeda (Le point (2017). Al Sahrawi created ISGS, as it is currently known, after breaking away from al Mourabitoun. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi formally confirmed Al Sahrawi's vow more than a year later, in October 2016, following ISGS operations in Niger and Burkina Faso.

ISGS began operations in the Gao region of Mali, focusing on the town of Menaka, sometimes extending westward to the Mopti region. ISGS activities swiftly spread to Niger's Tillabéri region, although most of the original militants were Malians from the highlands. In October 2017, ISGS claimed credit for an attack at Tongo Tongo, Niger (near the Mali border) that killed five Nigerien Special Forces and four American soldiers (Callimachi 2018). As a result, ISGS expanded its operations into Mali's Gurma region and eastern Burkina Faso in 2017 and 2018. ISGS reportedly has a core of 100 warriors, but their survival depends on a network of informants and logistical support from sympathetic locals. It may have 300-425 members, including Niger and Burkina Faso supporters. Unlike other radical Islamist groups operating in the Sahel, ISGS does not appear to have developed a coherent, politically based narrative. ISGS focuses on expanding the battlefield, not convincing people, gaining moral support, or building a base. Its focus on mobility might explain how it could strike and remain active on the borders of three countries despite the limited number of active fighters. One goal appears to be to pressure the few security forces available to police these large border areas. Despite its official separation from the AQIM network, ISGS continues to work with al-Qaeda-affiliated groups. In this way, ISGS is close to the AQIM offshoot. While ISGS uses the ISGS brand to increase its visibility – and ISIS benefits from an active global network – for all practical purposes, it operates within its own organizational framework, goals, and resources (Le

Roux, 2019).

Coordinated activities by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin(JNIM)

Despite the JNIM and ISGS being members of rival terrorist organizations, they found ways to communicate and work together. European Eye on Radicalization (2020) states that when it comes to the ISGS and JNIM, it is well known that up until 2017, there was communication between the two groups' senior leadership, and there have been rumors of interactions at a lower level. The two parties draw on comparable and (literally) related ethnic and tribal groups in order to achieve their shared objective of driving out Western powers. Colin Clarke (2020) asserts that the literature on terrorist collaboration explains why organizations cooperate in the first place. It has to deal with resources, fending off existential threats, and learning, among other things. Also, according to Brian J. Phillips (2012), when terrorist organizations cooperate, they may be able to share resources, spread information, and possibly enhance their capabilities. Collaborations provide terrorist groups access to cutting-edge equipment and methods. In general, allied groups are deadlier than unallied ones. Perhaps for these reasons, terrorists collaborate in a wide range of contexts. Nsaibia, Héni, and Caleb Weiss (2020) claim that cooperative actions typically lead to the formation of a special bond between the two parties. The collaboration between the ISGS and the JNIM on raids can be cited on at least five occasions, though there may be more. It is worth noting that, unlike other attacks mentioned later in this section, none of these groups were dual or conflicting in these cases. Instead, in each of the five instances, the attack was alleged by one of the parties, although independent sources later reported that ISGS and JNIM activists took part in the raid. Aside from the five coordinated actions carried out by two terrorist organizations, which will be discussed in more detail later, for instance, the war in Niger's western Tillabéri area, which borders Burkina Faso and Mali, has gotten much worse since the year 2021 (Amnesty International, 2021).

In addition to being slain, kidnapped, denied the chance to attend school, and forcibly displaced, children have also been recruited to fight. Girls have sometimes been compelled to marry warriors and suffered restrictions on their ability to leave the house in some places. Armed groups have destroyed schools and intimidated teachers throughout the region to protest what they view as secular or "Western" teaching (BBC, 2019). As of June 2021, this led to

the closure of at least 377 schools in the Tillabéri region, displacing more than 31,000 students (Amnesty International, 2021). The Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), which has ties to Al-Qaida, and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) are the two primary armed organizations in charge of the uprising in the region that straddles Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Both organizations operate across shifting borders and defy state dominance. While the JNIM has established itself close to populations along the Niger-Burkina Faso border, recruiting and exerting control over daily life, ISGS has been carrying out frequent large-scale attacks on people along the Niger-Mali border since early 2020 and forcibly displacing entire villages. Given the intensity of the violence and the degree of ISGS and JNIM organization, according to an Amnesty International study from 2021, the situation in the tri-border region of Niger is a constitute non-global armed conflict that has been ongoing since late 2019. Both parties have killed civilians and targeted schools in the Tillabéri region, among other war crimes. Children may also be the target of or adversely impacted by crimes against humanity committed by ISGS. Back to the two terrorist organizations' five synchronized operations, to start with, in November 2017, the two groups launched a harmonized attack on a joint MINUSMA and Malian military grouping in the region of In-Delimane, situated among Ansongo and Menaka in northeastern Mali. On May 14, 2019, during that time, ISGS fighters conducted an intricate ambush close to Tongo Tongo, Niger, killing nearly 30 Nigerien soldiers (Aljazeera,2019). Later, a JNIM commander, Inkarouta Ag Nokh (or Abu Alghabass), allegedly provided fighters for the operation, after which spoils were shared among various organizations. Not long after that attack, in August 2019, ISGS launched another large-scale assault against a military station in Koutougou, Burkina Faso. However, in a December 2019 report, French researcher Mathieu Pellerin concluded that it was likely another joint attack with JNIM. After a month, JNIM asserted a near concurrent attack against a Malian national guard camp in Mondoro and the regional G5 Sahel Force base in Boulkessi, both located in focal Mali's Mopti Area along the border with Burkina Faso (Pellerin,2019)

Similarly to Pellerin, a coordinator of an NGO based in the Sahel, one of the writers pointed out that ISGS fighters had participated in the double assault. At long last, on December 10, 2019, the ISGS launched the single deadliest attack on security forces ever in Niger, murdering more than 70 soldiers. Subsequently, Malian media claimed that two of the combatants killed in jihadi ranks were members of the Malian rebel organization HCUA, but they were later revealed to be connected to the JNIM locally, indicating that the JNIM was probably behind the raid. These incidents were clearly part of

a larger coordinated attack in the Liptako-Gourma area (or the tri-state border area of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso), in which both groups successively invaded various military stations. These forced militaries from both countries to withdraw tactically from their respective border regions, leaving previously disputed areas under JNIM and ISGS control (Nsaibia & Weiss, 2020). In certain instances, actions claimed by each association seemed to demonstrate some degree of cooperation between the franchises — albeit without engaging in joint assaults. For example, the assassination of the mayor of Koutougou, Burkina Faso, Hamid Koundaba, by ISGS militants on April 8, 2018. After the assassination the next day, JNIM claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device (IED) on Burkinabe forces sent to reinforce the area. In the Menaka district of Mali, intermittent clashes between the jihadists and a variety of organizations, such as the pro-Bamako Tuareg and Dawsahak militias, the Imghad Tuareg, the Allies Self Defense Party (GATIA), and the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA), revealed this form of coordination. JNIM announced a series of assaults in the Gao and Menaka districts in mid-2019, claiming to be fighting MSA and GATIA. These assaults were taking place simultaneously as ISGS attacks on militias. The United Nations has also confirmed specific instances where JNIM and ISGS collaborated, such as the attacks on GATIA and MSA in Menaka. As previously stated, numerous instances of the JNIM and the ISGS collaboration in Mali have existed. ISGS had the option of working unhindered in Kidal in northern Mali, the historical stronghold of JNIM leader Ag-Ghali, evidenced by numerous assaults in Algeria directly across the Algeria-Mali line, indicating a certain level of JNIM acceptance. Indeed, these attacks suggest that ISGS was active in the area until late 2019, months after fighting between the two groups erupted in other parts of the region.

Additionally, it is possible that the two organizations planned a hostage-taking attempt in Benin. Jihadis took two French tourists hostage in northern Benin in May 2019. The two were then taken to Burkina Faso, where they were to travel through northern Mali. Later, after two French soldiers were killed in an operation by French special forces in Burkina Faso, the two were set free. After the raid, French officials claimed that the JNIM was the organization that funded the operation. According to the French Newspaper *Le Monde*, in May 2019, Burkinabe intelligence discovered that the kidnapping in Benin was carried out by ISGS-linked militants who were then planning to transport the French citizens to Katiba Macina (Sophie Douce et al. 2019). Military authorities in France and the United States have confirmed collaboration between the JNIM and the ISGS. General Bruno Guibert, the former commander in chief of France's Sahel Operation Barkhane, reported in 2018

that JNIM and ISGS had launched joint attacks in the Sahel but cautioned against any broad alliance between the two parties. Brigadier General Dagvin R.M. Anderson, commander of the United States Marine Corps, said: In an interview published in February 2020, the US Special Operations Command in Africa stated that the US had found instances where JNIM and ISGS collaborated and organized attacks. General Anderson spoke after tensions between ISGS and JNIM erupted before their relationship fully deteriorated. "JNIM gives solidarity of intent, unity of exertion but not necessarily unity of order," Anderson said at the time, adding that JNIM and ISIS-ISGS "can work together, and even coordinate attacks together."

Anderson also said that JNIM and ISGS "are less concerned than those who have full oversight and have instead focused on spreading their extremist ideology and working for the greater cause of establishment." Like his French counterpart, he avoided implying a grand merger between al-Qaida and the Islamic State in the Sahel. It's worth noting that there have been several cases of dual accusations in which two organizations claimed responsibility for the same attacks (Nsaibia& Weiss, 2020). JNIM claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device attack on the Barkhane convoy near Indelimane in February 2018, but ISGS later claimed responsibility. JNIM and ISGS claimed a few assaults in the Mansila region of Burkina Faso's Yagha Province in January 2019, just over a year later. With similar claims, the two organizations also announced an ambush against the Malian army near Boulkessi in March 2020. Dual claims could indicate competition, but they could also suggest that JNIM and ISGS are having difficulty separating themselves from one another, especially regarding how their respective chains of command recognize actions by the rank-and-file.

The clashes between the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin(JNIM)

The number of violent incidents involving Islamist groups in the Sahel almost quadrupled in one year, from 1180 to 2005, according to the African Center (2022). The two parties have engaged in battle at least 125 times, from the start of the fighting in 2019 until January 2, 2021, killing at least 731 fighters on each side and injuring thousands of civilians. The ongoing war between JNIM and ISGS forced residents of Tessit and its surroundings to escape to Ansongo, Gao, and Niamey in February 2022. Several causes can explain the conflicts between these two terrorist organizations.

The recent confrontation between JNIM and ISGS has several causes,

according to research by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point 2020. The primary ones are stoked ideological conflicts; pressure from Islamic State Central on ISGS to challenge JNIM after its official reorganization under the ISWAP banner; and tensions brought on by ISGS's expanding ambition in the region, including competition for fighters and resources. Also, the JNIM's willingness to engage in negotiations with the Malian government, which the ISGS views as a betrayal of jihadist principles and labels them as apostates. Another element fostering armed conflict between these two terrorist groups is the regular desertion of JNIM members to the ISGS and vice versa.

The conflict between the Macina Katiba, commanded by Amadou Kouffa, and former Katiba members who joined the ISGS in 2020 is a recent example (WAMAPS, 2022). In addition, the fact that the JNIM and the ISGS take various approaches to jihad is another factor contributing to the rivalry between the two organizations. Although all sides favor the use of force and the implementation of Sharia law, there are differences of opinion, such as the targeting of civilians. Lastly, the Islamic State is a terrorist organization in the "territorialization" business, according to Dr. Aly Tounkara, an expert at the Center for Security and Strategic Studies in the Sahel (CESS). The Islamic State seeks to occupy and maintain control of various occupied areas by enforcing Sharia law. The JNIM, on the other hand, prefers to build a close relationship with the local chieftains rather than systematically trying to occupy the land. In the case of Tessit, the control of the main routes for the trafficking of drugs, ISGS and JNIM, according to Heni Nsaibia and Caleb Weiss (2020), have engaged in several physical clashes in the Sahel region of Mali and the Burkina Faso border region.

The conflict then shifted to the eastern part of Burkina Faso along the Niger-Benin border from the Inner Niger Delta of Mali and the Gourma region of Mali and Burkina Faso, according to estimates from the Army Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). These armed commitments have resulted in the deaths of more than 300 jihadis on both sides since the start of the hostilities. In its April 2020 briefing, the International Crisis Organization also noted that fighting in Burkina Faso's Soum province "caused at least 100 deaths" in that month alone. As a result, it is evident that the "Sahelian exception" proposed by JNIM and ISGS is no longer valid. After a skirmish near the border town of Ariel, Burkina Faso, the conflict between JNIM and ISGS officially began in July 2019. A new conflict between Gao and Ansongo was recorded in Haoussa-Foulane, Mali, in September 2019. According to records, clashes between the two organizations occurred in the southern part of Mondoro (Douentza), Dogo (Youwarou), and In-Abelbelbel in December 2019 and January 2020 (Gourma-Rharous).

In the year 2020, the clashes intensified. In March 2020, JNIM and ISGS clashed near Fassala, Mauritania's border town with Mali. Except for Haoussa-Foulane and In-Abelbel, these areas are within JNIM's KatibaMacina zones of operation, indicating that the conflict began within JNIM's zone of impact as it attempted to push ISGS out of the Inner Niger Delta before spreading to other zones and katibas. Despite these conflicts, neither side recognized their vicious conflicts in the Sahel until a May 2020 issue of the Islamic State's weekly *Al Naba* bulletin. The *Al Naba* article addressed the clashes between the two jihadi heavyweights in Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Burkina Faso-Niger border area in the previous month. The Islamic State stated that its fighters in central Mali "repelled two assaults" from the JNIM in the Mopti region. It specifically mentioned the area near Nampala, close to Mauritania's borders, and the Sego region's zones "east of Macina." Over the last few weeks, local media have confirmed clashes between jihadist groups in the same regions, lending credence to the Islamic State's statements.

Conflicts were registered in the Mopti villages of Dialloubé, Koubi, Diantakaya, and Ninga in early April 2020. The Islamic State's May 2020 announcement also mentions recent battles south of Boulkessi, Mali. Fights have also been registered in the Gourma region of Mali and Burkina Faso, similar to the jihadi-on-jihadi fighting in Mopti, Mali (Nsaibia& Weiss, 2020). For example, on April 13, 2020, the Islamic State attacked JNIM's men near Tin-Tabakat. *Al Naba* recorded a three-day encounter between JNIM and ISGS near the town of In-Tillit in Mali's Gao region. While local reports contradict this point, the United Nations noted that the Islamic State's presence in Gao has grown since earlier this year, making this situation entirely fair. On April 18, 2020, in the Ndaki region of Mali's Gossi commune, one of the biggest battles between the two is said to have taken place. According to local media sources, JNIM militants targeted members of the Islamic State in four separate villages in the district. The JNIM convoy had up to 40 vehicles, according to media reports in Mali and Burkina Faso. The Islamic State appears to have confirmed these events on a different date. The aim of JNIM, according to the party, is to establish Islamic State positions in the Boula area, West of Korfooueyouey on the Mali-Burkina Faso border, with "dozens of motorcycles and vehicles" on April 26, 2020, according to the Islamic calendar.

Following a suicide car bomb against al-Qaeda members, the Islamic State declared that its fighters had taken the lead in the fighting. According to the study, JNIM was also said to have confiscated 40 motorcycles and three cars. On April 20, 2020, another firefighter was reported near the village of Pobe in Burkina Faso's Soum province, while another incident occurred in Kerboule in the province's Koutougou department. In Burkina Faso, more

battles were registered near the towns of Arbinda and Nassoumbou. In another issue of *Al Naba*, published in June 2020, the first direct reference to clashes with Ansaroul Islam was made. The Islamic State stated in the June 2020 bulletin that Jafar Dicko, the leader of Ansaroul Islam, which was formed with the help of JNIM's constituent groups, had lost more than 170 fighters in clashes with the Islamic State's men in the Mali-Burkina Faso border region in late May 2020.

In the June 2020 *Al Naba* issue, another conflict in Burkina Faso between JNIM and ISGS was recorded near Ghana, most likely corresponding to an affirmed episode near Pama, Burkina Faso, on May 28, 2020. Fighting was also registered near the Burkina Faso-Niger border in the Yagha province of Burkina Faso at the end of May 2020. Despite this, al-Qa'ida Telegram stations had a different version of events. Al-Qa'ida supporters say that *Al Naba*'s account of events is false and that JNIM has recently assassinated several ISGS members in Burkina Faso. Another argument made by pro-al-Qa'ida sources suggested that Abdelmalek Droukdel asked JNIM to "destroy the Islamic State and eliminate them from the land of the mujahideen," implying that Droukdel's role in the battle between Islamic State and al-Qa'ida franchises in the region was much more significant than previously believed. However, the specifics of each claim are yet to be verified. Furthermore, at the time of publication, official al-Qa'ida outlets had made no public comments on the battle between the two groups (Nsaibia & Weiss, 2020).

The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal muslimin's (JNIM) funding, recruitment, membership, ideology, and goal, targets, and tactics

This section will center its discussions on the financing, recruitment, membership, ideology, goals, targets, and tactics of both the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). Furthermore, we will highlight the different operational methods employed by these groups and the potential targets they aim to pursue.

Funding

The ISGS derives funding from robbery, ransom kidnapping, extortion protection, and smuggling of cigarettes and illegal narcotics. All these are

ways that the ISGS raises revenue. According to Firewatch Solutions (2020), it is not known to the public whether it is receiving funding from outside sources. The JNIM party, on the other hand, inherited many of its revenue inflows from the AQIM and its other member groups and employs these well-established income generation techniques through its affiliates and contacts. Kidnapping and ransom are thought to provide a significant portion of the JNIM's funding. Smugglers and traffickers who paid "taxes" for the safe transit of territories governed by the JNIM in the area provide another important source of funds for JNIM. With the increase in European demand, some analysts claim that facilitating cocaine trafficking is quickly becoming JNIM's most profitable source of revenue.

Furthermore, JNIM has gradually benefited from the rise in human trafficking in recent years, which has been linked to the dramatic increase in migrants attempting to reach Europe. The community has also been known to engage in other forms of taxation on local communities within its area of influence in exchange for goods and services. These services primarily include "defense" and "governance," but they can also include "education," "electricity," and "health care," among other things. Another funding source is donations from supporters abroad, especially from non-governmental organizations, such as charities, many of which have a religious mission. Before the merger that produced JNIM, it was rumored that Qatari and Saudi charities supported the AQIM in Mali in 2013 and that several citizens in Western European countries had previously been detained for monetary donations to the organization. It was also speculated in the past that AQIM had received state support. The Algerian government, for example, has previously accused Iran and Sudan of supporting the party. While it is believed that JNIM is potentially eligible for indirect funding sources, state-funded assistance is doubtful (Constellis, 2018).

Recruitment

Since 2017, the ISGS has evolved due to its ability to organize many fighters in the Mali-Niger borderlands during intercommunal ferocity. Many ISGS fighters are indigenous to the areas in which they work. The ISGS, like the JNIM, uses "local concerns to attract public support" and capitalizes on oppressed ethnic groups' "sense of injustice" and their "desire for self-defense" and security (Constellis, 2018). The ISGS has 46 fighters from various ethnic groups, including Fulanis from Niger and Mali, Dawsahak from Ménaka and Gao, Tuaregs, Sahraouis, Bambaras, and Mossis. According to the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), the JNIM, on the

other hand, has successfully incorporated into local societies in Mopti to understand how to identify local grievances and contexts. Armed Islamist groups linked to Al-Qaida ‘based their recruiting efforts’ on the Fulani people group, according to a Human Rights Watch study, and found out how to acquire recruits by manipulating the Fulani community’s dissatisfactions with destitution, lawlessness, abusive security services, political corruption, and struggle for land and potable water (Constellis, 2018).

Targets and tactics

The ISGS is highly mobile and capable of attacking vast regions, according to the Georgetown Security Studies Review 2020(GSSR), although it “does not appear to claim full control over the territories it occupies and has not established organized governance structures.” Despite having a small number of fighters, ISGS could “inflict massive losses” due to its “maneuverability and increasingly complex tactics.” The group uses motorcycle combatants to launch quick attacks, allowing them to withdraw “before army reinforcements have time to react” (Demuynck & Coleman, 2020). ISGS “uses mortar, heavy machine guns (AK-47), and rocket-propelled grenades in its attacks, in addition to trucks loaded with explosives and suicide bombings,” according to CISAC (2018). More recent attacks in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, which occurred in late 2019, have also been identified as “sophisticated and extremely deadly” with the ISGS technique of using drones for reconnaissance prior to attacks (European Eye on Radicalization, 2020). Local and international military forces, ethnic groups, and local government officials are all targets of the ISGS. In terms of civilian targets, the ISGS launched several attacks in 2017 and 2018 against Malian civilian nomad camps, markets, and villages. Since 2018, the ISGS has “repeatedly attacked colleges with disastrous consequences” (CISAC, 2018). Several civilians were killed during clashes between ISGS and JNIM in the Gao, Mopti, and Menaka regions in 2020.

JNIM’s previous targets included Malian forces, UN forces, tourist hotspots, and French counter-terrorism forces, who were declared the organization’s historic enemy. JNIM used suicide bombers, burned cars, kidnapped people, and engaged in gun battles. An assault on a resort outside of Bamako, as well as attacks on the French embassy and army headquarters in Burkina Faso’s capital, were all carried out by the group. JNIM launched its first attack on the G5 Sahel headquarters in Mali in June 2018 in response to the formation of the G5 Sahel to coordinate regional counter-terrorism efforts (Africanews 2018). The group released a high-quality video in March 2018

highlighting the breadth of its operations and the training camp's strength and paid tribute to the leaders. JNIM has also been embroiled in racial tensions in the city (Weiss, Caleb 2018). In a war with the Bambaras in central Mali, JNIM fighters battled alongside the Fulanis (Weiss, Caleb 2018). According to the party, the Bambaras' military operations are supported by the Malian army. Ghali officially revealed the JNIM's list of enemies, which includes countries from Africa, the Americas, and Europe: The United States, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Niger, the Netherlands, Sweden (Mapping Militant Organizations, 2018).

Ideology and goal

According to Joscelyn, Thomas, and Caleb Weiss. (2018), ISGS derives much of its tactical approach and philosophical objectives from the Islamic State (IS). As an IS affiliate, the ISGS has vowed its allegiance to the Islamic State's (IS) ambition of restoring the Islamic caliphate in West Africa. ISGS founder Sahrawi acknowledged Baghdadi as "Emir ul-Mu'minin," a designation indicating the caliph's status, in a video declaring the group's loyalty to IS policy. On the other hand, JNIM's philosophy and aims are very much in line with the global Salafi-jihadi tradition of splitting the world into two utterly opposite groups, where one fights the other until absolute subjugation is achieved. This practice is geared towards unifying Muslims in North and West Africa, abolishing secular governments in the region, and establishing Islamic governments in their stead (Bukarti, 2018). The JNIM's formation was in line with the new operationalization focus of Al-Qaeda, i.e., emphasis on "peace" as an ideal way of enforcing Shariah law thoroughly and efficiently in places where the jihadists did not have full power hitherto. In an audiovisual declaration, the new leaders of JNIM stated their intention to stay unified against the Crusader enemy. According to Ghali, the militant approach adopted by JNIM is to expand its territories and train militants to battle JNIM's adversaries while maintaining good relations with local communities (Mapping Militant Organizations, 2018).

Membership

IS-GS was estimated to have about 40 fighters in May 2015. According to one report, its size increased to 300 fighters in April 2018 and to 425 fighters in late July 2018. The overwhelming majority of IS-GS warriors are Fulani. In addition to its core members, IS-GS forces include Peul, Tuareg,

and Arab fighters, continuing a trend in which the group attracts sympathetic local villagers by leveraging their ethnic and other grievances with Islamist messages. JNIM, on the other hand, has a membership of 1,000 to 2,000 fighters (CSIS) (Constellis, 2018). JNIM also brings together members from a variety of traditional groups, such as Bambaras, Tuaregs, Sahelian, Fulanis and North African Arabs, and Muhjirn, giving the organization an unrivaled social and territorial reach within the Sahel. JNIM's strong message of unification and diversity has helped it enlarge its social networks and financial resource base. By this, the level of regional and global recruitment appeals has also heightened.

In contrast to AQIM, which largely consists of North Africans where most relevant roles are particularly dominated and occupied by Algerians, JNIM, on the other hand, aims to differentiate itself from extant ethnic contexts in its areas of operation and functioning. Inferentially, JNIM meant to emphasize and override the homogeneity of its rivals and adversaries, such as the Islamic State (IS). As a result, JNIM and its affiliates will function with somewhat ubiquity and autonomy while still retaining their organizational support systems and operating in accordance with a common philosophy (Constellis, 2018).

Conclusion

The Islamic State of Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), two of Africa's deadliest terrorist organizations, have grown in recent years, and their operations in Africa's Sahel region are moving towards Sub-Saharan Africa's coastal regions. The volatile and precarious security situation in Sahel Africa has attracted both jihadist and organized crime factions. Distinct from the Levant, the rivalry between Al-Qaeda affiliate JNIM and Islamic State affiliate ISGS has proved way more perilous for local governments than any other jihadist group. The future of the area would well be determined by how this dynamic develops over time. In fact, both terrorist groups have wrecked the economies and communities of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, Algeria, and Chad, prompting the government to respond with armed raids and form an observatory body. Notably, social and economic inequity are driving forces behind the uprising. These factors provide insight into how to combat terrorism in the Sahel region, as suggested below.

Recommendations

This paper proposes three basic containment measures based on the root causes of armed activities in the Sahel, such as the ISG and JNIM. The comprehensive strategy, regional partnership (Group of Five Forces for the Sahel), and political dimensions are all discussed in these recommendations. According to the International Crisis Group (2017), a comprehensive strategy involving multiple actors must be further established and implemented primarily to deal with the crucial problems plaguing the Sahara-Sahel region so that Jihadist-Salafist terrorism is curtailed and stability restored in the region. In order to establish tailored containment strategies, systems of differentiation amongst militants, criminals, nomads, and jihadists at the military level should be established by the principal authorities of Sahelian states. Second, Sahelian states should strengthen their national security and law enforcement apparatus to ensure they are reliable, competent, and capable of carrying out their duties (Ghanem-Yazbeck, 2017c). Finally, increased security coordination, cooperation, and intelligence sharing should be promoted. For example, Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger make up the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (also known as G5 Sahel joint force, FC-G5S). This regional cooperation, which began in February 2017 and involved five thousand troops from the G5 Sahel states, had received approval from the Peace and Security Council of the African Union by April 2017. It was further consolidated and strengthened upon ratifying and accepting UNSC Resolution 2359. By increasing collaboration amongst state armies and rural area surveillance, the joint force of the Sahel (G5) proposes to combat smuggling, terrorism, and other planned orchestrations of crime.

Consequently, during the December 2017 G5 Sahel summit in Celle-Saint-Cloud, France and other European nations (particularly Italy, UK, and Germany) swore more extensive assistance for security and stability in the Sahel. Operating from national and regional power echelons remains essential in the political spheres. Regarding the former, central governments of the various Sahel states must introduce broad reforms covering the state's social, educational, political, and economic aspects to ensure universal and equitable access to services and resources. The institutionalization and practice of good governance, strengthening civil-military relations, and decentralization would help anchor democracy at the regional and national levels (Tull, 2017). The various governments in the Sahel should establish unrestricted and available mediums to allow for consultation and communication with socio-political and native actors, including those of low regard, even in rural areas, to reassure the social contract between the authorities and the local people.

In a variety of areas (politics, economy, justice, and security), the EU [an anti-terrorism advocate], for example, could provide technical and strategic support to Sahelian governments to foster the course of good governance and answerability (Lebovich, 2017). Also, Sahelian countries should harness good cooperative relations on a regional level to reduce their dependence on foreign assistance. Finally, regional and sub-regional bodies of which Sahelian leaders are part must prove viability in crisis management and mediation whenever conflicts on the Sahel and, by extension, the African region keep recurring (Institute for Security Studies, 2017).

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A Tale of Two Jihads: Unraveling the Atrocities of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) in the Sahel

focus/f-news/3848851/posts.

ABSTRACT

The Sahel area of West Africa has become the latest battleground for Al-Qaeda affiliated Jama'at Nusrat Al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State affiliated Islamic State in the Greater Sahel (ISGS). This piece, as far as possible, identifies the heightened atrocities perpetuated by both groups in the Sahel region. With little or no doubt, the strategies and ascendancy in atrocities orchestrated by the JNIM and the ISGS could be largely hypothesized to have negative implications for Africa's Sahel region (Chad, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania). As a matter of concern, the paper confirms the said hypothesis and finds that the activities of the two Jihad-descent groups pose adverse security, social and political ramifications for the Sahel region and beyond. With the theory of deprivation as the undergirding framework, the work explores how the lack of basic needs and legitimate entitlements of citizens have catalyzed the dominance of JNIM and ISGS in the Sahel. Aside from discussing the formation, events trends, atrocities, and strategies of JNIM and ISGS, the paper advances for swift, action-oriented, collective efforts of governments within the Sahel region. In order to restore Sahel's stability, increased security collaboration and strengthening the tenets of good governance are some worthwhile recommendations postulated.

KEYWORDS

Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS); Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM); Sahel; Jihadist.

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PARTNERS

NERINT

The Brazilian Centre for Strategy & International Relations (NERINT) was the first Centre in Southern Brazil to focus its study and research exclusively on the field of International Relations. It was established in 1999 at the Latin American Advanced Studies Institute (ILEA) of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and is currently part of the university's Centre for International Studies on Government (CEGOV). Its objective has always been the critical and innovative study of the international system's transformations after the end of the Cold War, from the perspective of the developing world. In parallel, NERINT has also sought to contribute to the debate on a national project for Brazil through the understanding of the available strategic options for the autonomous international insertion of the country.

The exploratory studies developed by NERINT on the new emerging countries since the threshold of the 21st century experienced remarkable expansion. Cooperation with state, business, academic and social institutions was intensified, as well as the direct contact with centres in Latin America, Africa and Asia, in addition to the existing ones in Europe and North America. An outcome of the Centre's activity was the creation of an undergraduate course in International Relations (2004) and a Doctoral Program in International Strategic Studies (PPGEEI, 2010). Two journals were also created: the bilingual and biannual *Austral: Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations* and the bimonthly journal *Conjuntura Austral*. In addition, since 2016, NERINT offers a bilingual Research Bulletin, published by graduate and undergraduate students and researchers of the Centre. NERINT is also partnered with UFRGS's Doctoral Program in Political Science (PPGPOL), established in 1973. Thus, besides the advanced research and intense editorial activities, NERINT is also the birthplace of innovative undergraduate and graduate programs.

PPGEEI

The Doctoral Program in International Strategic Studies (PPGEEI) started in 2010, offering Master's and Doctorate degrees, both supported by qualified professors and researchers with international experience. It is the result of several developments on research and education at the Universidade

Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS).

Its roots can be traced to the Brazilian Centre for Strategy and International Relations (NERINT), established in 1999, established in 1999 and now affiliated with the Centre for International Studies on Government (CEGOV) at UFRGS.

The research tradition that gave rise to PPGEEI was based on a prospective analysis of the trends of the 1990s. The remarkable expansion of Brazilian diplomacy and economics from the beginning of the century confirmed the perspective adopted, which allowed the intense cooperation with the diplomatic and international economic organizations in Brazil. The Program is already a reference in the strategic analysis of the integration of emerging powers in international and South-South relations.

The Program's vision emphasizes strategic, theoretical and applied methods, always relying on rigorous scientific and academic principles to do so. For this reason, it has been approached by students from all over Brazil and several other countries, and it has established partnerships in all continents. Thus, PPGEEI is a program focused on understanding the rapid changes within the international system. Alongside NERINT, it publishes two journals: *Conjuntura Austral* (bimonthly) and *Austral: Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations* (biannual and bilingual). PPGEEI has three research lines

International Political Economy

It focuses on the international insertion of the Brazilian economy and other major developing countries in South America, Asia and Africa; discusses the characteristics and effects of globalization; and develops comparative and sectoral studies concerned with the effects of the internationalization of companies and productive sectors. Special attention is paid to international financial crises and its effects on Brazil and other countries of the South.

International Politics

It emphasizes the analysis of the process of formation, implementation and evaluation of foreign policy. It seeks to confront patterns of international integration of strategic countries in South America, Africa and Asia, considering institutional patterns, trade policy, structures of intermediation of interest, governance, International Law and the role of actors of civil society in the South-South axis of contemporary International Relations.

International Security

It approaches the defense, strategy and security issues in the international system from a perspective that takes into account the most powerful states at the global level, but systematically introduces the question of the regional balances of power, the South-South axis, the existence of regional security complexes, military issues and the impact of information technology in the Digital Age.

CEGOV

The Centre for International Studies on Government (CEGOV) located at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) develops studies and research projects on governmental affairs from a comparative perspective. The Centre gathers researchers from several departments of the University, such as Political Science, International Relations, Law, Economics, Administration, Education, Urbanism and Computer Science. It encompasses scholars from the most traditional research groups at UFRGS, such as NERINT and CEBRAFRICA, specialised in a broad range of public policy areas.

CEGOV is chaired by a Director, and its policies and priorities are determined by an Advisory Board and a Scientific Board. The activities of the Centre are undertaken by working groups, which take the responsibility for specific projects. Currently, CEGOV has eight fully established and operating working groups. The Centre's researchers work on multidisciplinary projects covering the fields of international politics and governance, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, institutional development, Brazilian and South-American economy, comparative institutional design and decision-making processes, as well as public management, democratic controls and decentralisation of public services.

The Centre is a place for interaction among scholars from UFRGS and other academic institutions, highlighting its multidisciplinary and open nature, as well as its vocation to collaborative applied research. Being a reference for research on comparative governmental studies, CEGOV offers a wide range of extracurricular activities such as extension and specialisation courses, and advisory activities.

CEBRAFRICA

The Brazilian Centre for African Studies (CEBRAFRICA) has its origins in the Center of Studies Brazil-South Africa (CESUL), a program established in 2005 through an association between the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and the Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation (FUNAG)

of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its research activities are developed in cooperation with the Brazilian Centre for Strategy and International Relations (NERINT).

In March 2012, CESUL was expanded into CEBRAFRICA. At the same time, the South African series, which published five books, was transformed into the African Series, with new titles. The Centre's main objectives remain the same as before: to conduct research, support the development of memoirs, thesis and undergraduate works, congregate research groups on Africa, organize seminars, promote student and professor exchanges with other institutions, establish research networks and joint projects with African and Africanist institutions, publish national and translated works on the field, and expand the specialized library made available by FUNAG.

The numerous research themes seek to increase knowledge of the African continent and its relations with Brazil on the following topics: International Relations, Organizations and Integration, Security and Defense, Political Systems, History, Geography, Economic Development, Social Structures and their Transformations, and Schools of Thought. CEBRAFRICA counts among its partners renowned institutions from Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Canada, South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Senegal, Cape Verde, Egypt, Nigeria, Morocco, Portugal, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Sweden, Russia, India, and China. Current researches focuses on "Brazilian, Chinese, and Indian Presence in Africa", "Africa in South-South Cooperation", "African Conflicts", "Integration and Development in Africa", "African Relations with Great Powers", and "Inter-African Relations".

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