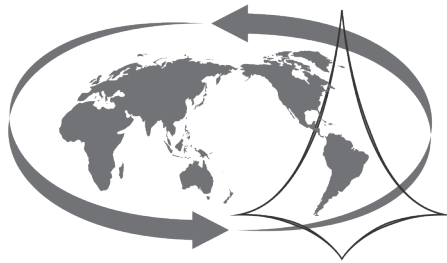


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About the Journal

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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EDITOR'S NOTE

The beginning of US President Donald Trump new term in January 2025, represented the formalization of a new reality in international relations that was taking shape since the Covid pandemics. The triggering of the Russian-Ukraine war also with NATO protagonism, had already produced shock waves, realigning geopolitical tectonic plates. Since October 2023, the conflicts in the Middle East destabilized the international order even more. The world system was irreversibly entering an unstable multipolarity, gradually replacing the so-called US unipolarity and the virtual bipolarity US-China.

Objectively, Trump's action, only introduced a reality shock due to an assertive strategic change for the US and the world. In a forceful manner, as it is his style, he and his team shocked Europe, Canada and Ukraine, with his phone call with Vladimir Putin and the disregard of Volodymyr Zelenski in the White House. Several analysts argue that this is an ideological and illogical vision. However, Trump does not lean on traditional politics, on purely ideological or even militarist rationalizations. His businessman logic uses threats to reach a profitable negotiation. His goal is to attack the US State trillionaire deficits and reverse its economic decline.

In order to do this, he announced the end of the neoliberal globalization and of the multilateral liberal system, that BRICS members were seeking to reformulate. A realist Hard Politics replaced the Democrats Soft Power narratives. First, his action hit his own allies, reframing their position, moving on to his adversaries. He seems to have accepted that the world had become multipolar, with four big players: China, Russia, India, with the US as a *primus inter pares*. Trump is in a hurry, because he aims to achieve good results until the 2026 legislative mid-term elections.

Several statesmen and academics believe that this is an impossible mission, but what all of them show, is strategic confusion, with improvised actions and alliances, that weekly evolve. This is the Unstable side of the new multipolarity. To understand the underlying reality (and the possibilities) represents a complex and urgent task, in a world in which everybody is scared to call things by its name. As a starting point, it is necessary to abandon the illusions and narratives generated by the end of the Cold War and analyse the ongoing political-military relations, the technology Revolution and its social

impact, demographic transformations and climate change.

In this context, we thereby publish a set of articles that deal with the case studies of Central Asia, Brazil, and the Russian-Ukrainian War, the Middle East, Argentina and China, giving voice to authors from the Geopolitical South (Third World). The authors are teachers-researchers from four big Brazilian universities, from China, Taiwan, Nigeria, Argentina and Poland, with a broad range of approaches and themes.

The vision of authors from the Geopolitical South enriches the academic and strategic perception in relation to the analysed themes, materializing the permanent goals of AUSTRAL: Brazilian Journal of Strategy and International Relations. This is crucial in a moment that the global scenario is evolving into a series of conflicts and tensions, which had already led to military escalation in a highly unpredictable scenario. Brazil, for its turn, was deeply hit by the ongoing changes in a world where geoeconomics scenarios represent the new reality. Therefore, more than ever, it is necessary that the Academy develops an urgent critical-realist analysis, based on this new changing reality, as a way of contributing to support statesmen and society.

We thank UFRGS Pró-Reitoria de Pesquisa for its support through the Journal Editor's Note Publishing Support Program (PAEP), as well as the entire team that worked on the editing and translation, in particular the Editing Assistants Cássio Donato Monteiro D'Ávila and Igor Estima Sardo, with the collaboration of Felipe Werner Samuel. We would also like to thank our qualified reviewers and Professor Cristina Soreanu Pecequilo for reviewing the translations. The teamwork of researchers at NERINT/UFRGS 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.

SINO-RUSSIAN COOPERATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON CENTRAL ASIA

Giorgio Romano Schutte¹

Diego Noveli Valadares²

1. Introduction

The relationship between Russia and China has been widely debated in contemporary geopolitics, especially after 2014, when the two countries began to strengthen their cooperation in the face of shared challenges. The perception that U.S. primacy poses a threat to their national interests has driven a strategic partnership, consolidated in response to factors such as NATO's eastward expansion toward Russia, tensions in the Indo-Pacific, economic sanctions against Moscow, and trade and technological disputes between Washington and Beijing. In this context, both countries seek alternatives to the Western-dominated international system, reinforcing their autonomy in sectors such as energy, defense, and technology. This dynamic is particularly evident in Central Asia, a region traditionally considered part of Russia's sphere of influence but which has experienced a growing Chinese presence, driven by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Against this backdrop, a central question emerges: do Moscow's and Beijing's strategies constitute a competition for regional hegemony, or do they point toward a potential complementary alignment of interests? This question, which raises fundamental issues about the nature of the relationship between the two powers, opens the way for broader debates about Russia's ability to preserve its influence in the face of China's expansion and the future trajectory of their

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strategic partnership.

Some analysts argue that Russia is no longer the leading actor, having been surpassed by China, whose economic power and strategic investments grant it a dominant position (Higgins 2022; Shetty 2024). Others contend that Russian power is in decline, which may lead to a gradual loss of prominence relative to China's rise (Akromov 2024; de Waal 2024; Dzhuraev and McGlinchey 2022; Kashgarian 2022; Saivetz 2023). Moreover, some interpretations suggest that the war in Ukraine has altered the dynamics between Russia and China, turning them into competitors seeking to expand their influence in the region (Hua 2024). On the other hand, certain analyses assert that despite China's advance, Russia remains an important actor in the region and that the shared interests between the two countries may mitigate potential disputes, leading to a joint management that benefits both powers (Gabuev and Umarov 2023; Lass 2022).

Consequently, this article aims to analyze the dynamics of Sino-Russian cooperation in Central Asia, examining how the functional division between Russian and Chinese influences is configured in the current geopolitical context. The research is justified by the need to understand the mechanisms that enable the coexistence and, at times, the complementarity between the two powers in a scenario marked by sanctions, power reconfigurations, and transformations in trade and investment flows. From this perspective, the study seeks to offer both a theoretical and empirical contribution to contemporary debates in international relations, highlighting the challenges and opportunities generated by the combined presence of Moscow and Beijing in the region.

To address this question, the article adopts a methodological approach that combines qualitative and quantitative analyses. A critical review of the specialized literature on geopolitics, Sino-Russian relations, and Central Asia is integrated with the interpretation of economic and strategic data from sources such as the World Bank and regional institutes. The temporal focus is on the post-2014 period, marked by key events that redefined regional dynamics: the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (2013), the annexation of Crimea (2014), and the partial withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan. These milestones not only accelerated the reconfiguration of the balance of power in Central Asia but also highlighted Moscow's and Beijing's capacity to adapt their strategies to a context of asymmetric interdependence.

The investigation covers different axes of influence in Central Asia, considering the multiple factors that shape regional dynamics. In the military field, it analyzes Russia's strategic presence, including military bases, security

agreements, and the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in regional stability. In the productive sphere, it examines flows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the activities of Russian and Chinese companies in infrastructure and strategic sectors. The financial dimension is explored through the integration of banking systems, migrant worker remittances, and capital flows that sustain the economic presence of Moscow and Beijing. Additionally, technology and education are addressed through the expansion of the Digital Silk Road, technological partnerships, and the presence of Russian educational institutions. Russian cultural influence is also significant, especially through the use of the Russian language as a *lingua franca*, the dissemination of media content, and the preservation of historical and academic ties with countries in the region. In trade, the analysis focuses on exchanges between Central Asia, Russia, and China, observing patterns of export, import, and re-export. The energy issue also stands out, with emphasis on the transportation and commercialization of oil and natural gas, essential resources for the regional geopolitical configuration.

The analysis argues that, although Russia has ceded economic space to China in the region, its relevance persists through other mechanisms, such as historical ties, collective security agreements, and energy interdependence. At the same time, it is argued that Sino-Russian cooperation is not based on mere tactical convergence, but on a strategic management of complementarities: while China prioritizes investments in infrastructure and connectivity, Russia reinforces its role as guarantor of political and military stability. This functional division, combined with mutual distrust regarding the Western-led international order, creates incentives for maintaining the partnership even in contexts of asymmetry. By integrating military, financial, and cultural dimensions, the study seeks not only to challenge narratives about the inevitability of conflict between the powers but also to demonstrate how Central Asia has become a region for pragmatic coexistence between distinct power projects.

The article is organized into five sections: the present introduction, three main sections, and, finally, the concluding remarks. The second section discusses how Russia employs military, political, and economic mechanisms to preserve its traditional role in the region. The third section explores China's strategy, with emphasis on investments, the expansion of the BRI, and the consolidation of its economic and technological presence. The fourth section, in turn, examines the perspective of Central Asian countries, highlighting their capacity for action, identification of opportunities, and negotiation strategies in the face of the dual influences of Moscow and Beijing. Furthermore, this analysis is related to the broader context of Russia's growing dependence on China, illustrating how this dynamic shapes the maneuvering space of Central

Asian states within the regional geopolitical balance. Finally, the concluding remarks synthesize the debates and point to directions for future research on the challenges and potentialities of this geopolitical dynamic.:

2. The Russian Perspective in Central Asia

In the military sphere, the partial withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan in 2014 reduced the sense of security among Central Asian governments. In this vacuum, Russia intensified its regional presence by deploying troops and conducting military exercises with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) (Collins 2014). Russian strengthening became evident with the closure, also in 2014, of the last U.S. airbase in Central Asia – at Manas Airport, Kyrgyzstan – and with the military rapprochement following the peaceful power transition in 2017, when Sooronbay Jeenbekov expressed interest in establishing a second Russian base and expanding military facilities in Kant and Karakol (Kainazarova 2018; Tan 2020). The signing of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea in 2018 – among Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan (Skalamera 2018) – can also be seen as an expansion of Russian interests in regional security. By establishing rules for the delimitation of internal waters, territorial waters, and exclusive fishing zones, and by declaring the Caspian a zone of peace prohibiting military forces from non-littoral states, the Convention partly responded to the 2010 agreements between Kazakhstan and the United States, reinforcing Russia's effort to restrict foreign military presence (Labardini 2021; Pradhan 2019).

It is important to highlight, however, that even with this intensification, recent events reveal Russian influence to be marked by contradictions. In Kyrgyzstan, in 2020, allegations of electoral fraud triggered intense protests, culminating in Jeenbekov's resignation and the rise of Sadyr Japarov. Although the new government adopted a pro-Russia stance, Moscow remained ambiguous, avoiding direct intervention despite the presence of Russian bases on Kyrgyz territory and the country's participation in the CSTO (Mikovic 2020). In 2021, border conflicts between Kyrgyz and Tajik communities, stemming from disputes over contested areas, escalated into armed confrontations and forced negotiations for the demilitarization of the disputed zones. The swift mediation, encouraged by neighbors such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, as well as by Russia, highlighted Moscow's reluctance to act decisively so as not to expose the bloc's vulnerabilities (Pantucci and Soliev 2023; Sullivan 2021).

In contrast, the CSTO intervened more decisively in Kazakhstan in 2022. Violent protests, resulting from rising fuel prices and socioeconomic

problems, led President Tokayev to request intervention, citing the threat of terrorist groups trained abroad. The deployment of a contingent of 4,000 soldiers for peacekeeping reaffirmed Russia's role as guarantor of regional security – as well as setting a precedent for military cooperation in Central Asia (Denisov 2022; Santos 2022). However, the operation, predominantly symbolic and short-lived, exposed the limitations of the CSTO and Russian strategy, functioning more as a presence gesture than as a robust intervention – possibly influenced, in part, by Chinese interests in the region (Davidzon, Libman, and Saggat 2023):

The war in Ukraine also had indirect consequences in Central Asia, where countries maintained a traditional stance of neutrality – neither openly supporting the aggression nor condemning it – replicating attitudes observed during the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the war against Georgia in 2008 (Engvall 2023). Although these positions prevented drastic ruptures, the conflict stimulated tensions and encouraged efforts to diversify partnerships without significantly altering historical relations in the region. The episode that most strained relations between Moscow and the Central Asian states involved Kazakhstan. At the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in 2022, the Kazakh president stated that his country would not recognize Lugansk and Donetsk as independent republics (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2022) and signaled the pursuit of alternative routes for oil exports. In response, Moscow approved – and later reversed – a law that threatened to shut down the CPC, a key pipeline for Kazakhstan, citing environmental concerns. Alarmed, Kazakhstan began diversifying its military partnerships, acquiring U.S. drones, signing a cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom, entering fourteen bilateral agreements with Turkey, and securing the production of Turkish drones on its territory (Fernandes and Grantseva 2023).

Other countries in the region have also sought to diversify their sources of weaponry, driven by doubts about Russia's capacity to maintain security – especially after the redeployment of military resources from bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the Ukrainian conflict (Engvall 2023; Hess 2023). Thus, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan intensified their search for new strategic partners: Uzbekistan strengthened ties with Turkey, signed military cooperation agreements, and contacted the United States for drone acquisitions, while Kyrgyzstan opted for Turkish drones and canceled CSTO military exercises scheduled for 2022 (Fernandes and Grantseva 2023).

However, despite Central Asian countries' efforts to diversify their arms suppliers, Russia's military influence in the region remains significant. This presence is sustained by military bases, subsidized weaponry, and security agreements that limit the approach of other actors (Gabuev and Umarov

2023). Moscow continues to be the main arms supplier for the region, playing a central role in these countries' military imports (Carteny and Pizzolo 2022). Moreover, the CSTO, despite its contradictions and weaknesses – evident in its irregular responses to internal political crises and border conflicts – continues to play a relevant role in regional security. Through the organization, Russia promotes joint exercises that enhance interoperability between its forces and those of Central Asian countries, in addition to maintaining military bases with contingents ready for rapid crisis response, consolidating its strategic influence in the region. Thus, even in the face of challenges and attempts to reduce dependence, the Kremlin remains the main military actor in Central Asia, consolidating its strategic position in regional security.

From a productive perspective, significant changes occurred starting in 2022, when the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions imposed new challenges on Russia while simultaneously opening opportunities for a reconfiguration of its economic presence in Central Asia. The sanctions imposed on Moscow led to a large exodus of Russian companies, which relocated to the region to avoid trade barriers and ensure payment in foreign currency (Hugot and Mogilevskii 2023). In Kazakhstan, from March 2022, the number of Russian companies increased significantly, with an addition of 500 to 800 new entities per month and a peak of 1,100 relocations in August 2022. In April of the same year, a total of 15,400 companies with Russian capital was registered, an increase of 4,000 companies compared to January 2022 (Osipova and Vasil'kova 2022). In 2023, approximately half of the foreign companies in the country were of Russian origin, and Russian investments reached a stock of USD 13 billion (Eurasian Development Bank 2023, 6). The relocation movement is not limited to Kazakhstan. In the first eight months of 2022, Kyrgyzstan recorded 546 companies with Russian capital – double the number recorded in the same period the previous year – while in Uzbekistan, of the 14,500 foreign companies, 2,700 were of Russian origin, surpassing the number of Turkish (203) and Chinese (149) company registrations in the first seven months of the same year (Osipova and Vasil'kova 2022).

Overall, more than 24,000 companies with Russian capital operate in Central Asia, representing investments exceeding USD 38 billion. In this new scenario, Russia has sought to develop joint ventures with Central Asian countries for the production of mechanical engineering components, as well as equipment and systems for digitization and automation of production processes (News Central Asia 2024). Thus, this corporate migration reflects a strategic adaptation by Moscow to sanctions and a strengthening of economic ties with Central Asia. The growing productive interdependence between Russia and the region not only mitigates the impact of Western restrictions

but also repositions Moscow as an important economic actor in strategic Central Asian sectors. This movement consolidates Russia's presence in the regional economy, reinforcing its influence and ensuring that, despite geopolitical challenges, its participation in Central Asia's productive sphere remains significant.

In the financial sector, there is also an observable interdependence between Moscow and the Central Asian countries, which has been an essential factor for maintaining Russian influence in the region. Following the sanctions imposed in 2014, Russia intensified its initiatives to mitigate economic setbacks, promoting a regional economic union and expanding integration with Central Asian countries to lessen the impact of sanctions, reduce dependence on the dollar, and strengthen economic and political ties (Krapohl and Vasileva-Dienes 2020; Laitinen 2018). However, this ambiguous strategy, while reinforcing Russian influence, also exposes structural weaknesses in the financial systems of partner countries, a vulnerability exacerbated by the harsher sanctions of 2022 (Ozat 2023; Vaulgrenant 2023; World Bank 2025).

To better understand the impact of this strategy, the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in 2014 is noteworthy. This initiative, developed by Russia in collaboration with Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Armenia (Krapohl and Vasileva-Dienes 2020), quickly expanded with the inclusion of Kyrgyzstan, which received promises of investments in its energy sector and guarantees of rights for its workers in Russia (Laitinen 2018). The EEU established a customs union aimed at promoting the free movement of labor, goods, services, and capital. The treaty establishing the Union grants it its own legal identity and the capacity to conduct international activities, focusing on addressing common challenges among member states. This breadth of cooperation is reflected in the creation and expansion of common markets, such as those for medical devices and electricity, and in the anticipation of future financial and energy markets (Belitski and Pomerlyan 2023). However, despite representing a deeper integration effort, the EEU also faces internal tensions, evidenced by conflicts over coordination of monetary policies and criticisms regarding the depreciation of the ruble, which may undermine the competitiveness of some members (Joireman, Tulepbayeva and Vanderhill 2020; Kazantsev, Medvedeva and Safranchuk 2021).

In parallel, the creation of the Financial Messaging Transfer System in 2014 marked Russia's effort to circumvent sanctions, facilitating cross-border payments through the participation of Central Asian banks and partnerships with Russian financial institutions. This integration enabled international transactions via credit and debit cards, as well as electronic funds transfers,

aligning the region's financial systems more closely with the Russian model. However, the intensification of this integration has brought challenges, such as the joint fluctuation of local currencies with the ruble, which can increase the cost of dollar-denominated debts and impact inflation in Central Asian countries (Barrios et al. 2023).

These frictions and challenges reveal a complex situation in which interdependence strengthens Russian presence but also generates conflicts and uncertainties in monetary policy management. However, even amid these frictions, Russia's capacity to influence financial changes in Central Asian countries already demonstrates considerable influence in the region, which is further reinforced through mechanisms such as remittance flows sent by Central Asian migrant workers living in Russia to their home countries. The crisis caused by the war in Ukraine prompted migration of Central Asian workers to Russia, raising remittances to record levels in 2022 – with a 50% increase – and contributing significantly to regional GDPs. The importance of remittances for the countries in the region is evident, representing 20% of Uzbekistan's GDP, 26% of Kyrgyzstan's, and 49% of Tajikistan's in 2022 (Ozat 2023; Vaulgrenant 2023; World Bank 2025).

Thus, financial integration between Russia and Central Asian countries can be interpreted as a monetary coordination strategy that, in certain aspects, contributes to regional economic stability. However, this approach – based on maintaining remittance flows, coordinating banking systems, and consolidating mechanisms such as the Eurasian Economic Union – has significant limitations. Russia's inability to comprehensively meet the region's liquidity and credit demands reflects the challenges posed by international sanctions and the structural weaknesses of its own financial system. Nevertheless, monetary interdependence remains a central factor in Central Asia's economic dynamics. Internal changes in the Russian economy, such as ruble fluctuations or financial restrictions resulting from sanctions, continue to directly impact countries in the region, demonstrating that Moscow, despite its weaknesses, maintains a significant financial influence in Central Asia. This persistent link reinforces the resilience of Russia's presence, even amid challenges and an increasing need for adaptation.

In the cultural field, Russia maintains a significant presence in Central Asia, mainly due to the widespread use of the Russian language, which gives it advantages in the media and academic sectors (Laruelle 2014). In the media sector, the Russian government has leveraged this linguistic influence as a soft power tool, promoting the expansion of channels and news agencies such as Rossotrudnichestvo, Russkii Mir, and Russia Today. These initiatives are facilitated by the large audience of Russian journalistic products in Central

Asia, where, due to restrictions on freedom of expression, Russian media are often perceived as more professional and reliable (Freeman 2017; Kosmarskaya and Kosmarski 2019). In the academic sphere, Russia maintains a strong educational presence in the region, with 25 university branches distributed across Kazakhstan (6), Kyrgyzstan (2), Tajikistan (3), and Uzbekistan (14). Furthermore, in 2023, approximately 185,000 Central Asian students were enrolled in Russian institutions, including 60,000 from Kazakhstan, 46,000 from Uzbekistan, 31,000 from Turkmenistan, 30,000 from Tajikistan, and 16,000 from Kyrgyzstan, with around 40% receiving financial support from the Russian government (Russian... 2023).

Given this context, it is evident that Russia continues to play a central role in Central Asia, sustaining its influence through its military presence, economic and financial interdependence, and the maintenance of cultural and educational ties. Despite vulnerabilities such as international sanctions and Central Asian countries seeking other partners, Moscow still preserves strategic elements that provide resilience, including its leadership in the CSTO, its ability to project power in the region through military bases, and its strong involvement in Central Asian productive and financial dynamics. Additionally, the Russian language and the presence of educational and media institutions remain effective soft power instruments, reinforcing the Kremlin's cultural influence. Thus, although its predominance is being challenged, Russia remains a key actor in shaping the political, economic, and security landscape of Central Asia.

3. The Chinese Perspective in Central Asia

Although China has expanded its military presence in Central Asia, its involvement in the region remains predominantly economic. Indeed, there has been growth in security cooperation: countries such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan have increased the acquisition of Chinese weapons, and Tajikistan, in particular, has joined regional mechanisms like the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (Fernandes and Grantseva 2023; Kazantsev, Medvedeva and Safranchuk 2021). Moreover, China's share in the region's military imports rose from 1.5% between 2010 and 2014 to 18% in the period from 2014 to 2019. However, this advance remains limited, especially compared to Russian influence, which accounted for 62% of Central Asia's military imports during the same period (Carteny and Pizzolo 2022).

Thus, although Beijing has expanded its role in the defense sector, its presence in Central Asia continues to be primarily economic. This is evidenced

by the announcement of USD 3.7 billion in investments during the 2023 China-Central Asia Summit and the signing of the Xi'an Declaration, which reaffirmed the commitment to regional security and stability without implying the formation of a formal military alliance or directly challenging Russia's dominant position. This development-focused strategy is widely accepted by Moscow, which sees regional stability as essential for maintaining its own influence (Gabuev and Umarov 2023; Nelson 2023). Therefore, while Russia remains the main actor in security matters due to its military presence, China consolidates its leadership in the economic sphere, expanding investments and infrastructure without disrupting Russian influence.

Thus, it is necessary to begin the analysis of productive issues by highlighting the role of Chinese investments, especially because, during the same period in which Beijing expanded its economic presence in the region through the BRI, Moscow significantly reduced its foreign investments. In 2014, these investments reached USD 57.08 billion, but from 2015 onward there was a decline of 61.3%, falling to USD 22.09 billion, with relatively low levels persisting in the following years – USD 22.31 billion in 2016 and USD 36.76 billion in 2017 – and a severe impact in 2020, when they reached only USD 5.85 billion, representing a reduction of 89.7% from the peak (World Bank 2025). During the same period, China consolidated its influence through the launch of the BRI, which not only increased the volume of its investments in the region but also diversified its involvement in sectors such as telecommunications, industry, manufacturing, construction, and services.

Significant projects were implemented in several countries: in Tajikistan, substantial investments in energy, transportation, and agriculture, including the construction of a thermal power plant and infrastructure projects such as the Khojend-Isfara highway and the renovation of hydroelectric plants; in Turkmenistan, the Chinese partnership boosted the development of communications, transportation, and infrastructure, including the construction of a railway connecting the country to China, Kazakhstan, and Iran (Hoh 2019). The Kyrgyz government also turned to China to overcome structural challenges, such as the lack of infrastructure that hinders the exploitation of its vast mineral deposits. In response, Beijing rehabilitated several roads and modernized transportation and power transmission networks to promote national integration and facilitate transport between regions of the country – projects that Kyrgyzstan could not finance on its own (Karikeev and Zhu 2019).

Similarly, Uzbekistan has benefited from railway projects, such as the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, which aims to facilitate access to the sea, in addition to investments in economic zones, water conservation, roads,

and railway electrification (Hoh 2019). In Kazakhstan, Chinese involvement is manifested through Samruk-Kazyna, a sovereign wealth fund created in 2008 by the Kazakh government, which has raised large loans from China to finance strategic ventures, such as the construction of railway lines connecting the country to China and the Caspian Sea, the expansion of ports like Aktau and Kuryk, and the development of logistics centers. The Khorgos dry port, on the Kazakhstan-China border, has become a key component of the BRI and the Central Asia-China gas pipeline, responsible for 70% of overland product transport between China and Europe (Pieper 2021; Zogg 2019).

As a result of these advances, China has taken the lead in investments in four Central Asian countries, representing 79% of the Foreign Direct Investment stock in Uzbekistan in 2022 (Hall 2024), 60% in Tajikistan in 2023 (Flesch 2024), and 28% in Kyrgyzstan also in 2023 (Kachkinbaeva and Menchaca 2024). In Turkmenistan, China is estimated to have accounted for about 40% of FDI in 2021 (Mukhammadsodik 2023). The only exception is Kazakhstan, where in 2023 the FDI stock was led by the Netherlands and the United States (National Bank of Kazakhstan 2024). These shifts in investment patterns highlight China's growing presence in the region and the relative decline of Russia.

Similarly, China is consolidating itself as an increasingly relevant alternative in the financial sector, offering large-scale investments, more flexible lines of credit, and contributing to the modernization of local financial systems, as well as diversifying sources of financing. This became evident immediately after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, when sanctions reduced the availability of Russian financing for Central Asian banks, increased transaction costs, and decreased the liquidity of local currencies. In Kazakhstan, where three major banks – Sberbank, VTB, and Alfa Bank – are subsidiaries of Russian institutions, problems arose when these institutions were sanctioned, leading two of them to reduce or exit the market. Similar issues occurred in Tajikistan, where the close connection between local and Russian banks hindered international transfers, while in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the restrictions affected card transfers and mobile applications, respectively (Barrios et al. 2023).

These events demonstrate how excessive dependence on Russian financial infrastructure weakens Central Asian economies, prompting countries in the region to seek new sources of financing. The reduction in Russian liquidity and the need to diversify resources created a gap that China has increasingly filled, mainly through BRI-linked loans, leading several countries in the region to allocate considerable resources to debt service. Notably, in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, China holds 30% and 41% of

public external debt, respectively, while in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, Chinese participation reaches 3%, 7%, and 8%, respectively (World Bank 2023, 159, 115, 167, 112, 170).

More important than the volume of loans is the bargaining power China gains through the conditions imposed on these governments. These financings come with restrictions that limit competition and technology transfer, favor Chinese companies, and deepen the economic and technological dependence of Central Asian countries. By controlling project implementation, Beijing ensures that economic benefits and innovations remain within its territory, and in cases of default, acquires land, local companies, and rights to exploit natural resources such as gold and silver (Galimova et al. 2024; Karrar and Mostowlansky 2020; Kazantsev, Medvedeva and Safranchuk 2021; Otorbaev 2022; Skalamera 2018).

In the technological field, China also takes the lead, both due to sanctions restricting Russia's access to advanced technologies and because of the already established dominance of its national giants. The Chinese strategy is largely realized through the Digital Silk Road, an extension of the BRI that facilitates the entry of companies such as China Mobile, China Telecom, China Unicom, Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, and Huawei into member countries of the initiative. This allows these national champions to gain competitive advantages and expand their presence in emerging markets, strengthening China's technological position in the region (Boaventura, Conti and Morais 2023; Muzaparaova 2021).

Chinese technological expansion also translates into the development of 5G networks, smart cities, fiber-optic cables, mobile payment systems, telephone communication, and IT platforms for shipment processing, among other solutions. In Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the Digital Silk Road is evident through the high number of joint projects across various information technology areas, while in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, investments focus on the creation of smart cities and the implementation of next-generation telecommunications networks. In Turkmenistan, the priority has been the construction of a fiber-optic communication cable under the Caspian Sea (Muzaparaova 2021). Beyond the commercial sector, China's technological influence in Central Asia encompasses cooperation initiatives aimed at regional development and poverty reduction through science and technology. These measures include the development of agricultural technologies, water-saving practices exchange, reclamation of arid and saline soils, investments in irrigation, pest control, livestock, veterinary medicine, seismic safety, and the modernization of customs controls with digital solutions (Devonshire-Ellis 2023).

Thus, it is clear that China has consolidated its presence in Central Asia mainly through strategic investments, credit expansion, and technological advancement, taking a central role in modernizing regional infrastructures. The growing dependence of Central Asian countries on Chinese financing and technologies highlights a regional realignment in which Russian presence, though still significant, has been relativized in key areas. This process not only redefines power dynamics in the region but also creates new dynamics and opportunities for Moscow, which must navigate China's rise without compromising its own position.

4. Central Asia between Russia and China

Even with the consolidated presence of Russia and China in Central Asia – partly facilitated by the limited Western engagement in the region – the Central Asian countries should not be seen as mere satellites of these powers. On the contrary, they have been acting as independent actors seeking to balance their international relations and strengthen their autonomy. However, the region's strategic position is shaped not only by its own regional initiatives but also by the balance of power between China and Russia. Thus, understanding how these powers interact and project influence in the region is crucial for assessing the maneuvering space of the Central Asian countries.

Regarding the agency of Central Asian countries, the accession of Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the presidency of Uzbekistan in 2016 marked a significant shift in regional policy, promoting greater cooperation with neighbors to resolve border disputes, improve connectivity, and facilitate infrastructure projects. This new approach strengthened ties among regional countries, reflected in trade agreements, joint military maneuvers, and initiatives addressing water and energy issues. Kazakhstan also played a key role in this process, proposing regular meetings between the security councils of Central Asian countries and encouraging summits among heads of state to discuss common challenges such as security, trade, and the environment (Dadabaev 2018; Matveeva 2023; Patnaik 2019; Sitenko 2023; Yuyan 2020).

In parallel with the strengthening of intraregional cooperation, Central Asia has expanded its presence on the international stage. In recent years, countries in the region have begun negotiating collectively with leaders from various nations, including India, Russia, Turkey, the United States, and the European Union. These meetings have addressed topics such as regional security, energy independence, and economic diversification, reflecting an effort to reduce dependence on China and Russia. The war in Ukraine and

geopolitical tensions have reinforced the importance of Central Asia, which has become a key player for global energy security, especially due to its reserves of critical materials for renewable energy and uranium. Although full integration among Central Asian countries has not yet been achieved, joint initiatives demonstrate a strategic movement toward closer ties and mutual cooperation (Helf 2023; Matveeva 2023; Temnycky 2023).

However, despite advances in regional and external coordination, Sino-Russian influence in Central Asia remains predominant and is structured on complementary bases. Moscow maintains its primacy in security, financial integration, and strategic productive sectors, while Beijing stands out in infrastructure investment, technology, and credit provision. This complementarity became even more pronounced after 2014, when Western sanctions and Moscow's isolation increased Russian dependence on Chinese economic support, driving an even closer partnership in the region. In other words, the weakening of Russia's ties with the West made cooperation with China indispensable, reinforcing strategic coordination between the two in Central Asia.

On the other hand, Central Asian countries have been using this dynamic to their advantage, balancing external influences to obtain favorable economic and political concessions (Sitenko 2023). This maneuvering capacity is particularly evident in commercial and energy dynamics, where regional states act as intermediaries in Sino-Russian trade and as key logistical nodes for the transport of goods and hydrocarbons. Strengthening these connections highlights not only the growing interdependence among Central Asian, Russian, and Chinese economies, but also the space these countries find to expand their autonomy within this scenario of competition and cooperation.

Trade between Russia and Central Asia, especially after the imposition of international sanctions, highlights how financial integration has played a strategic role in maintaining and expanding Russian influence in the region. The use of the Financial Messaging System for payments in rubles allowed Russia to mitigate the impact of sanctions, reducing dependence on the dollar and other Western currencies. At the same time, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has been key in creating an alternative trade network, enabling sanctioned products to reach Russia through re-exports by member countries (Kazantsev, Medvedeva and Safranchuk 2021).

Simultaneously, China has leveraged Central Asia as a platform to re-export goods to Russia, circumventing direct restrictions. This strategy allows Beijing to move merchandise, strengthen commercial ties, offer an alternative for Russia, and expand its influence in the local economic dynamics. Trade flows between Central Asia and its partners have registered substantial growth

since the Ukraine invasion. For instance, Uzbek exports to Russia rose 52% in 2022 compared to 2021, while Chinese exports to the same country increased by 30% (Observatory of Economic Complexity 2022). In Kyrgyzstan, Chinese imports jumped 266% between 2021 and 2023, and exports to Russia rose 80%. Similarly, Tajik exports to Russia grew 85%, and imports from China increased by 75%, while Kazakhstan recorded a 39% increase in exports to Russia and a 103% rise in imports from China (International Trade Centre 2025).

These figures reflect a significant shift in trade flows, positioning China as the largest partner for most countries in the region. In 2022, China accounted for 19.7% of Uzbekistan's trade, surpassing Russia at 17.52%; in 2023, China led Kyrgyzstan's trade with a 35% share, while Russia represented 18%. In Turkmenistan, China concentrated nearly 59% of all trade, with 67% of exports directed to Beijing, and in Kazakhstan, China's share reached 22.5% in 2023, exceeding Russia's 18.5%. The only country where Russia remained the main trade partner was Tajikistan, with 24.5% compared to China's 21.4% (International Trade Centre 2025). This dynamic, coupled with U.S. and EU sanctions against some Central Asian firms for re-exporting sanctioned goods to Russia (Putz 2024; Standish 2023), shows that Central Asian countries are increasingly acting as intermediaries in Sino-Russian trade, reflecting a strategic complementarity between the Central Asian, Russian, and Chinese economies (Webster 2023).

A similar pattern is observed in the transportation and commercialization of hydrocarbons (oil and natural gas), key resources for the region. For much of the period analyzed, Russia positioned itself as a transit corridor for Central Asian hydrocarbon exports. Its influence in Kazakhstan remained particularly high, as more than 80% of Kazakh oil is transported via pipelines crossing Russian territory (Ernst & Young 2023). This situation enabled Moscow to exert pressure, including threats to close the CPC pipeline, as occurred in 2022 after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine (Fernandes and Grantseva 2023), highlighting Russia's substantial control over regional energy routes. Concurrently, Russia intensified agreements to purchase gas from Central Asian countries, aiming to compete with China in this strategic sector. In 2017, Gazprom signed a five-year agreement to buy Uzbek gas, and a similar initiative was adopted in 2019 with Turkmenistan, reestablishing previously interrupted flows (British Petroleum 2022, 37; Kazantsev, Medvedeva and Safranchuk 2021; Skalamera 2023).

However, Russia's strategy underwent significant reconfigurations from 2022 onward due to two main factors: the loss of the European gas market and an energy crisis in Central Asia. This crisis, characterized

by power cuts, gas rationing, and interruptions in residential heating in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, was exacerbated by technical issues that disrupted Turkmenistan's gas exports to both Uzbekistan and China. In response to these energy challenges, Russia proposed in 2022 a natural gas union involving Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The proposal envisaged Gazprom taking over the transport networks of these countries in exchange for the right to re-export part of Russian gas to China. Initially rejected, the offer gained momentum after the winter crisis, culminating in the signing of bilateral agreements in January 2023 that established cooperation roadmaps for the gas industry and committed both countries to importing 10 bcm of Russian gas annually, of which 4–6 bcm could be destined for China (Losz and Mitrova 2023).

Additionally, Turkmenistan began facing strong competition from Russia following the redirection of Russian gas exports to Asia at competitive prices. In this context, Russia's interest in integrating the TAPI pipeline (traversing Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India) emerged as a strategy to reroute its energy exports and establish a partnership with Turkmenistan, turning it into a key transit country for Russian energy to other parts of Central Asia and South Asia. The implementation of TAPI would be important to diversify Turkmenistan's revenue sources and reduce its dependence on China, which since 2010 has been the main destination for Turkmen exports, absorbing between 70% and 80% of its gas between 2021 and 2023 (British Petroleum 2022, 37; Energy Institute 2023, 38; Energy Institute 2024, 45; Fazl-e-Haider 2023).

This complementarity suggests that in recent years, the competition between China and Russia for access to Central Asian resources has diminished considerably. Russia, which previously sought to secure Central Asian gas for the European market, now redirects its strategy to sell gas to Asia, including China. This shift reduces the potential for direct competition between the two countries. Moreover, Central Asia is not Russia's primary source of energy; most of the country's energy comes from Siberia and the Arctic, where China is investing in various projects that offer a higher potential return than projects in Central Asia (Skalamera 2018).

The analysis highlights a dynamic of rapprochement and complementarity between Russia and China in Central Asia, in which Moscow consolidates its influence through security centrality and historical and cultural ties, while Beijing advances primarily in the economic sphere, driven by investments and modernization initiatives. This implicit interdependence sustains a regional balance, but it does not entirely dispel uncertainty about whether the Sino-Russian relationship is fundamentally

cooperative or competitive. To further explore this issue and fully understand the positioning of the Central Asian countries, it is necessary to address the second point of this section: Russia's growing dependence on China and the resulting alignment of mutual convenience, guided both by the containment of Western influence and the guarantee of stability in Central Asia under conditions favorable to both powers.

In this context, recent shifts in the international landscape, intensified after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, have prompted a strategic realignment in Sino-Russian relations. In response to the war, the West drastically expanded sanctions against Russia, including blocking Russian banks from the SWIFT system, freezing international reserves, and imposing strict restrictions on the import of strategic resources such as oil and gas, as well as limiting access to sensitive technologies (Duggal and Panda 2024; Schott 2023; Timofeev 2022). These measures profoundly affected Russia's productive and technological capacities, forcing Moscow to seek alternatives to mitigate their impact. At the same time, China also faced coordinated Western restrictions. In the security sphere, the United States increased pressure through alliances such as QUAD and AUKUS to contain Beijing's military expansion (Casarini 2022; Huang and Sutter 2020; Zhao 2021). Economically, the West implemented tariffs and investment restrictions to reduce dependence on China's strategic supply chains—particularly in renewable energy, rare metals, and high-tech sectors—alongside targeted sanctions that blocked companies like Huawei from accessing advanced equipment and semiconductors (Ahmad 2021; Fang 2024; Hennessy 2023; Merino 2023).

Amid these international pressures and restrictions, Russia's need to offset the effects of sanctions converged with a closer alignment with Beijing. This deepening bilateral cooperation manifests across multiple sectors. In security, for instance, Russia has supplied advanced military systems—such as Su-35 fighter jets and S-400 missiles—and collaborated on the development of anti-ballistic missile defenses, conducting joint exercises in critical regions like the East China Sea, the Arctic, and areas near North America (Ahmad 2021; Bertrand and Liebermann 2024; Delaney 2024; Gorenburg et al. 2023). In energy, the intensification of bilateral trade has made China the largest destination for Russian oil and one of the main buyers of natural gas (Energy Institute 2024; Skalamera 2023). Moreover, Russia has become heavily dependent on China to meet its industrial and technological needs, particularly after Western sanctions restricted access to critical components. Beijing has emerged as one of the few available sources for semiconductors and essential industrial equipment (Bank of Russia 2023; International Trade

Centre 2025; Mulder 2023; Trudolyubov 2024).

This growing Russian dependence on China has not only led Moscow to enhance strategic coordination with Beijing in multilateral forums and regional initiatives but also resulted in increasing concessions to Chinese interests. However, these concessions are not merely a response to the growing power asymmetry between the two countries; they also reflect a strategic convergence aligned with Russia's interests in its disputes with the West. Moscow, which previously viewed initiatives like the BRI, the EAEU, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with suspicion, has come to accept their coordination as part of a new regional equilibrium in which China's economic presence has become unavoidable. This is partly because the stability of Central Asia—reinforced by China's presence—is essential for maintaining Russia's historical influence and for containing dynamics that could undermine its position in the region. At the same time, Beijing benefits from Russia's continued role as an interlocutor, facilitating the implementation of its BRI projects and reducing risks associated with separatist movements in Xinjiang. Furthermore, China's greater economic and strategic involvement serves a shared interest: limiting Western penetration in Central Asia and preventing U.S. and EU influence from gaining traction in the immediate vicinity of both countries (Ahmad 2021; Debone and Schutte 2020; Gan 2024; Kazantsev, Medvedeva and Safranchuk 2021; Lukin 2019; Lukin 2020; Meng-Fang, Na-Xi and Shan-Bing 2019; Skaricic 2023).

Thus, the growing Sino-Russian interdependence not only shapes global geopolitical dynamics but also redefines the role of Central Asia in the new Eurasian balance. Far from being passive recipients of this configuration, the Central Asian states have leveraged the rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing and their tensions with the West to secure strategic concessions and reinforce their position as essential intermediaries. This new arrangement reaffirms Central Asia as a space of accommodation between Russian and Chinese interests. The retreat of U.S. presence and increasing Western pressures have created an environment in which Beijing expands its economic influence without openly challenging Russia's primacy in security and politics, while Moscow views these advances as a means to preserve its regional relevance. This dynamic equilibrium supports pragmatic cooperation, keeping potential disputes under control and consolidating a regional status quo based on a functional division of influence and the logic of a Sino-Russian condominium (Lass 2022).

The data reveal a complex web of interactions between the influence mechanisms of the two countries: Russia excels in security and the maintenance of historical and cultural ties, while China strengthens its

presence through large-scale investments and infrastructure expansion. At first glance, this functional division might suggest competition; however, in practice, it demonstrates strategic coordination aimed at minimizing conflict and fostering mutual interdependence. Thus, Sino-Russian cooperation in the region is multifaceted and embedded within a context of global geopolitical realignments, where both countries seek to safeguard their interests amid Western pressures.

5. Conclusion

The analysis throughout this study shows that the Sino-Russian relationship in Central Asia is structured around a functional division of spheres of influence: Russia maintains its centrality in regional security, while China consolidates itself as the main economic investor. This arrangement emerged after 2014, when Western sanctions imposed on Moscow following the annexation of Crimea and the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan reshaped the regional balance of power. At the same time, the expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative strengthened China's presence in infrastructure, energy, and trade sectors, allowing Beijing to expand its influence without directly challenging Russia's security primacy. Far from open antagonism, the actions of the two powers in Central Asia reflect a dynamic of strategic coordination, in which each reinforces its position through distinct means, minimizing conflict and avoiding an overt struggle for hegemony.

In the military sphere, Russia maintains a consolidated presence with bases in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, in addition to leading the CSTO. Moscow also leverages energy interdependence, remittances from Central Asian migrants, and financial integration promoted by the EEU as instruments of influence. China, while intensifying security cooperation with Central Asian countries through the provision of military equipment and joint exercises, adopts a more cautious approach so as not to directly challenge Russia's role as the primary guarantor of regional stability. China's role is more prominent in the economic realm: its investment model, combined with loans and the construction of strategic infrastructure, has made China the largest economic partner for most countries in the region.

Thus, the Sino-Russian rapprochement reveals a coexistence of influences in the region, where Moscow's projection of military, cultural, and political power combines with China's economic, industrial, and technological advances. In this scenario, Asian integration allows Russia to leverage China's growth to boost its own development and that of its neighbors, in a strategy

aimed at regional stability that aligns with Beijing's interests. This partnership does not imply a conflict of interests but rather a shared management of the region, with both countries respecting and balancing their roles to ensure stability and avoid disputes. Moreover, this cooperation serves as a response to Western pressures, underscoring the strategic importance of Central Asia for both countries' geopolitical objectives. Consequently, China's growing influence complements and strengthens Russian interests, and this rapprochement is part of broader plans to challenge the West, reflecting Moscow's and Beijing's global ambitions and consolidating their joint and enduring influence in the region.

Despite the depth of this analysis, the study presents limitations primarily related to the inherent complexity of geopolitical interactions in a rapidly changing context. Variability in regional contexts and the dynamic nature of actor relationships hinder the generalization of results, indicating the need for more specific future investigations. Suggested research directions include analyzing the potential impact of changes in U.S. foreign policy following Donald Trump's return to the presidency and a possible ceasefire in Ukraine, which could provide new insights into the redefinition of strategic alliances and cooperation mechanisms between Russia and China.

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Sino-Russian cooperation in Central Asia, examining China's growing economic presence and the reconfiguration of Russian influence in the region. Since 2014, Western sanctions and geopolitical tensions have led Moscow and Beijing to deepen their partnership. While China expands investments through the Belt and Road Initiative, Russia maintains its central role in regional security and financial influence. The study argues that despite China's rise, Central Asia has become a space for strategic accommodation, where both powers avoid direct conflicts and consolidate their global presence.

KEYWORDS

Geopolitics, Russia, China, Central Asia

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DISINFORMATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: EXAMINING THE VULNERABILITIES OF BRAZIL

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Introduction

The expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the early 21st century has substantially increased the importance of the internet in individuals' lives. Although, there is no consensual concept for ICTs, definitions are generally proposed to represent all devices, applications, network components, data, systems, and infrastructures involved in modern computing. Thus, the internet, mobile phones, computer programs, social networks, wireless networks, and other services that enable data access, storage, transmission, and processing are considered types of ICTs.

The evolution of systems and tools surrounding this type of technology, along with the increase in connectivity between societies, has also brought new threats. As a result, issues such as information security, cybercrime, cybersecurity, and cyber defense have entered the agendas of various states, particularly Great Powers.

Brazil, at least through normative documents, has emphasized the importance of this issue. The editions of the National Defense Policy have consistently highlighted that the cyber sector is strategic for the country, stressing the need to enhance information and communication technologies, not only within the Armed Forces but also across all state structures. Moreover, through the National Cybersecurity Strategy (E-Ciber 2020), Brazil acknowledges that the intensification of developments in the field of information and communication technology has led to increased use of cyberspace for various activities, including the provision of public services. Furthermore, the expansion of ICTs has enabled an exponential growth in social interactions within the cyber dimension.

In the context of major powers, with the annexation of Crimea by

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Russia and the support for separatist organizations in eastern Ukraine by Moscow, United States authorities have noted the expansion of Kremlin-sponsored disinformation campaigns against Washington and its allies. This advancement occurs through state media outlets, such as Russia Today and Sputnik, but also through increased presence on social networks with hired trolls and the creation of new information emitters (Bunce and Hozíć 2016, 440).

In 2017, reports from U.S. intelligence agencies suggested the possibility that the Russian government had financed the creation and dissemination of disinformation during the U.S. presidential elections, aiming to undermine the campaign of the Democratic Party candidate, Hillary Clinton. Following this event, the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) sponsored the establishment of the Hybrid Threats Centre of Excellence in Helsinki, designed to investigate potential disinformation threats directed at Europe (Lanoszka 2019). Conversely, in the same year, Russia also raised concerns about the possibility of disinformation campaigns originating from Europe, particularly from the United States, accusing Washington of sponsoring destabilization efforts in various regions of the world, including Ukraine in 2014 during the Euromaidan protests.

States are increasingly improving their capabilities for widespread propaganda and disinformation to alter how people think and act. Furthermore, international actors are also investing in mechanisms of protection to combat this type of threat, such as banning of portals from Russian state media by EU member countries and Canada or the Golden Shield Project of China which blocks content from various sites that are considered threats to security such as the Voice of America (Nichols and Corrêa 2023).

Hence, there is a justification for qualitatively and quantitatively investing in research on the impacts of this new situation in Brazil. The objective of this investigation is to identify vulnerabilities of Brazil relating to the impacts of disinformation operations promoted by state or non-state actors. The development of new insights about the State's weakness regarding disinformation campaigns also contributes to analyzing the technological development of the country in a national security context, especially in the ICT area. In these terms, the cyber sector must be perceived as an indispensable part of national strategy.

Within the realm of information security, the revelations of Edward Snowden in 2013 about the espionage program conducted by the National Security Agency exposed that Brazilian authorities, including President Dilma Rousseff, had their phones tapped by the U.S. agency. In addition, according to BNAméricas (2020), Brazil is the second country most affected

by cybercrime, totaling 70 million victims and 80 billion dollars in financial losses.

More research is also needed to investigate the potentialities and vulnerabilities of Brazil in an international competition context, where various attributes of the ICT domain can impact the distribution of material capabilities among states. Henceforth, technologies such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, 5G, virtual/augmented reality and big data acquire strategic value. All of this, coupled with the increasing need for microprocessors and other types of hardware, requires Brazil, a state proposing itself as a power, to develop its industries in line with these new technologies to compete with main international system actors and ensure its own security.

Methodology

This investigation addresses the concept of disinformation applying it to the field of International Relations (IR). So, the relation of this term as part of a subversion strategy is detailed. To achieve this, the literature on this terminology is reviewed to position it within the dynamics of competition existing in the international system. Thus, the analysis of Lanoszka (2019) about the effectiveness of disinformation operations in altering a state's policy is discussed.

In the case of Brazil, three hypotheses constructed by Lanoszka (2019) concerning the ineffectiveness of disinformation campaigns in producing changes in target states according to interests of the perpetrator are tested: H1) international anarchy generates uncertainties about any information transmitted by adversaries, so rival governments will always expect the worst actions from enemies and will build means of protection against them; H2) citizens that generally trust more in their past experiences, hold preconceptions about foreign political elites and are more likely to adopt ideological perspectives when thinking about the international dimension than state elites, a factor that increases the difficulty of influence from external actors; H3) the state can employ countermeasures even in a scenario of political polarization; it is not incapable of taking actions to reduce the impacts of disinformation campaigns and may even develop a counter-disinformation campaign to minimize the damage from the adversary's operation.

By testing these hypotheses, it is possible to map Brazil's perceptions of risks and defense policies about information security and cybersecurity. This facilitates an examination of potential threats to the information domain,

the formulation of new hypotheses for testing in other investigations and the creation of contributions for future theorizations around the theme of subversion.

The adopted methodology by this investigation aspires to provide a concrete understanding of current context, exploring Brazil's main vulnerabilities to disinformation campaigns. This analysis focuses on contributing to the planning of civilian and military institutions to minimize potential occurrences and ensure a competitive advantage for the state in events related to the instrumentalization of information for political destabilization.

The concept of cyberspace

It is important to highlight that, according to Kramer et al. (2009), there are over 28 definitions of cyberspace, indicating a lack of conceptual consensus. However, in a project led by Professor Nazli Choucri (2015), involving several institutions and titled "Explorations in Cyber International Relations," cyberspace is understood as encompassing: (1) physical structures and telecommunication devices that enable the connection of technological and communication networks; (2) computer systems; (3) networks connecting computer systems; (4) networks of networks linking computer systems; (5) user access nodes and intermediate routing nodes; and (6) constituent data.

Cyberspace is a strategic domain, yet it is also a social one. According to Brazil's Military Doctrine on Cyber Defense (2023), cyberspace is perceived as a virtual dimension formed by computational devices connected to networks, where digital information is transmitted, processed, and stored. Furthermore, cyberspace is classified as an area of action for cyber defense, conceptualized as a set of practices conducted within the framework of a national strategic-level plan aimed at "protecting information assets of national defense interest, acquiring data for intelligence knowledge production, and seeking superiority over the opponent's information systems." The 2020 National Defense White Paper, on the other hand, considers cyberspace as a multifaceted threat scenario, encompassing both state and non-state actors, which can jeopardize the integrity of critical infrastructures essential to systems associated with national security.

Daniel Ventre (2013) characterizes cyberspace as both a strategic and social domain. The author divides cyberspace into three layers. The first is the hardware layer, which comprises the physical devices that support the second layer, the virtual layer, encompassing programs, applications, and information (software). This second layer, in turn, is used and manipulated

by the cognitive layer of users, referred to as “peopleware.” Ventre’s approach reinforces the concept that cyberspace is shaped by user experiences. The existence of the peopleware layer socializes cyberspace, framing it not merely from an electronic and/or mechanical perspective. The way peopleware engages with cyberspace transforms it into a space of social interactions and, consequently, a space of power.

This new operational dimension is substantially exploited on social media, where mass sharing of personal information by users increases risks to national security. Another aspect is that flexibility of privacy enables content customization based on user profiles, defined through data collection of individual behavior during platform access, or even when not in use. This selection is carried out by algorithms based on data collection, allowing dissemination of narratives tailored to the user. Thus, there is an intensification of potential to affect the cognitive field due to easing of sharing, speed of spreading and reaching (Stassun and Assmann 2012; Nichols and Corrêa 2023).

Information and disinformation in IR

The evolution of data analysis technologies, artificial intelligence and machine learning has revolutionized both the ability to economically and politically influence other actors and decision-making related to security. It has also enabled using information as a form of coercion and manipulation on a large scale and increased speed of communication. The significance of this process can be observed in the 2017 United States National Strategy, which includes a chapter on ‘information statecraft,’ highlighting potential risks from Russia and China on this topic (Rosenbach and Mansted 2019).

States have engaged in a “zero-sum race” for data extraction and operationalization. This technological sector tends to have monopolistic companies due to a virtuous cycle: the more data obtained, the more applications developed by these corporations are improved, the increase of profits improve skills to extract and instrumentalize larger amounts of data. This accumulation of data becomes a relevant tool for employing disinformation through the use of algorithms for content targeting.

Disinformation is a type of information designed to deceive. Disinformation campaigns are understood as the systematic effort of an actor to influence the political process by using disinformation to deceive an audience (Fallis 2011; Lanoszka 2019). Disinformation is a component of deception operations that seek to manipulate beliefs to gain advantages and

produce a coercive relationship. Rid (2020) indicates that in the mid-2010s, disinformation operations were altered to a new format in face of technological innovations and internet culture. In this new era, disinformation activities are faster, do not require operational qualification and can be conducted remotely and in a decentralized manner.

A complicating factor is the political use of the term “disinformation.” By pointing out another actor of conducting disinformation campaigns, the accuser seeks to undermine trust in the information released by the accused target, legitimize censorship and sanctions, and strengthen their own credibility. The mutual accusations between the United States and Russia exemplify the use of the term “disinformation” as a tool to influence public opinion. For instance, during the conflicts in Ukraine, the White House accused Moscow of spreading disinformation to justify its military actions, including claims of genocide in the Donbass region or the potential existence of Ukrainian biological weapons laboratories. The United States also accused the Kremlin of sponsoring narratives against vaccines produced by U.S. companies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Conversely, Russia has accused the United States of employing disinformation to destabilize governments not aligned with the West and to incite internal protests in Russia.

Regarding theoretical perspectives, the topic of disinformation is understudied in International Relations (IR). The structural realism approach prioritizes the status of the distribution of material capabilities in the international system and there is no consensus on dealing with intelligence/counterintelligence as a material capability. Lanoszka (2019, 5) suggests that a hypothesis supporting the understanding of intelligence as a component of material capabilities is the comprehension of intelligence as a tool capable of empowering one state in relation to another. In that case, international disinformation campaigns can be considered within the logic of structural realism by interpreting them as an instrument which undermines the material capabilities of the target or weakens the political process of the aimed society.

Although not directly addressing disinformation, classical realists considered the role of information translated by cultural factors which have the ability to influence how states seek to increase their power. Morgenthau highlights ‘cultural imperialism’ as the most effective cultural instrument of power, seeking to control individuals’ minds with the aim of altering power relations between nations. Carr, in turn, refers to power over opinion as being conditioned by status, interests, and economic and military superiority, which facilitate the imposition of ideas on others. Similarly, Aron identifies the “idea” as one of the three objectives pursued by states, alongside power and glory (Suppo 2011, 49).

Lanoszka (2019, p. 5) argues that rationalist theories are the most effective for analyzing the effects of disinformation, as they assume that information holds significant relevance in international relations. Rathbun (2007) notes that rationalists align with structural realists in recognizing that anarchy generates uncertainty regarding the intentions of other actors, though this uncertainty can be managed. Glasser (1994) asserts that states can acquire information about the intentions of other states, allowing them to classify these states as either status quo defenders or revisionist actors, as well as distinguishing between offensive and defensive characteristics.

According to Lanoszka (2019, p. 6), there is no reason to indicate that international anarchy has less force in the relationship between the actors who practice disinformation and those players targeted by these campaigns. On the contrary, disinformation erodes trust and norms, with adversaries being the primary targets of this type of operation. This context is more similar to the international anarchic system than a system where anarchy is constrained (Lanoszka 2019, 6).

Indeed, international anarchy seems to dictate the dynamics in the process of disinformation as the major operations of this kind occurred during times when the anarchical international system was explicitly materialized, e.g. campaigns against Japan in the 1920s propagated by Moscow and the CIA operations against East Germany. However, it is crucial to note that direct antagonism is not a necessary condition for the use of disinformation campaigns. It must also be considered that the actor conducting such operations aims to alter the behavior of its target, either to shift the balance of power in its favor, maintain it, or destabilize the target internally.

The existence of international anarchy does not establish a causal relationship in the construction of “barriers” or “filters” that would enable a state to block all information from other actors. In a conflictual international system, states will strive to seek new areas of influence while also maintaining existing ones. Encountering resistance does not prevent states from instrumentalizing information or achieving some degree of success through its use.

Although uncertainty is considered a central element in realist theory, it is mistaken to assume that distrust invalidates any form of communication signals from external actors or that such signals would always be met with skepticism. Another important point, countering the argument that uncertainty renders information campaigns unfeasible, is that states possess internal characteristics that may facilitate the penetration of these signals.

In summary, the field of International Relations theory still lacks robust explanations regarding disinformation campaigns or the use of information

for political purposes. Reflecting this gap, there is a need to develop analyses capable of constructing theoretical models that address this issue within the complex interactions among actors in the international system.

Subversion and IR

In searching for theorization in International Relations (IR), the perspective on subversion as the reversal of structural power and as a strategic instrument stands out (Maschmeyer 2022; Maschmeyer 2023; Krieg 2023). Actors who hold structural power have the capacity to create interaction structures and shape these frameworks to ensure advantages. Subversion seeks to exploit the structure of the targets to convert advantages into disadvantages for those holding structural power. Vulnerabilities in the structure rules and practices, as well as the agents interacting within and through them, are also explored by subversion. Moreover, subversion operations may also aim to affect shared constitutive identity understandings.

Two crucial factors determine the effects that subversion activities can cause: the structural position of the target entity and the depth of subversion. Regarding the first factor, it is necessary to consider that subversive power cannot change structural positions but can exploit them according to its interests. Consequently, an assessment of possible targets is required for the success of operations through efforts to influence public opinion by disseminating disinformation in the media. Second, the depth of subversion depends mainly on the perpetrator's capacity. When attempting to subvert an adversary, it is necessary to identify vulnerabilities and develop best ways to exploit them. Reversing structural power requires some familiarity with structure's type of structure one strives to attack; thus, states with structures and levels of structural power similar to targets have fewer barriers than those lacking these conditions (Maschmeyer 2022, 88).

Conversely, Krieg (2023) conceives subversion as a strategic tool. He differs from Maschmeyer (2022, 2021) by seeking to relate subversion and war based on Clausewitz's traditional approach. Krieg points out that the characterization of subversion as an instrument of power orchestrated by information networks in coordination without the presence of conventional military operations seems incompatible with traditional definitions of war. Subversion seeks to change the behavior of opponents blurring boundaries between war and peace - even without using coercive means. Additionally, it also exploits socio-psychological, physical and infrastructural vulnerabilities in the target's informational environment to alter socio-political consensus.

Thus, the strategic functionality lies in directing individual and mass awareness and causing regime change in more extreme cases.

For Krieg (2023, 73), narratives are decisive in subversion since they construct realities, manufacture identities for individuals in a community, and are like plots that benefit themselves from “our socio-psychological weaknesses to create “truth” as a socially constructed phenomenon.” This strategic use of narratives in a subversion context is classified as ‘weaponized narratives’ which look to change communication levels between rulers and the ruled and shift communication patterns among various actors coexisting in the decision-making process, such as the press, academia, civil society, and politicians. To be considered subversive, a weaponized narrative must be capable of generating mobilization, fabricating a high level of social orchestration through various networks, and galvanizing violent activism to compel reactions from political leaders.

Mobilization is made of the chaos of the informational ecosystem with intentionally or unintentionally disseminated false information. The consequence is that it becomes nearly impossible to filter information for political decision-making. Moreover, the political incapacity for effective decision-making relatively diminishes trust and legitimacy in government bodies and polarizes public discourse. For this reason, to question government’s incapacities in addressing public concerns can particularly provoke political violence through insurgencies.

On the vulnerability of states to the impacts derived from disinformation activities, Lanoszka (2019) argues that these actions lack effectiveness since they should refute three hypotheses to be successful: H1) international anarchy generates uncertainties about any information transmitted by adversaries; therefore, rival governments will always expect the worst actions from enemies and will build means of protection against them; H2) citizens generally trust more in their previous experiences, hold prejudices about foreign political elites and would be more likely to adopt ideological perspectives when thinking about the international dimension than state elites, a factor that increases the difficulty of influence coming from external actors; H3) states can employ countermeasures even in a scenario of political polarization; it is not incapable of taking actions to reduce the impact of disinformation campaigns and may even develop a counter-disinformation action to minimize the damage from the adversary’s operation .

First hypothesis

The first factor diminishing the effectiveness of disinformation campaigns is that international anarchy generates uncertainties about information from adversaries. Therefore, communication signals emitted by external actors will always be seen ambiguously since there is no certainty about the nature of threats and what can be done to counter them. For a disinformation campaign to succeed in influencing society and destabilizing the political process, it must be considered that individuals would accept any type of external information. To test this first hypothesis in the Brazilian case, it is necessary to understand how the country generally receives and interprets information transmitted by external actors and to analyze the penetration level of foreign media in the Brazilian press environment.

Although not restricted to the internet, main coordinated disinformation efforts in recent years have been carried out in the virtual environment especially through social networks (Rid, 2020). Lanoszka agrees with this trend underlining Russia's increased activities on the internet and the case of Cambridge Analytica capturing data from Facebook for use in the campaigns of U.S. presidential election 2016. In the first decades of the 21st century, there has been a pivotal growth in the number of users on social networks, texting apps and video streaming platforms in Brazil. These services are provided by a few corporations that monopolize this sector. For instance, Instagram and Facebook, the largest social networks in terms of users in Brazil, belong to the same business group: Meta Inc. Furthermore, WhatsApp, the most widely used texting app by Brazilians with a significant advantage over competitors, also belongs to the same conglomerate as Instagram and Facebook.

Google, Android, Gmail, and Chrome respectively are the most used search engine, mobile operating system, email server, and browser in Brazil. All of them belong to the Alphabet Inc., conglomerate known for holding the largest amount of individual data worldwide controlling over 90% of the Brazilian search engine market. YouTube, the largest streaming platform globally and the most used in Brazil, is also owned by Alphabet.

This concentration of Brazilian internet in basically two U.S. companies reveals uncertainty, not only about the security of citizens' information due to these companies' possession of sensitive data, but also about the selection of content accessed by users which are defined by algorithms controlled by very few actors. For example, the algorithm of Instagram and Facebook selects certain types of posts to appear in the primary section (feed) of these social networks and tends to highlight controversial themes that generate a certain type of engagement. This kind of process is accompanied by the possibility of disseminating information with a particular bias through a herd behavior.

This suggests that the lower the diversity of corporations providing services in the social media or data storage sector, the greater the possibility of channels for disseminating disinformation. Further, the absence of active national companies in this area also amplifies the scenario of uncertainty.

Particularly, even before the start of the war with Ukraine (2022), the most used social network by Russian citizens was VK, a private national company. The conflict with Kiev and the worsening of relations between Moscow and the West led to the banning of Facebook in the country. In the search engine market, Google lost to Yandex, and in the texting apps market Telegram also surpassed WhatsApp as the most popular messenger. Something similar also occurs in China; WeChat, Weibo, and Baidu, Chinese companies, surpass all their foreign competitors.

High corporate concentration in the ICT sector and the dominance of foreign companies combined with the weak performance of national industry and lack of political interest in developing this area of economy, leads to the conclusion that the first hypothesis/obstacle is refuted in the Brazilian case. The total control of user data by these companies and the oligopoly of content selection algorithms enable an informational penetration field by potential adversaries; furthermore, it allows the use of sensitive user data, which could pose risks to national security. Thus, the manufacturing of identity and meaning in a community becomes feasible thanks to the management capacity of these corporations over what reaches the user of their services (Krieg 2023). This scenario also reflects the role of the subversive actor, as defined by Maschmeyer (2022), in exploiting the target structure to convert existing advantages in Brazil's informational ecosystem (structural power) into disadvantages.

The construction of a secure information environment and the attainment of strategic advantages also involve the analysis of economic areas related to the technological sector and to the debate on national security. Consequently, the quantity of resources and economic growth can be positive for military power and the lack of them can produce vulnerabilities to state security (Knorr 1977). One of its considerations that most impacts this research certainly relates to the importance of technological innovation in military-economic potential. If expansion of production is more structured in technological development, translated into higher worker productivity, than in simple economic growth it will have greater benefits concerning military potential because economic activities that involve high technology have more synergies with the military industry (Knorr 1973).

To increase the economic-military potential of a state, it becomes essential to make public investments in Research and Development. This can

be evidenced by observing the share of global spending in the area which is substantially concentrated in the most industrially developed countries, with an emphasis on Research and Development in the military sector. In these terms, a state needs to associate national security with development of its high-technology sectors related to the cyber/informational nexus striving to increase industrial productivity and enhance its defense against cyber attacks, building an environment of synergy between the development of economic strategic sectors and means of deterrence against this type of influence. The absence of national companies in this sector demonstrates that Brazil is far from achieving the security-economy nexus, at least in terms of the information and communication area.

Second hypothesis

The hypothesis that citizens trust more in their past experiences, harboring preconceptions about foreign political elites and, for this reason, would be more skeptical about being influenced by foreign actors, is also contested in the case of Brazil. On this hypothesis, the relationship between state and society generally affects how the government conducts its foreign policy. Information access and processing vary between these two entities. For instance, executive members involved in foreign policy decision-making process possess privileged information due to state political-military institutions controlled by these agents. These leaders may make wrong decisions in information processing, relative power calculations, identification of alternatives to address problems, and assessment of consequences of a particular action (Lanoszka 2019).

Nevertheless, society does not have access to this kind of information like decision-makers. Regarding views on foreign policy conduct, citizens usually rely more on their experiences, which is uncommon for those involved in the foreign policy decision-making process. Additionally, citizens would be more inclined to adopt ideological perspectives when thinking about the international dimension than state elites.

In Lanoszka's (2019) view, disinformation campaigns intend to create diligence among executive members involved in foreign policy and the general public, impacting the target's alignment in the international system according to the interests of the state undertaking the operation. For disinformation operations to be effective the capacity of individuals influencing state policies must be considered.

Some contradictions arise when applying this hypothesis in

Brazil and can be explained from a sociological standpoint. Souza (2020) highlights historical-structural elements that train the Brazilian middle class in reproducing an anti-corruption discourse, which in practice ended up overflowing its meaning. This historical-structural process is expressed in the ontological difference between human beings, the foundation of political and social life. It translates into the idea that there is an irrefutable solution to the social and political life of the world, and this answer becomes treated as solid and impossible to contest. For this, a solution must be accepted as universally valid scientific knowledge, defining what is true and what is not.² Those who control these definitions of knowledge validity also tend to decide what is fair and unfair and can justify any form of social and political domination.

In the public context, the competition for success of scientific messages occurs through accessing investment in resources and powerful personal relationships, based on the symbolic dimension of ideas and their effectiveness in social life. Modern Nation-State emerges in the scientific context and in the struggling for legitimacy that is translated through identity presuppositions such as the idea of the “chosen people” and “chosen nation,” as is in the USA, which has resources to strengthen these discourses. In states like Brazil, where a colonized elite has had and continues to have its wealth built through intermediation work and exploitation of those they command, national identity does not assume the “chosen nation” sense but rather that of the “underdog”. The Brazilian identity is the negative image of American identity: while Americans are perceived as better, Brazilians perceive themselves as the worst and the most corrupt.

The colonized Brazilian elite reflects this identity creating its own science from practice and transforms existing knowledge according to the interests of large companies and governments, indicating which knowledge will be hegemonic. In this process of adaptation, the Brazilian elite is deeply influenced by the American elite, in a relational dynamic aimed at the expansion of U.S. capital. Consequently, the “inferiority complex” opens individuals’ cognition to external influence. This trend highlights the instrumentalization of the elite itself by foreign actors.

Penido and Stédile (2020, 44) also stress attempts to colonize Southern strategic thinking carried out through the structuring of cooperation, training, and education actions involving US armed forces and those of other Latin American countries. Among the proposals are the budgetary

2 Souza (2020) argues that a significant portion of the idea of scientific knowledge as absolute truth arises from the Enlightenment historical perception of knowledge production detached from any sector or political view. This framework stems from the view of continuity between religion and science, prevalent in the Western context.

limits for the defense industry that are incompatible with local development needs, the transformation of Latin American armed forces into police forces, especially with the growth of military actions against organized crime, and the maintenance of physical US military bases in the region. Meanwhile, internally, Washington does not follow these measures propagated to the rest. States with little investment capacity continue to bet on misguided strategies that accentuate their status of strategic dependence. The aspects of subordination and dependence of elites enable the spread of disinformation movements to be supported by institutions in the state apparatus, without the morphology of a new political class or a new social movement.

Concerning individual predispositions, it is important to mention that narratives exploit social and psychological weaknesses in society (Krieg 2023, 73). These are metaheuristic shortcuts that create meaning and divide the world into good/bad and legitimate/illegitimate. For the formation of these weaponized narratives, pre-existing political polarization, schisms in social fabric and other tension potentials are considered. For these reasons, in addition to the fact that the information and communication sector has a significant external influence, internal fractures in Brazil are a major vulnerability signal for disinformation campaigns.

Third hypothesis

The third hypothesis constructed by Lanoszka (2019) suggests that states can employ countermeasures to minimize the consequences of disinformation operations. The State is not an inert object without the ability to make decisions to reduce the force of disinformation operations. Additionally, the state can counterattack using the same *modus operandi*.

The implementation of these countermeasures involves decision-making processes in the political arena. Lanoszka mentions that the requirement for a rapid response capability to debunk disinformation is crucial for minimizing consequences. However, in the current digital revolution, as Rid (2020) asserts, the spread of disinformation made an extremely complex task the perpetrator identification. Moreover, countermeasures commonly used, such as fact-checking websites or the punishment of internal actors that disseminate disinformation, usually focus on the mitigation of damage caused to the target. Due to the rapid spread facilitated by internet technologies, damage control cannot keep up with the dynamism of disinformation operations.

Regarding the institutional dimension and considering the interactions

between information security and the cyber sector in Brazil, the strategic conception of cyberspace began to take shape with the National Defense Policy (2005) and the National Defense Strategy (2008). The latter positions cybernetics as a strategic domain controlled by the Exército Brasileiro (Brazilian Army). In the following years, other interactions between the documents became concrete, such as the exploratory elaboration of a cyber defense green book in 2010 and a doctrine in 2014.

These documents are the foundation for building Brazil's cyber defense structures, such as the Cyber Defense Center (CDCiber) in 2012, The National School of Cyber Defense (ENaDCiber) created in 2015, and the establishment of the joint service involving The Cyber Defense Command, established in 2016, responsible for strategic cyber defense, with CDCiber performing operational functions. The strategic institutionalization of military power permeated CDCiber in establishing The Joint Cyber Defense Detachment, whose goal is to provide capabilities for cyber warfare conducted at the tactical level by The Joint Cyber Warfare Detachment.

In 2018, The National Information Security Policy (PNSI) was instituted, bringing reforms to the state structure for cybersecurity and cyber defense. The new model defines Information Security as a systemic area covering cybersecurity, cyber defense, physical security and data protection. PNSI designates The Institutional Security Cabinet (GSI) as the cybersecurity administrator and executor of information security policy planning alongside The Ministry of Defense (MD).³ The document stipulates that MD must support GSI in activities related to cybersecurity. Additionally, it must build guidelines and procedures that can be used in systems connected to cyber defense. According to Devanny et al. (2022, 7), this change in the institutional model increases the priority level of cybersecurity, relegating a secondary role to cyber defense.

PNSI also creates The National Information Security Strategy (ENSI), outlining its development in five modules: cybersecurity, cyber defense, critical infrastructure security, confidential information security and protection against data leakage. The development of these modules is still ongoing, and currently, only the cybersecurity module has been published through E-Ciber (The National Cybersecurity Strategy). E-Ciber reinforces that cybersecurity is under GSI's command and cyber defense is under MD's command.

The E-Ciber outlines a series of strategic objectives for Brazil in the field of cybersecurity. The first is to make the country more prosperous and trustworthy in the digital environment. The second is to enhance the country's

³ Primarily the Brazilian Army (EB), which is responsible for cyber defense.

resilience to cyber threats. Lastly, the third objective is to strengthen Brazil's role in the field of cybersecurity on an international level.

Despite the establishment of these institutional frameworks, Devanny et al. (2022, 9) emphasize that there is a kind of conceptual confusion, with the absence of a clear definition for cyber power, coupled with institutional tension mainly due to the organizational shift towards cybersecurity promoted by PNSI. Thus, cyber power is not used as a concept for national strategic integration to unify efforts that exist separately to enable cybersecurity and cyber defense. Despite these distortions, it is important to note that, at least in these publications, Brazil prioritizes the development of defensive and offensive cyber capabilities along with the construction of a cyber defense industrial base. E-Ciber points out the need to foster partnerships between academia and the public and private sectors, as well as the necessity of international cooperation for strategic purposes.

Another mechanism constructed by Brazil to ensure the state's information security is Decree No. 11,856, of December 26, 2023, establishing The National Cybersecurity Policy (PNCiber) and The National Cybersecurity Committee. It defines the principles, objectives, and instruments of The National Cybersecurity Policy and addresses the competence and composition of The National Telecommunications Committee.

The objectives of PNCiber include promoting the development of nationally-oriented products, services, and technologies for cybersecurity; ensuring the confidentiality, authenticity, and availability of solutions and data used in the processing, storage, and electronic/digital transmission of information; promoting responsible behavior for children, adolescents, and the elderly in cyberspace; contributing to combating cybercrime and other malicious actions; promoting the use of cybersecurity protection measures and risk management for the prevention, mitigation, and neutralization of vulnerabilities and cyber attacks; enhancing the resilience of public and private entities to cyber attacks; promoting cybersecurity training in society; contributing to scientific research, technological development, and innovation related to cybersecurity; encouraging coordination and the exchange of cybersecurity information between federal entities, the three branches, the private sector, and society; creating regulatory, supervisory, and control devices to enhance national cybersecurity and developing strategies for cybersecurity cooperation (Brazil 2023).

Regarding the Armed Forces and their relationship with cyber power, Devanny et al. (2022) highlight which, despite being designated as a strategic sector in The National Defense Strategy, the percentage allocated to the area in the budget of the Equipment and Defense Articulation Plan is only 1.48%

compared to other Army programs. It is important to note that the entry cost for technologies associated with cyber power is relatively lower compared to other military capabilities, nevertheless, in 2019, the budget for cyber defense almost doubled on average compared to the period between 2012 and 2018.

On the subject of social media, there is a growing debate on platform regulation, especially following the vandalism of the headquarters of The Three Branches on January 8, 2023, as many of those responsible were mobilized through these websites. A crucial example is the resumption of discussions about the bill 2630/2020, known as the Fake News Bill, to control the spread of misinformation on these platforms. Discussions about regulation are still in their early stages and face significant opposition, both from corporations like Meta and Google and from far-right groups, some of which are known for proliferating misinformation on social media. Despite this, in a survey published by Atlas Intel in April 2023, 78% of Brazilians support the need for legislation that establishes well-defined rules for the operation of social media in the country (Atlas Intel, 2023).

In the juridical arena, Brazil has implemented some countermeasures and prevention activities regarding combating misinformation. As mentioned, the Brazilian electoral process has been dealing with the spread of misinformation since the popularization of social media, reaching its peak in the 2018 and 2022 presidential elections. Since 2019, The Superior Electoral Court (TSE) has adopted measures to combat disinformation focused on campaigns that intend to legitimize Electoral Justice. For the 2022 elections, the Permanent Program to Combat Disinformation was created through Ordinance No. 510, of August 4, 2021 (TSE 2021), and various measures were taken against fake news and profiles that spread this type of content, as well as punishments against social media that kept this information online. These measures brought a series of criticisms regarding the reduction of freedom of expression rights, mainly from multinational corporations operating in the country.

As regards to the analysis of the third hypothesis, it can be affirmed that Brazil has adopted some institutional countermeasures against disinformation campaigns. This does not mean that the country has a completely secure environment regarding this problem. There are still various criticisms that can be made, especially about the lag in the national intelligence system. Nonetheless, it is evident that this hypothesis is the one most corroborated in the Brazilian case. Certainly, the country is not static in the fight against disinformation and has put into practice a series of combat and prevention actions.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to analyze the effectiveness of disinformation campaigns in Brazil and to discuss the policies developed by this state to mitigate the impacts of such activities. Thus, it was necessary to identify Brazil's vulnerabilities regarding the possibility of being a target of disinformation operations promoted by states or non-state actors. To achieve this, the hypotheses/obstacles constructed by Lanoszka (2019) in an article published in the *European Journal of International Security*, titled 'Disinformation in International Politics,' were utilized. In his analysis, the author attempts to corroborate the argument that disinformation campaigns are not effective, because of the existence of various limits to their success. In contrast, Lanoszka's hypotheses (2019) support the assumption of ineffectiveness if applied only to major powers or states with a relatively established ICT sector. They seek to spend efforts in cybersecurity, through the development of this pivotal area for national strategy.

In this research, it was found that the first two hypotheses of Lanoszka failed in the Brazilian case, but the third was partially corroborated. In the first, the high concentration in the ICT sector by foreign companies along with the incipient presence of national industry and the lack of political interest in this area of the economy, indicates that Brazil is vulnerable to disinformation campaigns. As shown by data on the ICT sector, Brazil still has much smaller numbers in terms of encouraging national development in this area compared to other developing states, such as India. The lack of state control over these companies' algorithms and the collection of sensitive user data by corporations also emphasizes risks to national security. Most internet services are provided by U.S. big tech companies: Meta, Alphabet, and Microsoft.

The second hypothesis is also refuted, on account of Brazilian society having internal predispositions that increase the likelihood of the success of disinformation operations, such as political polarization and external cultural influence. Polarization is translated not only through highly contested elections but also by the growth of a moral condemnation discourse among groups, especially from the idea of the existence of moral representatives against a corrupt ensemble that becomes responsible for all social evils. This external cultural influence manifests in the colonial experience that hinders the development of autonomous national thinking and dictates perceptions like innate corruption in Brazilian society and Western primacy.

In conclusion, through testing the third hypothesis, it can be stated that Brazil partially complies with the requirements proposed in this obstacle

by Lanoszka. There are several mechanisms that provide countermeasures by the country's authorities regarding information security and cybersecurity, such as PNSI and PNCiber. Preventive measures also emerge within the scope of the Superior Electoral Court to try to preserve the course of elections. There is also a considerable increase in public awareness of the need for the regulation of social networks regarding the proliferation of disinformation, which could provide more countermeasure alternatives.

Further studies are needed to investigate the effectiveness of this type of disinformation instrumentalization, as well as investigations that analyze the impact of subversion in a strategic perspective. It becomes essential to conceive the differences between states regarding defense capabilities in relation to the problem, as much of the literature on the subject restricts itself to major powers and ignores the operational space of emerging states where digital technology plays a crucial role.

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ABSTRACT

Some of the foremost concerns regarding information security in International Relations revolve around the repercussions of misinformation on the internal political process, with the aim of undermining adversary states. Certain studies have indicated the inefficacy of such endeavors in yielding substantial results in modifying the behavior of the targets. Given this assumption, this research endeavored to assess, in the context of Brazil, three hypotheses questioning the efficacy of this type of instrument. The conclusion is that the country finds itself in a state of strategic vulnerability but has undertaken institutional efforts to counteract the potential ramifications of a disinformation campaign.

KEYWORDS

Disinformation, Subversion, Information Security, Brazil

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REFLECTIONS ON BRAZIL AND DEFENSE COOPERATION: BETWEEN HISTORICAL ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES (1822-PRESENT)

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Introduction

Defense cooperation in Brazil involves collaboration with other countries and international organizations to strengthen military, technological, security and diplomatic ties. This specific collaboration between actors in the international system can range from joint training and military exercises to the acquisition and development of military technology and has been included in Brazilian Defense documents since 1996 as a way to standardize, enable and encourage its actions.

The general objective of the research is to analyze the defense cooperation that Brazil has undertaken since its independence process. The specific objectives are to discuss defense cooperation theoretically, to historically periodize Brazil's defense cooperation actions (from 1822 to the present) and to identify its historical advantages and challenges. In proposing to answer what are the most evident historical characteristics of Brazil's defense cooperation, as a working hypothesis it is pointed out that the characteristics are a) advantages and challenges in Brazil's defense cooperation actions, b) a correlation between foreign policy and defense in these actions, also highlighting the c) mapping of priority areas, historically established.

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Methodologically, in terms of nature, this is an applied research, which seeks to “generate knowledge for practical application, aimed at solving specific problems” (Gerardt and Silveira 2009, 35) and in terms of objectives, it reveals itself to be a descriptive-explanatory research. The procedures used were documentary and bibliographic research and the collection of quantitative data, which, when associated, classify the research as qualitative in its protocol, with the aid of the hypothetical-deductive method, according to Karl Popper, understood by the sequential set: “problem – hypotheses – deduction of observed consequences – attempt at falsification – corroboration” (Gerardt and Silveira 2009, 27). In addition to a longer scope of the study, qualitative research also has the characteristics of

[...] objectification of the phenomenon; hierarchy of actions to describe, understand, explain, precision of the relations between the global and the local in a given phenomenon; observance of the differences between the social world and the natural world; respect for the interactive character between the objectives sought by researchers, their theoretical orientations and their empirical data; search for the most reliable results possible; opposition to the assumption that defends a single research model for all sciences (Gerardt and Silveira 2009, 32).³

Seeking to understand the totality of the phenomenon is also a characteristic of the qualitative protocol, rather than focusing on particular concepts. We agree with Minayo, as this protocol is suitable for studies of the history “[...] of representations [...] of relationships [...] that is, of the products of the interpretations that humans make during their lives, of the way they construct their material artifacts and themselves, feel and think” (Minayo 2008, 57).⁴

Why cooperate in Defense?

3 In the original: “[...] objetivação do fenômeno; hierarquização das ações de descrever, compreender, explicar, precisão das relações entre o global e o local em determinado fenômeno; observância das diferenças entre o mundo social e o mundo natural; respeito ao caráter interativo entre os objetivos buscados pelos investigadores, suas orientações teóricas e seus dados empíricos; busca de resultados os mais fidedignos possíveis; oposição ao pressuposto que defende um modelo único de pesquisa para todas as ciências” (Gerardt and Silveira 2009, 32).

4 In the original: “[...] das representações [...] das relações [...] ou seja, dos produtos das interpretações que os humanos fazem durante suas vidas, da forma como constroem seus artefatos materiais e a si mesmos, sentem e pensam” (Minayo 2008, 57).

In order to understand the relevance of Brazilian Defense⁵ cooperation actions in general, it is essential to revisit classical authors who have historically contributed with qualitative analyses and applied research. The theoretical-conceptual design that underpins this research is based on the theoretical perception of International Relations to help understand the dynamics of the international system, identifying that cooperation, in all spheres, is a relevant variable, associated with the historical approach as vital to understanding the evolution of Brazil's actions in defense cooperation.

The perspective of the Geopolitical South⁶ permeates the proposal and identifies that the theoretical analysis will complement the research through the bias of neorealism and how cooperation between states can be motivated by domestic and regional stability. It also takes into account the importance of analyzing international relations considering the colonial and post-colonial history of countries in the Geopolitical South, as these shape the power structures and current economic relations. Therefore, South-South cooperation must be understood as a strategy to strengthen the position of developing countries on the global stage, as this interaction can lead to more appropriate solutions to the problems they face, compared to the solutions proposed by the Geopolitical North, as “[...] we insist that South-South cooperation is a foreign policy strategy with a strong geopolitical aspect” (Da Rocha 2019, n/p).⁷

From the 1970s onwards, the debate on the possibilities and challenges of cooperation began to stand out in the area of International Relations. For neoliberal theorists, cooperation should occur through international organizations, which would be the institutions responsible for the functioning

5 In this article, the conceptualization related to Defense cooperation was chosen. Derived and/or complementary concepts, such as security and public safety cooperation, will not be the subject of specific analysis here, although they may sometimes be considered.

6 The concept of the Geopolitical South refers to a global division that goes beyond economic categories, addressing the dynamics of power, influence, and international alliances between countries considered part of the Global South. This geopolitical division is complex and multifaceted, reflecting the historical, economic, and political relations that shape the contemporary world. The term emerged during the Cold War to distinguish the developing Non-Aligned Countries of the Southern Hemisphere from the industrialized countries of the Northern Hemisphere. For Visentini (2019, 19), the Geopolitical South “[...] concentrates approximately two-thirds of the existing states (quite unequal), the overwhelming majority of which are highly politically fragile and have military and economic weaknesses. Their international agenda consists simply of maintaining their existence as a nation and maintaining the local elites in power”.

7 In the original: “[...] insistimos que a cooperação Sul-Sul é uma estratégia de política externa com forte feição geopolítica” (DA ROCHA, 2019, s/p).

of cooperation, in addition to promoting communication between the actors involved, and collective action would lead to a greater common objective (Smouts 2004). Haas (apud Marra 2008) contributes to the discussion by presenting the concept of “spill over”, which suggests that the set of benefits achieved through cooperation through the institutions of a certain sector can encourage cooperation in other areas.

Keohane (1984) points out that cooperation is more difficult in political terms than in other areas, such as the economy - this occurs because there are common interests that allow cooperation, which leads to the establishment of regimes that guarantee the permanence and continuity of cooperation, even without hegemony. Furthermore, according to the concept of balance of power, this is not impossible to achieve and can be used as an instrument of self-help, even accepting the limitations imposed by the concepts of sovereignty and self-help on the predisposition to cooperation.

Authors from the neo-institutionalist movement, in turn, analyze from the perspective of rational choice. Communication is another fundamental assumption for this movement, and through it, signals that are costly for an actor can be emitted, which would be a way of demonstrating the predisposition and commitment to cooperative efforts. Neo-institutionalists explain the continuity of cooperation through greater trust due to the successive fulfillment of agreements – the repetition of games – and also do not consider the issue of identity formation and the influence of these on changing perceptions about the environment. Müller (2002) says that cooperation in Defense is cooperation between actors that may be in conflict, since cooperation cannot be guaranteed for a long period of time, which can cause states to become adversaries to each other. This perception, says the author, indicates that a state trusts in the skills and capabilities of another – in contrast to the notion of self-help, which states that a state should only trust in its ability to survive. Furthermore, this would mean the accumulation of power and the loss of freedom of action (Müller 2002). The author also discusses the challenges and limitations of security and defense cooperation, recognizing that although international regimes can facilitate cooperation, they also face difficulties due to trust issues, divergent national interests, and changes in global power dynamics.

Because constructivists do not fix the priorities of actors or the structure in which they interact, collaboration in Defense is considered feasible (for Wendt apud Müller 2002). Constructivists, in contrast to realists, argue that actors can shape the structure. They argue that the structure of the international system is defined by material means (such as the distribution of power) and by the social component (Adler; Barnett 1998), which makes

collaboration less necessary. Customs and norms can change the international environment from extremely competitive to extremely cooperative.

The Copenhagen School created the Theory of Regional Security Complexes, to understand international security issues from a regionalist perspective. This theory - expanded by Buzan and Waever (2003) - states that, although security problems are more related to their region, they are still affected by the polarization of the international system. As a result, this is seen as a rapprochement between constructivism and offensive realism in international relations theories (Cepik 2005). Neorealists believe that national and regional stability can encourage cooperation between states.

The central point of the analysis carried out here is that the idea of stability (or its absence) is crucial for the analysis of Brazil's defense cooperation actions, giving special emphasis to its Strategic Environment, understood as an area of Brazilian priority action. According to Fiori (2013), it would be "the region where Brazil wants to radiate – preferably – its influence and its diplomatic, economic and military leadership, which includes South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Antarctica and the South Atlantic Basin" (s/p). The working hypothesis indicates that the advantages and challenges in Brazil's defense cooperation actions are correlated between defense and foreign policy in these actions, highlighting the mapping of priority areas, which were constructed throughout the history of the independent country. The idea of stability or its absence is crucial for the analysis, not only of Brazil's Strategic Environment, but for thinking about the definition of Brazil's defense policy historically and the motivations that lead to cooperation, on the part of defense policy.

Cooperating in Defense is acting internationally (bilaterally and multilaterally) with friendly nations and organizations to purposefully meet the demands of both sides. Agreeing with Muthanna (2006 apud Rezende, 2014), cooperation in Defense is also understood here between both civilians and military personnel, involving political-military collaboration (multilateral actions such as peacekeeping operations) and direct cooperation, which includes the ministries in the area, associated agencies and the Armed Forces of different states, also covering the issue of military cooperation.

In the Brazilian case, for Barros; Lima; Barros (2024), this international action of the defense sector is

represented by technical cooperation and military advisory services, combined operations with friendly nations, border cooperation, military exercises with foreign forces, cooperation in science and technology,

military courses abroad, bilateral and multilateral meetings, trips and acquisition programs, joint development of defense **products, and the work of military advisory services in international organizations. This broad international network is commonly referred to as defense diplomacy, technical cooperation, international cooperation in the defense sector** (Carvalho, 2017; Cottey and Forster, 2004; Plessis, 2008), and even defense activities in the international arena (Brazil, 2017b) (Barros; Lima; Barros, 2024, 7, **our emphasis**).⁸

For Rezende (2014),

cooperating in defense can be a way for these states to maintain, modernize and, eventually, even increase their power resources without, however, (a) triggering an arms race that they cannot maintain or (b) arousing the disagreement of the unipolar power (Rezende 2014, 527).⁹

Additionally, the (incomplete) correlation between Brazilian Defense and foreign policies, understood as public policies, guides the analysis of Brazil's positioning. Bringing Defense and foreign policies closer together is possible and also essential, considering the historical path that both public policies have taken. Although academics and technicians discuss whether foreign policy is a state policy, the truth is that it is a continuous action based on historical accumulation and standards of conduct (Cervo 2003; 2008), which has given predictability and continuity to Brazilian foreign actions, even with the changes required by each government and its political-partisan problems. Three issues are related to foreign policy as a public policy: a) the centrality of relations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidency of

8 In the original: “representada por cooperação técnica e assessorias militares, operações combinadas com nações amigas, cooperação fronteiriça, exercícios militares com forças estrangeiras, cooperação em ciência e tecnologia, cursos militares no exterior, reuniões bilaterais e multilaterais, viagens e programas de aquisição, desenvolvimento conjunto de produtos de defesa, e atuação de assessorias militares em organizações internacionais. **Essa ampla rede internacional é comumente referida como diplomacia de defesa, cooperação técnica, cooperação internacional do setor de defesa** (Carvalho, 2017; Cottey e Forster, 2004; Plessis, 2008), e até mesmo atividades de defesa na área internacional (Brasil, 2017b)” (Barros; Lima; Barros 2024, 7, **grifo nosso**).

9 In the original: “cooperar em defesa pode ser um caminho para que esses Estados possam manter, modernizar e, eventualmente, até mesmo aumentar seus recursos de poder sem, contudo, (a) desencadear uma corrida armamentista que não possam manter ou (b) despertar a discordância da potência unipolar” (Rezende 2014, 527).

the Republic; b) the adoption of institutional modernization measures within the Ministry; and c) the relevance of political coordination, transparency of decisions and social participation. The concept used by Araújo Castro (1982, 206) is adopted, according to which foreign policy is the set of guidelines that the country would have historically implemented in its relations with other states. Such guidelines would involve, among others, principles such as the sovereign equality of nations and non-intervention.

It is understood here that national defense is a public good provided to society through public policies. Public policies are usually the result of intense interaction between political actors and not the imposition of formulas and calculations for each problem. Defense policy deals with specific problems that cannot be transferred to the private sector or any other area of government management and seeks to implement solutions to these problems. An effort to fit national defense into this context occurred with the preparation and constant updating of national defense documents (National Defense Policy, National Defense Strategy and National Defense White Paper), since 2000, as the basic normative axis of National Defense.

National defense policy can focus both within the country, reducing its vulnerability, and outside it, reducing external threats through negotiations or direct armed attacks. This action is the result of major historical processes that led to its composition. We agree with Halliday (1999, 34)¹⁰ when he mentions that states, “[...] function simultaneously at the domestic and international levels and seek to maximize their benefits in one domain to improve their positions in the other. The needs of interstate competition explain much of the development of the modern state, while the mobilization of domestic resources and internal constraints account for the success of states in this competition”.

Almeida (2010), Alsina Jr. (2006) and Oliveira (2006) argue that Defense policy is a state policy, as a public policy, which deals with specific problems, not susceptible to transfer to the private sector or to any other field of government management; it can be understood by political, legal and economic concepts and must be immune to partisan disputes.

Public policy allows us to distinguish between what the government intends to do and what it actually does [...] being an intentional action

10 In the original: “[...] funcionam simultaneamente nos níveis doméstico e internacional e buscam maximizar seus benefícios em um domínio para melhorar suas posições no outro. As necessidades da competição interestatal explicam muito do desenvolvimento do Estado moderno, enquanto a mobilização dos recursos domésticos e os constrangimentos internos dão conta do sucesso dos Estados nessa competição” (Halliday 1999, 34).

[...] and although it has impacts in the short term, it is a long-term policy [...] it involves subsequent processes after its decision and proposition, that is, it also implies implementation, execution and evaluation (Souza 2006, 36).

For Proença Jr. and Duarte (2007) and Rudzit and Casarões (2003), Defense policy is a public policy that must necessarily consider the dynamics of its decision-making process, which is influenced, in addition to systemic constraints, by the determinations of domestic politics (such as party disputes, government changes and conflicts of interest), which would classify it more as a government policy. Santos (2018) identifies that Brazil's Defense policy has characteristics of both state policy (with continuities) and government policy (with conceptual innovations and changes in emphasis).

The discussion is fruitful and highlights the importance of deepening reflection on the topic, since it is also necessary to analyze Brazil's national Defense documents, which contain vital issues of the country's Defense cooperation. Lima (2015, 8)¹¹ agrees when he states that the aforementioned authors "reinforce the importance of subordinating the actors involved in both policies to government guidelines, highlight the difficulty of interaction between them when their organizations present different degrees of bureaucratic maturity, and present the need for coherence between the objectives of the country's external action", identifying that the institutional and international levels are fundamental in this analysis.

The Brazilian documents analyzed are the most recent versions of the National Defense Policy (2020), National Defense Strategy (2020), and National Defense White Paper (2020). The National Defense Policy, both in its first version (1996) and in its second (2005), emphasized the uncertainties of the post-Cold War international system. However, these documents did not explicitly mention threats or sources of uncertainty originating in South America. Furthermore, both policies affirm the defensive posture adopted by Brazil. The PDN (2005), in turn, also highlighted concerns about natural resources in relation to extra-regional threats, with the greatest concerns being concentrated in the South Atlantic and the Amazon. Therefore, the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS) deserves special mention, which, according to the PDN (2005), is one of the processes that can contribute to reducing the possibility of conflicts in the Strategic Surrounding

¹¹ In the original: "reforçam a importância da subordinação dos atores envolvidos nas duas políticas a diretrizes de governo, destacam a dificuldade de interação entre eles quando suas organizações apresentam graus de maturação burocrática díspares e apresentam a necessidade de coerência entre os objetivos da ação externa do País" (Lima 2015, 8).

Area.

Given concerns about extra-regional threats, the END (2008) proposed a greater presence of the Armed Forces on the borders (with priority being the Amazon region) and in the South Atlantic, with a role primarily of surveillance. The element of deterrence is present in these documents – which Brazil strives to demonstrate, but not in relation to its neighbors – and according to the PDN, this will be the second strategic option, with diplomatic action to resolve conflicts coming first. Another point raised by the END (2008) deals with the priority sectors for national Defense: cyber, space and nuclear.¹² The White Paper (2012) helps to build trust through military transparency. It contains information on the number of foreign soldiers in Brazil, Brazilian soldiers abroad and joint military exercises carried out by all Armed Forces between 2001 and 2011.

Compared to previous versions, the 2020 PND emphasizes the importance of a solid Defense policy that takes into account the development of strategic capabilities, international cooperation and the modernization of the Armed Forces. The END established new strategic priorities, such as cyber defense, space and biosecurity, in response to technological and global developments. In addition, the LBDN provided updated information on the Armed Forces' capabilities and modernization programs, as well as addressed emerging issues such as border protection and the defense of the South Atlantic.

Thus, the combination of theoretical elements mentioned above is complex for understanding cooperation in Defense, in agreement with Rezende, because

Although they have produced important advances, there are significant limits to understanding cooperation in Defense that are not explored in depth in the literature. While International Relations theories are very broad, identifying the conditions that are more or less favorable for cooperation, those that have specifically sought to address the element of cooperation in Defense and International Security are too specific (Rezende 2014, 520).¹³

¹² These last two are revisited in the White Paper (2012), where Brazil reaffirms the importance of bilateral nuclear exchange, in addition to the nuclear-powered submarine project, which will use nuclear technology only in this aspect – that is, the weapons used by the submarine will be conventional – in compliance with its commitment to nuclear agreements.

¹³ In the original: “Ainda que tenham produzido avanços importantes, há limites significativos para se entender a cooperação em defesa que não são aprofundados pela literatura. Enquanto as teorias de Relações Internacionais são muito amplas, localizando as condições mais ou me-

However, this item concludes with the certainty that cooperation in Defense is a relevant military and diplomatic instrument for states in their projection of power, maintenance of sovereignty and endogenous development and that in the Brazilian case, Defense and foreign policy have been in dialogue, at more or less close moments.

History of Brazilian Defense Cooperation

Methodologically, cooperation agreements in Defense (or international acts in the field of Defense and military affairs and their derivatives) are the focus of documentary analysis here. Based on a historical assessment and data collected from documentary sources, we propose a periodization of cooperation in the area implemented by the country, in four subsequent and complementary phases, based on Visentini (2015), namely: a) the first, from independent Brazil to the country's entry into the Second World War (1822-1942), strongly characterized by the actions of the Empire in the south of the continent and by the relationship with England and later the USA, as a focus of international influence; b) the second, between the end of the Second World War and the second half of the 1970s, of Brazilian unilateralism in the international system within the orbit of the USA in the context of the Cold War (1942-1978); c) the third phase, lasting from the end of the 1970s until the creation of the Ministry of Defense in 1999, in the context of multilateralism in the face of the erosion of North American hegemony in the international system and the related domestic transition (1978-1999); and d) the fourth and current phase, to the present day, of defense cooperation deepened by institutionalization and by the Defense Documents themselves (1999-present), still in the context of international multilateralism, under systemic transition, with a strong call for institutionalization.

Below, each phase will be analyzed, with the main activities of cooperation in Defense, without, however, intending to be exhaustive in itself; the intention here is to present some specific examples from each period, as a way of mapping the characteristics, advantages and challenges of the cooperation in Defense that Brazil has operated. It is important to emphasize that the documentary analysis opted for selected international acts signed between Brazil and some partners as the primary source, leaving the analysis related to the country's Attachés abroad for another time. In these acts, the

nos propícias para a cooperação, aqueles que buscaram especificamente tratar do elemento da cooperação em defesa e segurança internacional são específicos demais" (Rezende 2014, 520).

main intentions expressed by the actors and also the possible activities of the aforementioned cooperation were verified.

The first phase refers to independent Brazil under the monarchical regime and the Old Republic until 1942, with the maintenance of properties from the colonial period, characterized by the actions of the Brazilian Empire in the south of the continent (interventions in Uruguay and Argentina, War of the Triple Alliance) and by the relationship with England and later the USA, as centers of diplomatic, economic-commercial power and defense of the international system. During this long period, there were no acts of cooperation in Defense per se, but rather missions and other related activities, such as the French Military Mission (between 1850-1858), which was the first military mission in Brazil, led by French Colonel Pierre Labatut, with brief activity (due to disagreements with the Brazilian authorities), but helped in the introduction of European training methods in the Brazilian Army; the Prussian Military Mission (1865-1870), which was sent during the War of the Triple Alliance and played an important role in the reorganization and training of the Brazilian Army, to modernize the Brazilian military structure and discipline; and the American Military Mission (between 1922 and 1940), which significantly influenced the Brazilian armed forces, in the modernization of the Army and in the development of military tactics and strategies. In 1919, a new agreement was signed with France, for a new Military mission in Brazil, especially implemented with the Brazilian Army.¹⁴ For Guerra (2019, 14),¹⁵

¹⁴ The Mission was to assist in the training and modernization of the Army. For CPDOC (s/a, s/p), “[...] negotiations for the contract took place in Paris, between the Brazilian military attaché in France, Colonel Malan d’Angrogne, and the French Minister of War, Georges Clemenceau (1917-1920). At that time, the designated chief, General Maurice Gamelin, was already on a reconnaissance mission in Brazil. The contract was signed a few months later in the French capital and ratified shortly thereafter in Rio de Janeiro, then the Federal District. The terms of the contract stipulated that French officers would command the General Staff School (EEM, in portuguese), Officer Training School (EsAO, in portuguese), Quartermaster School and Veterinary School for four years; and that Brazil would undertake to prioritize French industry in its purchases of weapons and military equipment on the condition that the material offered, the delivery time and the prices were at least equivalent to those of other supplier countries. Although contracted for four years, the mission was extended to 20 years: its contract was renewed six times. His actions, although concentrated in the Federal District, had a national impact”.

¹⁵ In the original: “O Exército Brasileiro, cujas raízes estavam na doutrina militar do Exército Português e nas próprias experiências de conflitos internos e externos (sobretudo na Guerra da Tríplice Aliança), passaria à influência do Exército Francês no período de 1920 a 1940. Quando então, a MMF foi encerrada e o Exército Brasileiro passou a receber influências do Exército norte-americano, o qual também tinha em suas origens de formação o Exército Francês” (Guerra 2019, 14).

The Brazilian Army, whose roots were in the military doctrine of the Portuguese Army and in its own experiences of internal and external conflicts (especially in the War of the Triple Alliance), would come under the influence of the French Army in the period from 1920 to 1940. When then, the MMF was closed and the Brazilian Army began to receive influences from the North American Army, which also had in its origins the French Army.

It can be seen that the nuances of this first phase of cooperation place Defense policy side by side with Brazilian foreign policy in the 19th century and early 20th century, with a focus on relations with England, France and the USA, within the scope of Agro-Export Diplomacy (Cervo and Bueno 2002).

The beginning of the second phase dates back to the Brazil-United States Military Agreement (1942), which established the Brazilian alliance with the USA and the Allies against the Axis Powers during the Second World War.¹⁶ Brazil allowed the USA to use air bases in the Brazilian Northeast, which were essential for operations in the South Atlantic and Africa. Through the creation of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) – a Brazilian demand –, Brazil sent troops to fight in Europe, demonstrating a significant commitment to the alliance.¹⁷ In November 1943, the FEB called up more than 25,000 soldiers (known as “*pracinhas*”), led by General Mascarenhas de Moraes, and was integrated with the 5th US Army to act on the war front in northern Italy. Two of the most concrete results of this Agreement were a) the creation of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) - when the Ministry of Aeronautics was created on January 20, 1941, Decree-Law No. 2,961 already mentioned the creation of the “National Air Forces”, which were to bring together aircraft and military personnel from the Brazilian Navy and Army; and b) subsequent US support, together with the implementation of the Brazilian steel project proposed by the Getúlio Vargas government, a result of the swing diplomacy between 1936 and 1942.

¹⁶ Brazil had already aligned itself with the USA in January 1942, after the Rio de Janeiro Conference, when it decided to break off relations with the Axis – formed by Italy, Germany and Japan.

¹⁷ Vargas presented to Roosevelt at their meeting in Natal on January 28, 1943, the Plan for the International Enhancement of Brazil, which consisted of refusing to send troops to Portuguese archipelagos, giving priority to the Mediterranean, in order to gain international visibility. Bueno states that “Brazil’s direct participation in the conflict was more a result of its will than at the request of the United States” (Cervo and Bueno 2002, 280). Therefore, Brazil did not necessarily need to participate in the war, but Vargas desired such participation in order to obtain more advantages.

On March 15, 1952, the United States and Brazil signed the Mutual Defense and Assistance Agreement. During the Cold War, this agreement, also known as the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), was created to increase military cooperation between the two nations and ensure security in the Western Hemisphere. The agreement provided for military aid between the United States and Brazil, including military training and equipment. The objective of the agreement was to modernize the Brazilian Armed Forces and strengthen hemispheric defense against possible communist threats.

During most of the Cold War, Brazil aligned itself largely with the United States, receiving military and logistical support, in a position of unilateralism in the face of American hegemony (Visentini, 2015). The National Security Doctrine, influenced by the first governments of the Military Dictatorship, emphasized the importance of cooperation with Western powers to contain communist influence in Latin America.

The 1970s saw more pragmatic positions in Brazilian foreign policy, with the aforementioned vertical actions combined with horizontality and diagonality, which sometimes resulted in some cooperation activities in Defense and in a more effective rapprochement with South America. Thus, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) of 1978¹⁸, created with the aim of promoting sustainable development and cooperation in the Amazon, including security and Defense aspects, is a milestone for the beginning of the third phase (1978-1999). Another relevant partner of this period was Argentina, when the first combined exercises between the Navies of the two countries took place in 1978, such as the *Fraterno Operations*. However, it was only in 2005 that the first military and Defense cooperation agreements between Brasília and Buenos Aires were signed.

With the return to democracy in the 1980s, Brazil began to diversify its Defense partnerships. The 1988 Constitution brought new challenges and perspectives to the area's policy, both domestically/institutionally (the process of reorganizing departments and functions, the Armed Forces, the organizational chart, and the budget) and externally (promoting South American integration and the pursuit of strategic autonomy). With the end of the Cold War, cooperation evolved to include areas such as the fight against drug trafficking, regional security and peacekeeping operations.

A relevant instrument of this phase – which was later expanded – refers to Brazilian cooperation activities in all areas, through the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), created in 1987 and linked to the Ministry of

¹⁸ The Amazon Cooperation Treaty was initially signed on July 3, 1978, in Brasília, by Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. In 1995, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana joined the organization.

Foreign Affairs. The ABC began to coordinate, negotiate and implement international technical cooperation offered by Brazil to other developing countries, in addition to managing the technical cooperation received by Brazil from other nations and international organizations.

Brazil's technical cooperation with foreign countries is based on the capacity of specialized institutions in the country and occurs at three levels: bilateral, trilateral and with groups of countries, meeting the demands of developing countries. Based on the principles of horizontality, neutrality, non-conditionality and mutual benefits, the ABC's collaboration with the ministries, particularly the Defense Ministry in this case, has helped to promote South-South cooperation, since Brazil's technical cooperation abroad, commonly called South-South cooperation (SSC), is developed in response to demands received from foreign governments, through bilateral channels, or via international organizations with which the country maintains trilateral cooperation programs. In this aspect, initiatives can be bilateral, trilateral or with blocs of countries. [...] In SSC, it is not necessary to invest large financial resources to achieve excellent results for all parties involved. The partner country, by adapting the transferred knowledge to its reality, is ensuring the future sustainability of its own actions (ABC, 2024, n/p) ¹⁹

The 1990s, in the immediate post-Cold War period, saw Brazil deepen its regional integration processes and maintain bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation (especially in United Nations peacekeeping missions) with previously established partners.²⁰

19 In the original: "A cooperação técnica do Brasil para o exterior, comumente chamada de cooperação Sul-Sul (CSS), desenvolve-se em resposta a demandas recebidas de governos estrangeiros, por canais bilaterais, ou via organismos internacionais com os quais o País mantenha programas de cooperação trilateral. Nessa vertente, as iniciativas podem ser bilaterais, trilaterais ou com blocos de países. [...] Na CSS, não é necessário investir grandes recursos financeiros para alcançar excelentes resultados para todas as partes envolvidas. O país parceiro, ao adaptar o conhecimento transferido à sua realidade, está garantindo a sustentabilidade futura das suas próprias ações (ABC, 2024, s/p)".

20 The main peacekeeping missions in the 1990s were a) the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) - established in 1994 to verify the peace agreements between the government of Guatemala and the URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca) guerrilla group. Brazil sent military observers to monitor compliance with the agreements and contribute to the consolidation of peace; b) the United Nations Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), created in 1991 to verify the implementation of the peace agreements between the go-

The fourth (and current) phase of Brazil's defense cooperation began with the creation of the Ministry of Defense in 1999, which represented a significant milestone in the organization and administration of national defense. Before that, the Armed Forces were managed by three separate military ministries: the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. The unification of these ministries aimed to improve the coordination and efficiency of the country's defense policies, with Complementary Law No. 97 of June 9, 1999, during the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The main objectives of the creation of the Ministry included the advancement of a) Coordination (centralizing the command of the Armed Forces under a single ministry to strengthen integration between the Army, Navy and Air Force); b) a Coherent Defense Policy (formulating a more comprehensive national Defense policy, aligned with the country's strategic needs); c) Administrative Efficiency (increasing administrative and operational efficiency, eliminating redundancies and promoting the rationalization of resources); d) and Strengthening National Defense (strengthening the country's defense capacity, especially in an ever-changing international scenario full of new challenges and threats).²¹

In this phase, Brazil's Defense cooperation actions expanded quantitatively and qualitatively, driven by the institutionalization of Defense policy and by the Defense Documents themselves, which provide for their

vernment of El Salvador and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) guerrilla group. Brazil participated with military and police observers to ensure the implementation of the peace agreements and support the disarmament process; c) the United Nations Mission in Angola (UNAVEM II and III), which aimed to supervise the ceasefire and the peace process between the Angolan government and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). Brazil has sent troops and military observers to these missions; d) United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), which was established in 1992 to oversee the implementation of the peace agreement between the government of Mozambique and RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance), and Brazil participated with military observers to monitor the ceasefire, the demobilization of combatant forces and the holding of free elections; e) United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) - Although MINUSTAH was officially established in 2004, Brazil had already participated in stabilization efforts in Haiti in the 1990s through other peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions. Brazilian participation in MINUSTAH was subsequently consolidated, with Brazil assuming a leading role.

21 The Ministry of Defense became responsible for several functions, including: Strategic Planning (preparation and implementation of national defense policies and strategies); Interforce Coordination (coordination between the three Armed Forces for joint operations and integrated defense actions); International Relations (management of international defense relations, military and defense cooperation, as well as participation in peacekeeping missions); Budget and Resources (management of the defense budget and allocation of resources for the different areas and projects of the Armed Forces); and Military Modernization (supervision of the modernization and technological development programs of the Armed Forces).

actions and incentives, especially in the Brazilian Strategic Environment – a concept introduced by the Defense Documents. According to the 2020 National Defense Policy,

[...] international defense cooperation is essential for the country's security and the maintenance of regional peace and stability. **Brazil seeks to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral relations**, promoting the exchange of information, the conduct of joint exercises and participation in peacekeeping missions (Brasil 2020, 45, **emphasis added**).²²

Therefore, not only were previous actions with historical partners deepened at the vertical and horizontal levels, such as the United States and South America, but new partnerships were also established with African, European and Asian countries, in addition to increased participation in peacekeeping operations.²³ Defense cooperation with the United States has become strategic for Brazil, especially through three contemporary agreements: a) Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) signed on April 12, 2010,²⁴ covering the areas of research and development, technology, logistical support and joint training; b) Research, Development, Test and Evaluation Agreement of 2017 (RDT&E Agreement) with the objective of facilitating bilateral cooperation in research, development, testing and evaluation activities of defense technologies and promoting the exchange of information and collaboration in joint projects involving technological innovation to cooperate in research, development, testing and evaluation of defense technology and products; and c) Defense Information Sharing Agreement, dated March 8, 2020, which allows the sharing of sensitive information between the two countries, facilitating collaboration on Defense projects.²⁵

The sharing of activities in joint exercises (such as UNITAS, GUINEX,

22 In the original: “[...] a cooperação internacional em defesa é essencial para a segurança do país e a manutenção da paz e da estabilidade regionais. **O Brasil busca fortalecer suas relações bilaterais e multilaterais**, promovendo o intercâmbio de informações, a realização de exercícios conjuntos e a participação em missões de paz (Brasil 2020, 45, **grifo nosso**)”.

23 A complete list of International Acts signed by Brazil between 2000 and 2023 is available in Appendix B of Barros; Lima; Barros 2024.

24 Which came into force in 2015, according to Decree No. 8609/2015 (Brasil 2015, s/p).

25 This is the only one of its kind in South America. The agreement expands opportunities for both countries to jointly develop defense capabilities through cooperation in applied research, emerging technologies, analysis, operational studies, demonstrations and testing, and prototype evaluation.

Vanguarda Sul 22, FELINO, among others) remained an important point of this bilateral cooperation, as well as the training and specialization of Brazilian military human resources in US academies. In November 2021, the two countries agreed to continue joint training of Malawian units deployed to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), with support from pre-deployment training provided by the US Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) and the training of jungle warfare specialists that Brazil currently offers.

France has been a significant partner, particularly with the Submarine Development Program (PROSUB), which included the construction of conventional submarines and the development of a nuclear submarine. In 2014, the Agreement for the Purchase of Gripen Fighter Jets (2014) was concluded with Sweden, which also included technology transfer, training of pilots and maintenance personnel, and cooperation in the development of future versions of the fighter. With Israel, Defense and Security Cooperation Agreements were concluded in 2010, which involve the purchase of advanced defense systems, such as drones and radar systems, as well as collaboration in defense technology research and development. In subsequent years, there has been a significant increase in Brazil's purchase of defense equipment from Israel. Examples include radar systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), and cyber defense systems. In 2013, drones were purchased from the Israeli company Elbit Systems to be used by the Federal Police and the Armed Forces in security and surveillance operations. In 2019, Cybersecurity Cooperation was celebrated during President Jair Bolsonaro's visit to Israel, when memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed to strengthen cooperation in cybersecurity, recognizing the growing importance of this area in national defense. In 2020, collaboration was expanded with the signing of new agreements aimed at promoting technological innovation and technology transfer between the two countries, particularly in the areas of high technology and defense (Technology and Defense Agreements). With Italy, there is the 1975 Military Cooperation Agreement, on armored vehicle and aircraft development projects, revisited by the bilateral defense cooperation agreement signed in Rome on November 11, 2008. Furthermore, there is the Technical Complementary Adjustment of the agreement, on cooperation in the defense area, related to the aerospace field of September 30, 2014 (generating reciprocal benefits resulting from the creation of strategic partnerships between Brazilian and Italian industries²⁶).

²⁶ According to the text, the agreement will allow joint development, the transfer or assignment of critical security technologies, and the exchange of national defense industrial capabilities. The main areas for the development of cooperation will be unmanned aerial vehicles,

With Russia, there is the 2008 Military-Technical Cooperation Agreement, which focuses on technology exchange, purchase of military equipment and collaboration in defense development projects. With India, the 2003 Defense Cooperation Agreement, as part of the IBSA Forum (India, Brazil and South Africa), involves technology exchange, military training and joint participation in military exercises. And with South Africa, there is also the 2003 Defense Cooperation Agreement, with collaboration in defense projects, knowledge exchange and training. With China, although there are no formal defense cooperation agreements like those established with other countries, such as the USA and France, Brazil has explored opportunities for collaboration in training, information exchange and visits by military delegations, within the scope of a broader spectrum of bilateral cooperation. The armed forces of both countries have participated in joint military exercises, mainly in the multilateral framework, such as exercises promoted by the UN and other international forums. Brazil and China have cooperated on regional security issues, such as combating drug trafficking and peacekeeping operations.

Cooperation in this area has been strengthened between Brazil and South American countries as a vital aspect for regional security and political stability. Defense integration in the region has several dimensions, from joint military exercises to the search for coordination in defense and security policies. The main forms of cooperation researched refer to bi- and multilateral actions, especially highlighted in the documentation: a) Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), of 1978; b) South American Defense Council (CDS), established in 2008, with the objective of strengthening defense cooperation among the countries of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), through joint military exercises, exchange of information, training and development of a regional defense industry²⁷; c) bilateral agreements with several South American countries for the holding of joint military exercises, technological cooperation and exchange of intelligence information, such as agreements with Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Peru for cooperation in border security and combating transnational crimes.

It is important to emphasize Argentina as a strategic partner of Brazil. The Framework Agreement for Defense Cooperation between the Federative

electronic warfare, space, pilot training, and research and innovation (BRASIL, 2017, n.p.).

27 The CDS was formalized in December 2008 and its purpose was to “consolidate South America as a zone of peace, creating conditions for political stability and economic and social development; as well as to build a South American defense identity, generating consensus to strengthen cooperation on the continent” according to letter a, of Art. 4, of the CDS Statute (UNASUL, 2008, s/p).

Republic of Brazil and Argentina, signed in Puerto Iguazú on November 30, 2005 (entered into force by Decree No. 6,084 of April 19, 2007) is the most relevant regulatory framework of the partnership. In the Letter of Intent for the Brazil-Argentina Defense Production Integration Project of January 23, 2023, the two countries

1. They reaffirm the convenience of advancing in the consolidation of bilateral relations in the area of Defense and promoting all actions aimed at strengthening the agenda of integration, cooperation and mutual trust between the Armed Forces of both countries. 2. They will encourage the negotiation of the contract between the Argentine Army and IVECO Veículos de Defesa for the incorporation of 156 units of the “Guaraní 6x6” Wheeled Armored Combat Vehicle, including the transfer of technology, compensation for the progressive increase in the manufacture of parts in Argentina, logistical support and training of crews and technical personnel of the Argentine Army. 3. They will encourage understanding between the parties involved so that, once negotiations are finalized, it will be possible to deliver to the Argentine Army the first units of the “Guaraní 6x6” Wheeled Armored Combat Vehicle as soon as possible (Brasil, 2023a, n/p).²⁸

Additionally, the Action Plan for the relaunch of the Brazil-Argentina Strategic Alliance²⁹ foresees the resumption of bilateral cooperation actions in

28 In the original: “1. Reafirmam a conveniência de avançar na consolidação das relações bilaterais na área da Defesa e promover todas as ações que visem fortalecer a agenda de integração, cooperação e confiança mútua entre as Forças Armadas de ambos os países. 2. Encorajarão a negociação do contrato entre o Exército Argentino e a IVECO Veículos de Defesa para a incorporação de 156 unidades do Veículo Blindado de Combate sobre Rodas “Guaraní 6x6”, incluindo a transferência de tecnologia, a compensação para o aumento progressivo na fabricação de peças na Argentina, o apoio logístico e para o treinamento de tripulações e pessoal técnico do Exército Argentino. 3. Encorajarão o entendimento entre as partes envolvidas para que, uma vez finalizadas as negociações, seja possível a entrega ao Exército Argentino das primeiras unidades do Veículo Blindado de Combate sobre Rodas “Guaraní 6x6” o mais breve possível” (Brasil, 2023a, s/p).

29 Examples of regional cooperation include Joint Military Exercises such as AmazonLog17 (a logistical exercise held in 2017 with the participation of Brazil, Colombia and Peru, as well as observers from other countries); the Multinational Exercise UNITAS (which includes naval forces from several South American countries, held annually to strengthen naval cooperation); Operation Ágata (a joint initiative by the Brazilian Armed Forces, with the support of other security agencies, to reinforce presence and surveillance on the border with neighboring countries); and Operation Sentinela, coordinated by the Brazilian Federal Police, in collaboration with the Uruguayan National Police, to combat smuggling and drug trafficking on the border.

several fields, including space cooperation to build and launch the Argentine-Brazilian Marine Environmental Information Satellite (SABIA-Mar B), but also

[...] XI. DEFENSE

41. Action: Continue holding meetings of the Permanent Consultation and Coordination Mechanism on International Defense and Security (2+2).

42. Action: Continue the planning and execution cycles of the Binational Exercise “Operation Aranduru”

XII. SECURITY

43. Action: Exchange information through the Registry of Members of Criminal Factions (Criminal Organizations) with transnational operations in the ORCRIM System.

44. Action: Exchange experiences for Public Security Intelligence training actions.

45. Action: Exchange information to combat Money Laundering crimes by criminal factions with transnational operations with the aim of expanding methods for detecting evidence of these crimes.

46. Action: Exchange experiences on drug policy, with a focus on community centers, between the National Secretariat for Drug Policy and Asset Management (SENAD) and the National Secretariat for Drugs of Argentina (SEDRONAR).

47. Action: Stimulate the exchange of experiences based on the Mapping Project of the Federal Highway Police (PRF).

48. Action: Discuss projects of the Federal Police in the areas of cybercrime and bank fraud.

49. Action: Implement the Memorandum of Understanding between

Operation Hermandad has been taking place since 2018 between the Brazilian and Argentine armies, and in an area close to the border between Brazil and Argentina, highlighting the importance of cross-border collaboration. Also between Brazil and Argentina, Operation Yaguareté has been taking place since 2004, a joint military exercise between Brazil and Argentina, which was held for the first time in 2004. This exercise aims to improve military cooperation, strengthen interoperability and increase the capacity for joint response to different types of crises. Operation Guarani is a combined training exercise, at the Unit level, between troops of the Argentine and Brazilian Armies. Its tactical framework is situated in the context of war operations, with the establishment of a Mechanized Task Force (FT) based on a Unit of the host country, with reinforcement from a subunit of the member friendly nation, and is carried out annually since 2011 (planning phase) and 2012 (with troops on the ground).

the Federal Police of Brazil and the Federal Police of Argentina on the prevention and combat of transnational organized crime.

XIII. PEACE AND SECURITY

50. Action: Create a coordination mechanism on peace and security issues (United Nations Security Council, Conference on Disarmament, First Committee of the General Assembly, among other forums) (BRAZIL, 2023a, n.p.).³⁰

In the sub-area of education and training, Brazil offers places in its military academies for cadets from other South American countries, promoting the exchange of knowledge and strengthening military ties. Another essential point in the Strategic Environment refers to the fight against drug trafficking and transnational crimes, where cooperation in intelligence operations and joint operations is required.

Currently, there is no specific Defense agreement between Brazil and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) as a whole. However, within the CPLP, member states have bilateral Defense cooperation relations, and Brazil, as the most populous and economically strongest country in the bloc, plays a significant role in these initiatives.³¹ Brazil has

30 In addition to the X. OCEAN AND ANTARCTIC COOPERATION, with “35. Action: Continue the Ocean Dialogue between Brazil and Argentina, with a view to addressing maritime and oceanic issues of common interest, sharing information and coordinating positions in relevant international forums. 36. Action: Stimulate the coordination and strengthening of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS), with a view to maintaining the South Atlantic as a cooperation zone free from extraregional disputes. 37. Action: Act jointly with a view to the approval of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (SBAS) within the scope of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). 38. Action: Work for parliamentary approval, when applicable, the exchange of ratifications and entry into force of the Antarctic Cooperation Agreement between Brazil and Argentina, signed on 1/23/2023, in Buenos Aires. 39. Action: Stimulate cooperation initiatives on Antarctic issues, both in the scientific area and in logistical operations related to national activities in Antarctica. 40. Action: Continue Brazilian support for Argentina’s legitimate rights in the sovereignty dispute with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in relation to the Falklands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime spaces” (Brasil 2023ffi, n/p).

31 The formal beginning of defence cooperation in the CPLP was the 1st Meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the CPLP, in Oeiras, Portugal, in 1998. Other instruments of the defence architecture of the CPLP are the Conferences of Heads of State and Government, Meetings of the Ministers of Defence and of the CEMGFA, Meetings of the Directors of National Defence Policy (DPDN), Permanent Secretariat for Defence Affairs of the CPLP, Centre for Strategic Analysis of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, Integrated Programme of Combined Military Exercises of the CPLP, Military Exercises of the “FELINO” Series, Conferences of the Navies (and Coast Guards) of the CPLP, Meetings of Directors of Military Intelligence Services (DSIM), Protocol of Cooperation of the CPLP in the Field of Defence, CPLP Military Health

close defense relations with several CPLP countries, such as Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, among others. These relations include the exchange of military experiences, cooperation in training and joint exercises, with the FELINO series exercise being the most relevant in the Community and taking place since 2000 (biannually), as part of efforts to increase interoperability and joint response capacity in crisis situations, according to Bernardino and Rizzi (2023). Cooperation in maritime and coastal security is a priority area of mutual interest, especially for countries such as Brazil, Portugal and Cape Verde, which have extensive maritime zones. Military Sports Games, the Military Health Forum and the promotion of gender equality and women's rights in the Community, based on UN Security Council Resolution 1325, are also ongoing activities in the CPLP.

Also within the adjacent area of the Brazilian Strategic Environment – the West African coast and the South Atlantic – cooperation in Defense is an area of growing importance. This relationship is shaped by historical, cultural and strategic ties, and encompasses a range of activities, from military training and knowledge exchange to joint peacekeeping operations. The main areas are related to military training and capacity building, with the exchange of Officers³² (and special courses in peacekeeping operations, counter-terrorism, and military engineering techniques are some of the programs offered), peacekeeping operations,³³ in the development of defense technologies, with transfer of technology and knowledge for the development of local defense industries.³⁴

Some concrete examples of cooperation in Defense with African countries are: a) the Peace Operations Training Center (CIOpPaz), located

Forum, Disaster Response Mechanism in the CPLP, Action Plan of the Defence Component of the CPLP for the Implementation of Resolution 1325/2000 of the UNSC on Women, Peace and Security, according to Bernardino and Rizzi, 2023.

32 African officers are invited to participate in courses at Brazilian military academies, such as the Agulhas Negras Military Academy (AMAN) and the Army Command and General Staff School (ECEME).

33 By contributing troops and logistical support to several peacekeeping missions in Africa, such as MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of Congo) - Brazil has sent military observers and MINUSMA (Mali) - also participating with military observers, logistical and technical support, helping to develop capabilities in areas such as equipment maintenance, construction of military infrastructure and logistical operations.

34 Including collaboration in research and development projects in areas such as shipbuilding: partnerships in the development of military vessels, such as patrol vessels, and aeronautics, with cooperation in the aeronautics sector, including the sale and maintenance of military aircraft manufactured by Embraer.

in the city of Rio de Janeiro,³⁵ Brazil, which has been a training center for African military personnel in peace operations techniques. Military personnel from several African countries, such as Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Nigeria, Senegal and Ghana have participated in courses at CIOpPaz; b) the partnership with Angola, which includes military training programs, support for the modernization of the Angolan armed forces and participation in joint military exercises; c) cooperation with Mozambique in training and technical support programs, in addition to participating in demining and maritime security projects; d) partnership with Namibia, in the sub-areas of training and capacity building, development of naval infrastructure (construction and donation of ships) and technical and logistical support (provision of continuous technical support for the maintenance and operation of Namibian vessels, helping to develop the country's autonomous capacity in the naval area) and exchange of knowledge and technologies, with the Communications and Surveillance systems (sharing of technologies to improve Namibia's communications and surveillance systems, essential for maritime security and the monitoring of its territorial waters) (Rizzi; Cossul and Bueno, 2023).

Between advantages and challenges: final considerations

Defense cooperation in Brazil is a complex and multifaceted field, involving a combination of traditional strategic alliances and new partnerships with emerging countries and regional neighbors. The success of this cooperation depends on a clear strategic vision, efficient management of resources, and the ability to adapt to geopolitical changes, in a clear allusion to the relationship between defense and foreign policy.

This type of cooperation can bring many benefits to Brazil, such as improving military capacity, saving resources and strengthening regional security. However, it also presents challenges, such as technological

³⁵ CIOpPaz was created on June 23, 2010, as an evolution of the Brazilian Army's Center for Preparation and Evaluation for Peacekeeping Missions (CEPAOP), founded in 2005. The creation of CIOpPaz reflected Brazil's growing participation in peacekeeping operations and the need for a structure dedicated to specialized training and education for these missions. CIOpPaz's mission is to train military personnel, police officers, and civilians to act in peacekeeping, humanitarian, and disaster relief operations, providing training and education that emphasizes interoperability, a culture of peace, and an understanding of United Nations standards and procedures. Among the main courses offered are the Peacekeeping Mission Preparation Course (CPMP), the UN Military Observer Course (UNMO), the Civil-Military Coordination Course (CIMIC), and the Protection of Civilians Course (Brasil 2024).

dependence, risks to national sovereignty, and financial costs. Brazil must carefully weigh these factors when establishing defense partnerships to ensure that they serve its long-term strategic and security interests. The overall objective of the research was to analyze the defense cooperation that Brazil has undertaken since its independence process, discussing cooperation theoretically, proposing a brief division into four phases of Brazil's defense cooperation actions (1822-present) and identifying historical advantages and challenges. The methodological procedures adopted indicated, through literature review, bibliographic research and document analysis, that the main advantages and challenges of Brazilian Defense cooperation are broad, complex and strategically important in the same direction. After testing, the initial hypothesis was corroborated. It is important to mention the difficulty related to the methodological procedure of collecting quantitative data on cooperation in the area that Brazil undertakes, since these are actions and initiatives that occur in the three Forces simultaneously, without specific and ordered filing.

Another relevant point identified is the tone of this cooperation in Defense undertaken by Brazil, since we agree with Hirst when she argues about the feedback of cooperation, in a two-way path that is reinvented by the demands presented:

The involvement of Brazilian entities in programs that offer horizontal cooperation is not, therefore, associated with a policy that seeks to dispense with the receipt of technical knowledge necessary to consolidate areas of expertise. More than a substitutive dynamic, which expresses a zero-sum logic, we observe a two-way dynamic that feeds back on itself, with a view to improving the skills of state technical staff. **A simultaneity of cooperation programs received and offered is observed in several entities of the federation, which favors a process of learning and exchange between the two circuits that, in turn, expands and diversifies the spectrum of the state's international connections (Hirst 2012, 15, emphasis added).**³⁶

36 In the original: "O envolvimento de entidades brasileiras em programas que oferecem cooperação horizontal não está, portanto, associado a uma política que busque prescindir do recebimento de conhecimentos técnicos necessários para consolidar áreas de expertise. Mais do que uma dinâmica substitutiva, que expresse uma lógica de soma zero, observa-se uma dinâmica de via dupla que se retroalimenta, com vistas a aprimorar as competências dos quadros técnicos estatais. **Uma simultaneidade de programas de cooperação recebidos e oferecidos é observada em diversas entidades da federação, o que favorece um processo de aprendizagem e intercâmbio entre os dois circuitos que, por sua vez, amplia e diversifica o espectro das conexões internacionais do Estado**" (Hirst 2012, 15, grifo nosso).

The main advantages identified include strengthening military capacity through the promotion of joint training, education, specializations and qualifications. Participation in joint military exercises and training programs with the armed forces of other countries can improve the skills and preparedness of Brazilian troops. Access to advanced technologies and defense equipment that Brazil may not possess or produce locally is a possible advantage through bilateral agreements. In terms of resource savings, there is relative cost sharing, where collaborations can lead to a sharing of the costs of developing new technologies and military equipment, reducing the financial burden on Brazil. To improve regional security, cooperation with neighboring countries can contribute to regional stability and security, preventing tensions and conflicts, seeking to dismantle transnational criminal networks and strengthening diplomatic ties.

The exchange of strategic and intelligence information is a key point, as these partnerships can facilitate the exchange of intelligence information, helping to prevent threats such as terrorism and organized crime. Finally, in terms of the relationship between Defense policy and foreign policy, participation in Defense cooperation initiatives can increase Brazil's influence and prestige on the international stage, strengthening its diplomatic relations. For Barros, Lima and Barros (2024),

On the Itamaraty side, there is a growing increase in the space of the defense theme on the political agenda. There are two pieces of evidence of this process. In 2009, the MD and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) of the MRE signed a cooperation agreement with the aim of facilitating international technical cooperation in defense. In practice, the agreement aimed to facilitate the accounting and offering of initiatives for foreign military personnel in Brazil, helping to align foreign policy and defense objectives. This interaction is important, since most defense cooperation agreements focus on the topics of training, exercises, qualification and courses (Barros; Lima and Barros 2024, 22).³⁷

37 In the original: "Do lado do Itamaraty, há um crescente aumento de espaço do tema de defesa na agenda política. Há duas evidências desse processo. Em 2009, o MD e a Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC) do MRE assinaram um acordo de cooperação com o objetivo de facilitar a cooperação técnica internacional em defesa. Na prática, o convênio visou facilitar a contabilização e o oferecimento de iniciativas para militares estrangeiros no Brasil, contribuindo para alinhar os objetivos de política externa e defesa. Essa interação é importante, posto que grande parte dos acordos de cooperação em defesa tem foco nos temas de treinamentos,

As for the challenges, the following were identified: a) possible dependence on external suppliers, since Brazil may become dependent on other countries for the supply of defense technologies and equipment, which may be problematic in the event of conflicts of interest; b) remote possibility of external interference, when very close partnerships can lead to interference in internal matters and loss of autonomy in strategic and operational decisions; c) geopolitical alignment and external articulation, an item strongly linked to foreign policy; d) financial costs, since defense cooperation requires significant investments in infrastructure, training and equipment to align military capabilities with those of partners.

The financial sustainability of Defense programs is a constant concern and its inconsistency has become evident. The defense budget needs to be managed effectively to ensure the continuity of programs. In addition to these items, political and economic differences between partner countries, the need to harmonize defense and security policies, and budgetary limitations for implementing joint projects are also outlined in the challenges.

When a comparative analysis is made between Defense cooperation with countries from the North or South of the geopolitical world, it became clear from the methodological procedures that the countries from the North have advanced technology (such as the USA, the United Kingdom, France, Israel, and Germany), with cutting-edge military technology, and cooperation can provide access to modern equipment and technological innovations, in addition to well-trained armed forces, and can also offer training and exchange programs for Brazilian forces, combined with the experience accumulated in conflicts and missions. However, Brazil may become dependent on foreign technology and equipment, which may be problematic in cases of diplomatic tensions, in addition to the fact that foreign policies and geopolitical interests may not always align, leading to possible conflicts of interest, as well as the acquisition of technology and training from developed countries may be very expensive.

In relation to countries in the Geopolitical South, cooperation can strengthen diplomatic and economic relations with nations that share similar challenges and interests, there is a greater chance of aligning interests and priorities in terms of development, regional security and foreign policy, cost-benefit can be valued, as partnerships can be more economical and adapted to Brazil's specific needs, with a focus on appropriate technologies and innovative solutions, in addition to the issue of regional solidarity strengthening regional

exercícios, capacitação e cursos" (Barros; Lima and Barros 2024, 22).

cooperation between developing countries, promoting regional stability and security. However, technological and resource limitations and the provision of less advanced training and capacity building require more joint efforts to achieve high levels of effectiveness. In this sense, defense cooperation at a multilateral level proves to be more proactive (however, currently, the integration and cooperation processes in South America are going through a moment of institutional fragility).

Thus, it is clear that there is a defined mapping of the main themes and activities of Brazilian Defense cooperation, corroborating what was presented by Lima (2015), but expanding here with the following thematic groups: a) Education, specialization and training of human resources at various levels; b) Acquisition of material, equipment and technologies in the area; c) Exchange of knowledge and practices, with training in peacekeeping missions; d) Carrying out bilateral visits, technical meetings, courses and seminars, working groups and missions; e) Visits by mutual military vessels and aircraft; and f) Holding joint sporting events.

Theoretically, it can be summarized that defense cooperation is viable, fruitful and facilitated by regional stability. The bibliographic and documentary analysis carried out identified that there is political coherence in the framework agreements signed in the defense area by Brazil and its partners, since all of them present areas/subareas of defense cooperation contained in the Defense Documents. In summary, the choice between cooperation with countries of the Geopolitical North or South is not simple and must be based on a careful analysis of Brazil's strategic objectives and needs in terms of Defense, taking into account the correlation between Defense and foreign policy. However, it cannot be denied that South-South cooperation brings with it the geopolitical aspect and is intrinsically present in Brazil's history.

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes Defense cooperation in Brazil, seeking to facilitate a theoretical discussion and a proposal for a historical periodization of the actions of this type of cooperation in Brazil. When answering which are the most evident characteristics of cooperation in the area, as a working hypothesis it is pointed out that there are a) advantages and challenges in the actions of Defense cooperation in Brazil, b) a correlation between Defense and foreign policy in these actions and c) the mapping of priority areas throughout history is evident. Defense cooperation is a strategy that involves collaboration between countries to increase defense capacity, share information, conduct joint training, develop technologies and strengthen diplomatic ties. The review of the theoretical literature in the area points to several possibilities, understandings and paths for Defense cooperation, but in this research it was chosen to use the concept of stability as a factor generating cooperation, as well as the evolution of the correlation between Defense and foreign policy in Brazilian history.

KEYWORDS

Defense cooperation, Brazilian Defense policy, Brazilian foreign policy

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THE UKRAINIAN WAR AS AN ANTI-SYSTEMIC IMPERATIVE AND ITS GEOPOLITICAL CONSEQUENCES: THE RISE OF THE BRICS INFLUENCE¹

Charles Pennaforte²

Introduction

The so-called Special Military Operation (Ukraine War) launched by Russia in February 2022 has had a major impact on geopolitics, the economy and international relations. The economic sanctions promoted by the US and the European Union (EU) have made Russia one of the most sanctioned countries in the world.

The main idea of the US and the EU with sanctions was to promote the economic suffocation of Vladimir Putin's government in an attempt to hinder the goals of the definitive annexation of the Donbass region and, if possible, to promote a regime change in Russia, even if it was not openly declared. On the other hand, the BRICS countries have not followed the West in applying economic sanctions, nor has the so-called Global South, despite great political pressure.

This scenario brings with it a new perspective, both geopolitical and economic: the consolidation of the decline of the so-called US hegemony (Wallerstein, 2004) and the acceleration of the process of weakening the dollar as the standard for international trade. This process is still in the embryonic phase, as we will see in the course of our work.

As far as economic sanctions are concerned, they are not new; on the

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contrary, they date back to antiquity. An example of the banishment of Megara merchants from Athens in 432 BC was intended to promote the economic strangulation of the opposing city-state. In the 20th century, this economic stifling mechanism became more frequent. According to Alexander (2009), “The use of economic sanctions has, throughout history, been an integral component of the foreign policy of most nation-states.” From this perspective, countless countries have suffered or are suffering from the impact of economic sanctions since the 20th century, such as Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and now Russia.

The idea that sanctions would be an effective way of achieving objectives against enemies can be summarized by US President Woodrow Wilson’s statement in 1919:

A nation that is boycotted is a nation that is on the verge of surrender. Apply this economic, peaceful, silent and deadly remedy and there will be no need for force. It does not cost a life outside the boycotted nation, but it puts pressure on the nation, which, in my judgment, no modern nation could resist (Padover, p.108, 1942).

However, over time it was observed that their impacts were greater on the most vulnerable populations than on governments, as well as the consequences on nations not directly involved in the sanctions, which also suffered the so-called “side effects”.³ In 1997, Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, recognized this in his report to the UN. Even with “smart” sanctions, also known as “targeted” sanctions, that is, with specific objectives for certain sectors and people, especially after September 11, the impacts are still high on the most vulnerable populations. But recently, in 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the former president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, called for a re-evaluation of the use of economic sanctions that impact human rights.

In general, economic sanctions as a mechanism to punish regimes that defy the West have been analyzed by experts over time. We can briefly mention Kimberly Ann Elliott (1997), for example, who analyzed the success or otherwise of economic sanctions imposed by the US. Her conclusion did not point to a high percentage of success. In addition to the works by Peter A.G. van Bergeijk (2021), David Cortright and George A. Lopez (2000, 2002), and Kern Alexander (2009), among others, all try to explain the use and form

³ Countries that had trade relations with the sanctioned nation lose their ability to maintain them, i.e. they lose their market.

of the mechanism from different perspectives.

Thus, the perspective defended by the West of using sanctions as a mechanism to destabilize regimes classified as hostile to US interests has not been successful in the Russian case. Or even in the other cases already mentioned.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the Special Military Operation in Ukraine as a starting point for important geopolitical transformations (the emergence of possible new centers of power that will challenge the Washington-Brussels axis), economic transformations (the advance in the decline of the dollar as the hegemonic currency in trade, the so-called de-dollarization, already underway among several BRICS countries with the use of national currencies among their members), and the possible role of BRICS as a relevant geopolitical actor, in addition to the limited effectiveness of the economic sanctions against Russia.

From the reader's understanding, we point out that the "system" is the current systemic cycle of accumulation led by the US, also from a geopolitical point of view. In this way, anti-systemic action takes place against the leadership of the West without the need to break or alter the current dynamics of the world-system since, for example, some countries benefit from the current process underway.

We call these transformations the anti-systemic imperative: the response of the affected country (or group of countries affected in an organized way or not) to such actions originating in the West, which end up modifying and/or collaborating towards such change with important geo-economic repercussions in the medium and long term.

Major global geopolitical players (China and Russia) are investing in efforts to broaden and deepen the BRICS, each with its own strategic objective.⁴ We believe that since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the United States no longer has the capacity to effectively influence part of the international community to impose its economic, geopolitical, and strategic objectives.⁵

Through a qualitative analysis of specialized reading on the subject of economic sanctions and their impacts, the compilation of journalistic information from economic segments (economists, analysts, etc.) dedicated

4 Beijing has been seeking to expand its geo-economic activities through the Silk Road Belt, while Russia sees the grouping as an important platform to avoid being isolated by the West on the international stage. Both countries believe in multipolarity as a way of weakening Western power.

5 The illusions of the West: there's no stopping the geopolitical transformations underway. *Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil*. 13/09/2023. Available at: <<https://diplomatique.org.br/as-ilusoes-do-ocidente-nao-ha-como-parar-as-transformacoes-geopoliticas-em-curso/>>

to the subject and through a process of reviewing the material, we will try to answer the following questions in the course of the work: has the Russian-Ukrainian conflict contributed to the acceleration of the consensus of the BRICS and the so-called Global South in the process of diminishing the importance of the dollar as the only international trade currency? Does the increased influence of the BRICS in its Plus format have a greater geopolitical and economic impact than before the conflict?

We use the World Systems Analysis (WSA) as our theoretical basis, focusing on the weakening of the US hegemony (Wallerstein 2004; Pennaforte 2020), which has allowed Washington to challenge its traditional guidelines in terms of obtaining support for its interests from the international community. From an economic point of view, we will use the concept of Systemic Cycles of Accumulation (Arrighi 1996), currently led by the US. However, this Cycle is in the process of declining/transitioning to another that has not yet been defined and whose characteristic is the weakening/decline of US economic power.

The anti-systemic perspective is used to examine how the conflict in Ukraine contributes to the creation of a new geo-economic scenario. Thus, we will develop our analytical approach to the actions of countries such as China, Russia, North Korea and Iran, for example, which seek to combat directly (Proactive) or indirectly like Brazil, India and South Africa (Active), the actions imposed by the West to maintain its dominance on the international stage.

To answer these questions, the paper is divided into four parts. First, we define our theoretical approach from an anti-systemic perspective. In the second part, we look at the Ukrainian War as an anti-systemic imperative. In the third part we analyze the process of de-dollarization and its difficulties in the medium term, but a phenomenon that is already underway due to the sanctions against Russia and, finally, we will address the increased importance of the BRICS with its plus version.

This article argues that the economic sanctions against Russia have accelerated the BRICS countries' move away from the US dollar by demonstrating how dangerous it is to rely solely on one currency for commercial transactions, signaling a significant transformation in the global economic and geopolitical orders.

Anti-systemic action: an analysis perspective

In 2013, in the book *Anti-systemic Movements in Latin America: the*

Venezuelan case⁶ we used this anti-systemic approach for the first time, inspired by the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, Terence K. Hopkins and Giovanni Arrighi (1989). Hopkins and Giovanni Arrighi (1989) attempted to understand the leadership of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in his actions, both regionally and internationally, during his time at the head of Miraflores Palace.

Later (Pennaforde 2020), we deepened the analysis to take a broader view of International Relations. Our goal was to read the actions of countries that no longer accepted the logic of power emanating from the central countries under the post-Cold War reality, against the backdrop of the hegemonic decline of the USA and allied with the process of transition from the current Systemic Cycle of Accumulation to another yet to be defined as one that will not be controlled by Washington (Wallerstein 2004; Arrighi 1996).

From an anti-systemic perspective, we tried to understand the current geo-economic disputes and divided some nations into two groups: Proactive and Active. On the Proactive side are Russia, Iran, North Korea and China, for example. These so-called “Axis of Evil” countries have a more effective confrontation with the West and are constantly fought by the Washington-Brussels axis in various areas.

On the Active side we find countries like India, Brazil, South Africa, etc. This group acts “diplomatically” in the main international forums, defending multipolarity, multilateralism, the “end of hegemonies,” etc., and maintains good relations with the systemic powers (the West) without displaying an anti-Western stance. The current interstate scenario can also be understood through this process.

Using the anti-systemic perspective, we will now examine how recent geopolitical events, particularly the conflict in Ukraine, exemplify the challenges to the established global order.

The Ukrainian War and its geopolitical impacts: an anti-systemic imperative

The conflict that began in February 2022 with the second invasion of Ukraine (in 2014, Moscow invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula) marked an important turning point in the geopolitical dispute between the US/European Union (henceforth the West) and Russia. The large-scale actions

6 An adaptation of the doctoral thesis with the same title defended by us at the Institute of International Relations (IRI) of the National University of La Plata, Argentina.

taken by the West against Russia, namely thousands of sanctions on practically every sector of its economy,⁷ political actors,⁸ and the ban on the country from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) system, have not managed to affect Putin's leadership. By contrast, popular support for "Special Military Operations" is high in Russia.⁹

Despite their lack of effectiveness against Moscow (weakening and/or economic strangulation of the Putin government), these actions, due to their scale and consequences, can provoke significant changes in the international geopolitical and economic framework, becoming what we call an "anti-systemic imperative": the response of the affected country (or group of affected countries) to these actions ends up modifying and/or collaborating towards this change, with important repercussions in the medium and long term.

The actions of countries that opposed the maintenance of an international order led by the West, with the defense of a multipolar world and "without hegemonies" of a financial and geopolitical nature, constitute an anti-systemic action. We understand "System" here to mean the geopolitical and economic logic led by the West in the search for and/or maintenance of its privileges.

The Ukraine War as an anti-systemic imperative was generated by the mobilization of the systemic center against Russia and has generated some geopolitical side effects such as increased cooperation between Moscow and Beijing, for example, as well as the loss of Washington's ability to exert pressure on numerous countries to isolate Russia. In general, the Russia versus the West conflict has been creating more favorable conditions for more intense cooperation between Proactive countries and paving the way for Active countries to act as well.

The geopolitical changes resulting from the conflict in Ukraine have not only altered the dynamics of power but have also prompted an urgent reassessment of the global economic order, particularly dependence on the US dollar.

⁷ The sanctions froze Russian funds and made them inaccessible to the Russian government. See more at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia/>. Accessed on 25/08/2024.

⁸ There are more than 2300 sanctions against Russian individuals and entities.

⁹ Putin's approval rating in Russia is 81%, in contrast to the West. <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/internacional/aprovacao-de-putin-na-russia-e-de-81-contrapondo-ocidente/> 28/06/2023. Accessed on 31/08/2024.

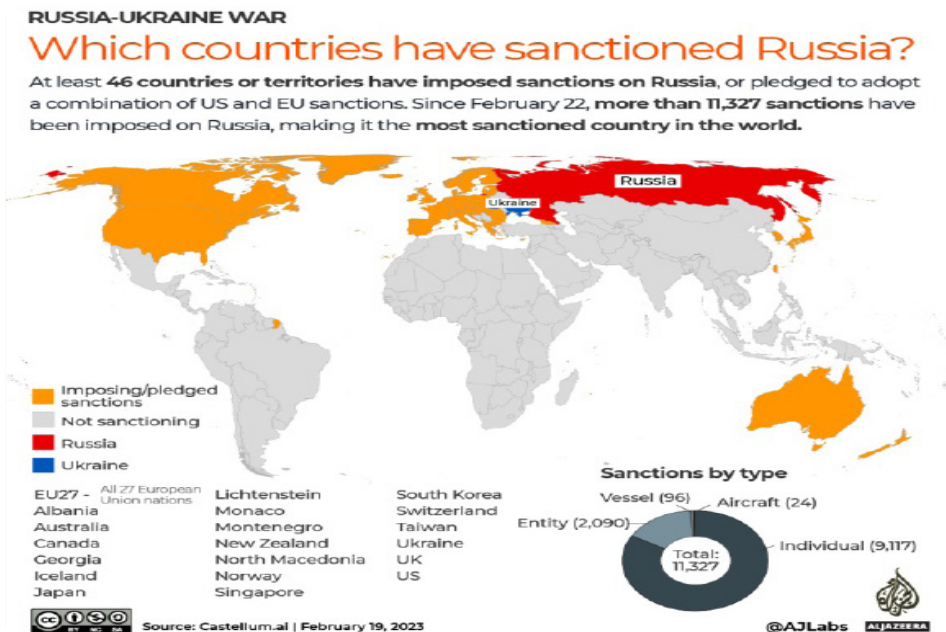
De-dollarizing international trade: a long-term process

The geopolitical changes resulting from the conflict in Ukraine have not only altered the dynamics of power, but have also led to an urgent reassessment of the global economic order, especially dependence on the US dollar.

The West's reaction with strict economic and political sanctions on Russia (see map below), and their configuration as an anti-systemic imperative, has led both Beijing and other countries to put themselves in the position of possible targets if they go against the systemic center. In fact, both Iran and North Korea already have this experience. And even Cuba.

Sanctions have collateral effects, as they affect countries that trade with the sanctioned nations, causing damage in some way. In other words, there is a need to reduce dependence on a system entirely controlled by the West from the strategic point of view of these countries.

Figure 1:



Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/16/mapping-where-every-country-stands-on-the-russia-ukraine-war>

For some time now, several nations have been questioning the dollar as the main international currency of exchange. Since Bretton Woods, its dominance has reflected an increase in US economic and geopolitical power, right up to the present day. This mechanism allows Washington immense power to exert its global influence, as well as being able to finance its economic deficits with peace of mind.

On the other hand, the use of one country's currency to dictate the global economic process is, to say the least, nonsensical in the light of logic: why the dollar and not another currency? We know the answer. Washington's immense military power since the end of World War II, size of its economy, and political stability, among other factors, have provided this supremacy.¹⁰ However, the international reality is changing.

With the decline of US primacy and the current systemic cycle of accumulation, engendered by the structural weakening of Washington that we have already mentioned, the dollar standard is being questioned. When analyzing the "weakening" of the dollar, it is not possible to say that in a few decades, the world economy will change to this standard. But it is clear that in the long term, the dollar will at least be present alongside other currencies in commercial transactions. Its prominence tended to be much lower. The analysis of this issue cannot be exclusively economic, but also geopolitical.

China has been an advocate of reducing the importance of the dollar in international trade in recent years and has been trading commodities in its currency with various trading partners, including Brazil and Argentina, for example. Within the BRICS, bilateral trade has sought to put the use of the dollar on the back burner. Beijing has been offering various currency swap lines to facilitate the use of the renminbi in its trade with other nations. Beijing's concerns can be expressed as follows:

The most resounding agreement was the one signed in 2018 in renminbi and rubles for the supply of Russian gas to China for the equivalent of around \$400 billion. It should be borne in mind that China imports \$250 billion in oil and another \$150 billion in commodities such as steel, copper, coal and soybeans from the rest of the world every year. All these commodities are now valued and traded internationally in dollars. Therefore, China also has to pay for them in US currency. The use of the renminbi has therefore become

¹⁰ See a good article by Kathy Jones. Will the U.S. Dollar Be Dethroned? April 4, 2023. <https://www.schwab.com/learn/story/will-us-dollar-be-dethroned>. Accessed on 28/09/2024.

a strategic priority for Beijing. Trade in renminbi is done intensively with the other BRICS countries, but more generally with other emerging economies around the world (Raimondi 2023).

At the same time, the BRICS has been making progress in discussions on a shared currency, a fact that encourages other actions in the same direction by other countries outside the systemic center. According to the Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov, in an interview with the Russian news agency TASS, he stated that:

“We believe that creating an independent BRICS payment system is an important goal for the future, which would be based on state-of-the-art tools such as digital technologies and blockchain. The main thing is to ensure that it is convenient for governments, ordinary people and businesses, as well as cost-effective and free of politics” (Singh 2024).

The tool is a blockchain payment platform that is being developed and called the BRICS Bridge (multilateral payment platform). It connects the financial systems of member countries via payment gateways to settlements at central banks (Nasdaq, 2024).

In August 2024, Russian senator Valentina Matviyenko reported that the new payment system was already being tested at an advanced stage, and according to her, in all member countries.¹¹ He also said that the “BRICS Bridge, a new digital means of payment, will be a global bomb in a good way’ if it works. According to Russian information, 159 countries can use digital payment methods (Bertolucci, 2024). Russia, which has held a rotating presidency for grouping since February 2024, is working on a project Russia, which has held a rotating presidency for grouping since February 2024, is working on a project aimed at mitigating the effects of Western Sanctions. Effects of Western sanctions.¹² This issue will be discussed at the BRICS Summit in October 2024 in Kazan and, if approved, could become operational.

¹¹ According to the Russian senator, “BRICS Bridge, a new digital payment method, will be a global bomb, in a good way”. <https://livecoins.com.br/sistema-de-pagamentos-do-brics-sera-bomba-global/> 19/08/2024. Accessed on 02/09/2024.

¹² BRICS Pay (<https://brics-pay.com/>). Accessed on 03/09/2024. See also Moscow’s use of cryptocurrencies in Russia plans to launch two cryptocurrency brokers and stablecoin of BRICS currencies. 23/08/2024, <https://livecoins.com.br/russia-planeja-lancar-duas-corretoras-de-cryptomoedas-e-stablecoin-de-moedas-do-brics/> Accessed on 02/09/2024.

According to experts, a “BRICS currency” would bring intra-organizational benefits, such as strengthening integration, reducing the dollar as a global reserve and trade currency, reducing the risk of global volatility associated with unilateral acts by the West, and encouraging countries to organize themselves into alliances for the development of regional currencies (Pistilli 2024). In practice, there is a tendency for trade dynamics to change, but this cannot reflect a “catastrophic” scenario in the short and medium terms for the dollar.

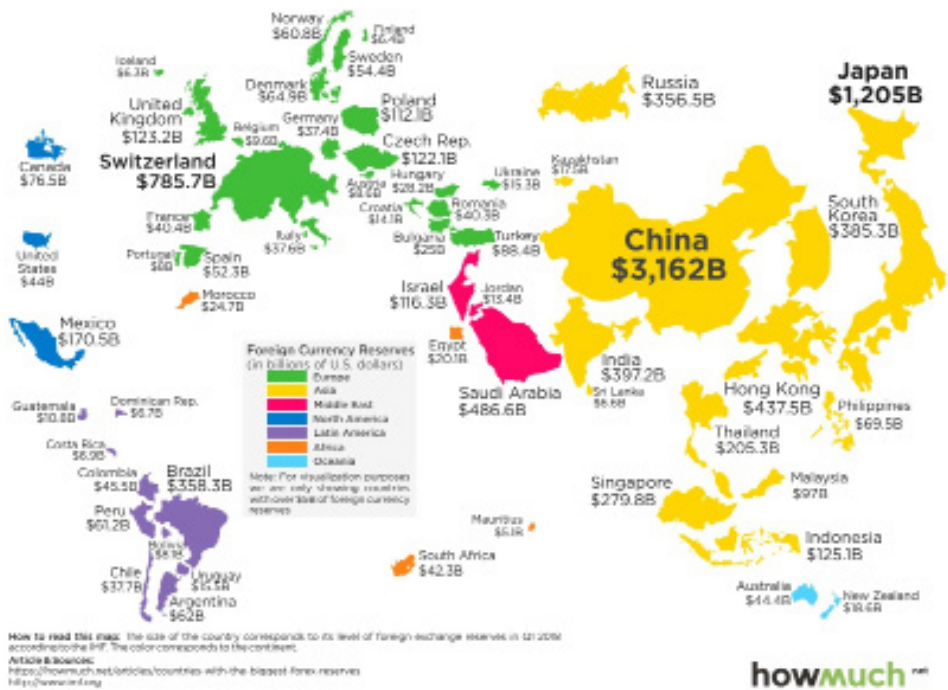
Approximately 90% of international trade is carried out using the US currency. For oil trade, for example, the dollar is used almost 100% of the time. In 2023, around a fifth of oil sales took place in dollars. Some experts point out the existence of other currencies competing with the dollar and the emergence of two financial systems in the future: one dollarized and the other non-dollarized (Jones, 2024). It is worth remembering that the US currency accounts for 60% of international reserves and 80% of financial market transactions.

Other national currencies are used for trade and international reserves (Figure 2). The euro ranks second as a reserve currency. China’s renminbi is making headway as a reserve currency for central banks around the world, although it accounts for less than 3%. The pound sterling, the Swiss franc and the Japanese yen also appear as reserve currencies.

Despite this favorable scenario for the US currency today, it should also be seen in a different light. The idea of countries working towards new alternatives to the dollar already shows that something has changed on the international economic stage. The transformation already occurs, which is a fact. Even if it is derisory from a statistical point of view at the moment.

Another BRICS member, India is also preparing to have its own currency, the rupee, operating on international markets. And New Delhi’s view is the same as that of the Chinese and Russians: the need to reduce the weight of the dollar in commercial transactions. Western economic sanctions not only harm the countries they punish but also create a “ripple effect” by damaging their trade with these countries, as we mentioned earlier. Iran and Venezuela, for example, were once India’s trading partners in the supply of crude oil. The solution to these problems is to reduce the use of the US currency (RAIMONDI, 2023).

Figure 2: The Countries with the Most Foreign Currency Reserves (2018)



Source: <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/countries-most-foreign-currency-reserves/>

Italian economist Paolo Raimondi, in an article entitled BRICS: The role of the unit of account for the new “basket of currencies” (2023), written for the Indian Foundation website, warns that the debate on the emergence of competing currencies to the dollar is already taking place in the US, even if it has not been widely publicized by the media. Raimondi quotes the son of the legendary economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1908-2006), the economist James Kenneth Galbraith, who asked the following question: ‘Can the US survive the rise of a multipolar world?’ in his article published by the Institute for New Economic Thinking.

In his text, Raimondi says that James Galbraith points out that the US could survive, adding that “not without political upheaval, stimulated by inflation and recession and by a declining stock market in the short term and, finally, by demands for a realistic strategy in tune with the current global balance of power.” The dollar-based order has so far been sustained mainly by instability elsewhere and the lack of a reliable alternative” (Raimondi, 2023).

The Ukrainian War is accelerating economic change due to the need for countries to change the dominance of the dollar in commercial transactions.

In addition to the process of reducing the use of the dollar as the sole currency for international trade, the BRICS is expanding its influence on the international geopolitical scene. Let's analyze this expansion and its consequences for the international system.

From single to plus: the BRICS increases its geopolitical importance

The expansion of the BRICS to include other members, known as BRICS Plus, marks a significant evolution in its role on the world stage. This inclusion broadened the coalition's geographic and economic influence, underscoring its challenge to traditional Euro-Atlantic dominance.

The 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg (2023) marked an expansion in the number of its members and its geographical area of operation. The transformation of the BRICS into BRICS Plus, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Iran, represented an important sign of the new international geo-economic and geopolitical scenario in the 21st century.

Argentina under the Javier Milei government did not accept the invitation to join the grouping in 2024. From a statistical perspective, the BRICS has become a geopolitical and economic giant. Of the 10 largest oil producers in the world, six are in the group, representing 42% of world trade. In addition, the BRICS accounts for 72% of the world's rare-earth mineral reserves. In demographic terms, the group's population has risen from 41% to 46% of the world's population. GDP in purchasing power parity terms is 36% of the world total. These are just some of the points that highlight the importance of the BRICS.

The Saudis and Chinese, for example, have already signed important economic agreements. The two countries have large-scale projects such as the Silk Belt and Road Initiative and the Saudis' Vision 2030, which include manufacturing and industrial development, as well as cooperation in the nuclear, war and new energy (hydrogen) sectors, in addition to the construction of a USD 500 million city to be called "Neom." Huawei is also participating with the 5G network, despite US objections. And an important detail: Beijing is offering the renminbi as a form of payment for some transactions.

Egypt, a plus member, is already considering issuing renminbi bonds in the Chinese market. Another factor helping the Chinese currency gain

more weight internationally is the Belt and Road Initiative, which, together with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, helps Beijing's project.

The Chinese geo-economic project is important for the growth and deepening of the BRICS, and has even been a proposal of the country since 2017. Its rise, which is now inevitable, will increase its geopolitical capacity to influence the international economy by offering options outside the systemic center for the development of the Global South and emerging markets.

The expansion of the BRICS is a clear sign of the new global geopolitical scenario in which countries from countless geographical areas are realizing the current moment in international relations: new poles of power that are taking shape and may be more interesting than the "old" ones. And the logic really seems to be that way with the new expansion of BRICS, now with "partner countries" (limited participation and no voting rights) approved at the XVI BRICS Summit in Kazan: Turkey, Indonesia, Belarus, Cuba, Bolivia, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Vietnam, Nigeria, Uganda and Algeria.

However, we must not forget Moscow and Beijing's own geopolitical plans to expand the grouping. Something that has been much debated among experts is the transformation of the BRICS into an "anti-Western" bloc by the two countries, a "proposal" that is not defended by Brazilians and Indians, for example.

Conclusion

As we have already pointed out, the Ukrainian War has become an important milestone in international relations by accelerating processes that were already underway, such as the increase in Sino-Russian cooperation and the beginning of the process of the relative weakening of the dollar in the long term, for example. On the other hand, we must bear in mind that the decline in the importance of the US currency will not occur quickly.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict is important in creating an environment of greater cooperation in the Global South, which no longer accepts the political and geopolitical dictates of the systemic center, alongside China's great capacity in the economic sphere to offer more economic advantages to its partners. Advantages that the West is no longer able or willing to offer as it used to. The West will have to recognize that the process of transition to another pole or poles is a fact.

For much of the Western media, the BRICS continues to be seen only as an acronym without any logic. Much of the analysis emphasizes the

economic and geopolitical asymmetries, such as the size of the economies, divergent geo-economic interests, geopolitical rivalries, for example, rather than the confluences that have been acquired over the last decade.

We know that this process is associated with the idea of not recognizing the new scenario that is being built outside the systemic center. In the past, we had different expressions of autonomism based on the logic of the debate on confronting the Cold War and the challenges of development; today, we have a different dynamic. The BRICS will be a decisive vector in overcoming the current dominance of the West towards another World Order focused on the Global South and its own interests.

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ABSTRACT

The Ukrainian War has become a catalyst for important geopolitical and economic transformations, challenging the established global order led by the United States and its allies. This article analyzes conflict as an “anti-systemic imperative,” a response by the affected countries that contributes to change with important repercussions in the medium and long term. Using World Systems Analysis and the concept of Systemic Cycles of Accumulation as theoretical frameworks, we argue that economic sanctions against Russia have accelerated the process of BRICS countries moving away from the US dollar, demonstrating the risks of relying on a single currency for international trade. The conflict also increased cooperation between countries opposed to Western hegemony and paved the way for the expansion of the BRICS, which now includes Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Iran. This “BRICS Plus” format has significantly increased the group’s geographical, demographic and economic influence, positioning it as a relevant geopolitical actor. Although the process of de-dollarization is still in its early stages, the growing use of alternative currencies and payment systems signals a significant change in the world’s economic order. The article concludes that the Ukrainian War accelerated ongoing processes, such as the relative weakening of the dollar and increased cooperation between the Global South, ultimately contributing to the transition to a new multipolar world order.

KEYWORDS

BRICS, Economic Sanctions, Ukrainian War, Anti-systemic imperative, De-dollarization

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CANADA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEACEKEEPING IN LEBANON: PRESERVING PEACE AND STABILITY

Mohamad Zreik¹

Introduction

Peacekeeping is a term used to describe a wide range of United Nations (UN) and other international efforts aimed at maintaining peace and security in areas affected by conflict or unrest. Peacekeeping efforts are typically led by the UN, but may also involve other international organizations, regional organizations, or individual states (Melin & Kathman, 2023).

The evolution of peacekeeping has taken place over several decades, and has seen the development of a number of different approaches to maintaining peace and security in conflict-affected areas (Bara & Hultman, 2020). Early peacekeeping missions were focused on monitoring ceasefire agreements, with peacekeepers primarily serving as observers and mediators between conflicting parties. Over time, peacekeeping missions have become more complex, with peacekeepers taking on a wider range of responsibilities, including supporting the disarmament of former combatants, protecting civilians, and helping to create the conditions for lasting peace (Bove et al., 2022).

In recent years, peacekeeping has become increasingly focused on conflict prevention, as well as on addressing the root causes of conflict, including poverty, inequality, and lack of good governance. This has led to the development of a number of innovative approaches to peacekeeping, such as community-based peacekeeping, which seeks to engage local communities and build their capacity to maintain peace and security (Blair et al., 2022).

Despite these changes, peacekeeping remains an important tool for

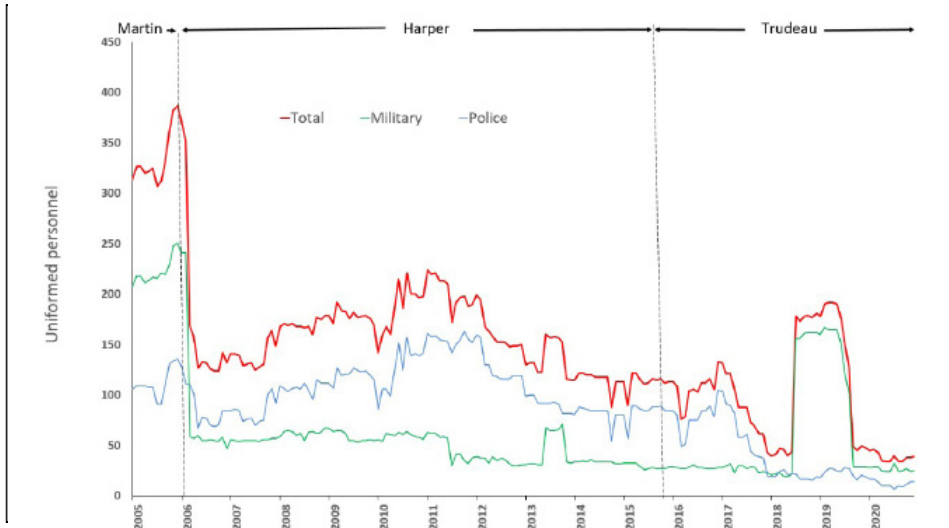
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promoting peace and stability in areas affected by conflict. However, it is also widely recognized that peacekeeping efforts face a number of significant challenges, including the need for adequate resources, the difficulties of operating in complex and often hostile environments, and the need for effective coordination and cooperation between different actors involved in peacekeeping missions.

Canada has a long history of participating in peacekeeping missions and is widely recognized as one of the largest contributors of peacekeeping troops and police officers in the world (Spooner, 2010). Canada has participated in over 50 peacekeeping missions since the establishment of the UN in 1945 (Maloney, 2002).

Starting with the first military observer head, BGen Harry Angle of UNMOGIP (the first observer mission, established in April 1948 for Kashmir), Canada has been a major contributor of people to UN peacekeeping operations. Canada proposed the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Egypt in 1956 and contributed significantly, including an entire battalion's worth of troops, during the duration of the deployment (1956–67). Canada sent significant units (battalions) to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for close to thirty years (1964–1993). Canada was the only country to participate in all peacekeeping operations during the Cold War, with around 1,000 deployed on average over 40 years. In fact, it kept being a major force until the early 1990s. Canada sent 3,300 uniformed personnel to the UN in 1993 (including in Bosnia, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Somalia). From its inception in 1974 until the Harper administration withdrew them in 2006, Canada provided the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights (UNDOF) with around 200 logisticians (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Contribution by month, from 2005 to 2020 (Dec), showing governments in power at the time



Source: Davis et al, 2021; using data from Department of National Defence

In the early years of peacekeeping, Canada was a leading contributor of troops and played a key role in establishing the principles and practices of modern peacekeeping. Canada has also been a strong advocate for the use of peacekeeping as a tool for promoting peace and stability, and has been a vocal supporter of efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of peacekeeping operations (Dorn & Libben, 2018).

Over the years, Canada has contributed troops, police officers, and other personnel to peacekeeping missions in a variety of countries and regions, including Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Haiti (Dorn, 2005). In addition, Canada has also provided significant financial and logistical support to peacekeeping missions, including through the deployment of transport and communications equipment, as well as through the provision of training and capacity-building programs for peacekeepers (Maloney, 2005).

Despite its long history of participation in peacekeeping, Canada has faced a number of challenges in recent years, including concerns about the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and the safety and security of peacekeepers in the field (Wagner, 2006). Nevertheless, Canada continues to play a significant role in peacekeeping efforts and remains committed to supporting international peace and security (DFAIT, 2013a).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon and its contribution to preserving peace and stability in the region. Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon is an important case to study for several reasons.

To begin with, Lebanon is a complex and challenging environment, with a long history of conflict and political instability. By examining Canada's peacekeeping efforts in this context, it is possible to gain insights into the effectiveness of peacekeeping in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting lasting peace and stability.

Moreover, Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon provides an opportunity to examine the challenges and limitations of peacekeeping efforts in the modern era. With increasing demands on peacekeepers to address a wider range of issues, including the protection of civilians, disarmament of former combatants, and support for peacebuilding and reconstruction, this study will help to shed light on the challenges and limitations of peacekeeping in complex and challenging environments.

Finally, by examining Canada's peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon, this study will contribute to our understanding of the role that individual states can play in supporting international peace and security. Canada has a long history of engagement in peacekeeping and has been a significant contributor of troops and resources to peacekeeping missions around the world. This study will help to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of Canada's peacekeeping efforts and will inform future efforts to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon is an important case to study as it provides insights into the challenges and limitations of peacekeeping in complex and challenging environments, the role that individual states can play in supporting international peace and security, and the effectiveness of peacekeeping in addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting lasting peace and stability.

Research questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

What was the role of Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon in promoting peace and stability in the region?

How did Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon contribute to the wider peacekeeping efforts of the UN and other international actors in the region?

What were the main challenges faced by Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, and how were these challenges addressed?

What were the strengths and weaknesses of Canada's peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon, and what can be learned from this experience to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions in the future?

Literature Review

Peacekeeping has been a central tool of the international community for promoting peace and stability around the world. The concept of peacekeeping has its roots in the idea of preventing the escalation of conflict and promoting peace and stability through the deployment of neutral international forces.

The evolution of peacekeeping can be traced back to the late 1940s and 1950s, with the establishment of the first peacekeeping missions by the UN. The initial focus of peacekeeping was on maintaining ceasefires between conflicting parties and monitoring armistice agreements (UN, 2021). Over time, the scope of peacekeeping expanded to include the protection of civilians, disarmament of former combatants, support for peacebuilding and reconstruction, and the promotion of the rule of law and human rights.

The end of the Cold War marked a new phase in the evolution of peacekeeping, with the UN taking on an increased role in responding to conflict around the world (DFAIT, 2013b). This was reflected in the increased number of peacekeeping missions and the broader range of tasks assigned to peacekeepers.

Despite these changes, the fundamental principles of peacekeeping have remained consistent over time. Peacekeeping continues to be based on the principles of impartiality, the consent of the parties, and the use of force only in self-defense (UN, 2022). Peacekeeping is designed to provide a neutral and impartial presence that can help to prevent the escalation of conflict and promote a peaceful resolution to disputes.

One of the key strengths of peacekeeping is its ability to provide a stabilizing presence in conflict-affected areas. By maintaining a presence on the ground, peacekeepers can help to reduce tensions, prevent violence, and create a more secure environment for civilians. In addition, peacekeeping missions can play an important role in supporting the transition from conflict

to peace by facilitating the disarmament of former combatants, supporting the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, and promoting the rule of law and human rights (UN, 2016).

However, peacekeeping is not without its challenges. One of the main challenges facing peacekeepers is the changing nature of conflict, which has become more complex and multifaceted in recent years. This has led to an increased demand for peacekeepers with specialized skills and capabilities, as well as a more robust mandate that allows them to respond to the changing nature of conflict (Murphy, 2007).

Another challenge facing peacekeepers is the need to maintain the consent of the parties to the conflict. This requires peacekeepers to remain neutral and impartial, and to avoid taking sides in the conflict. This can be difficult in practice, particularly in environments where the conflicting parties have strong political, ethnic, or religious ties (Shinar, 2009).

Lebanon is a small country located in the Middle East that has a complex and often tumultuous history. The conflict in Lebanon can be traced back to the late 1940s, when the country gained independence from France and became one of the first Arab states to adopt a democratic form of government (UNSC, 2000).

However, despite its early promise, Lebanon has been plagued by conflict and instability over the years. This has been driven by a number of factors, including political and economic divisions, ethnic and religious tensions, and external influences from neighboring countries.

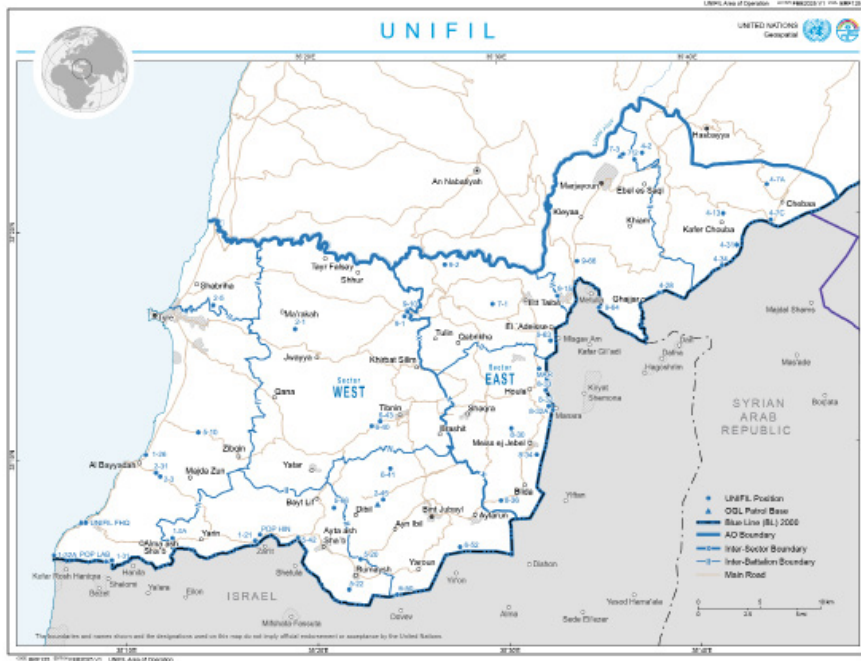
One of the most significant periods of conflict in Lebanon was the civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. During this time, the country was torn apart by sectarian fighting between different religious and ethnic groups, and the conflict resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of people and the displacement of hundreds of thousands more (Zreik, 2021).

Since the end of the civil war, Lebanon has faced a number of challenges, including political and economic instability, sporadic outbreaks of violence, and ongoing tensions with neighboring countries. In recent years, the country has been affected by the conflict in Syria and has been struggling to address the influx of refugees from that country (Zreik, 2022).

Since the end of the civil war in 1990, the UN has been involved in peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, with the goal of promoting peace and stability in the country (Murphy, 2007). The first peacekeeping mission in Lebanon was the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which was established in 1978 with the mandate to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and to restore international peace and security

in the area. Over the years, UNIFIL has undergone several expansions and modifications to its mandate, reflecting the changing nature of the conflict in Lebanon (UNIFIL, 2019).

Map 1: UNIFIL Deployment Areas in Lebanon



Source: UNIFIL official website <https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-maps>

In addition to UNIFIL, the UN has also been involved in other peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts in Lebanon. For example, the UN has supported the Lebanese government in its efforts to disarm and demobilize armed groups, and has helped to promote the rule of law and human rights in the country. The UN has also played a critical role in supporting the Lebanese people in the aftermath of the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon, by providing humanitarian aid and assistance to those affected by the conflict (Shinar, 2009).

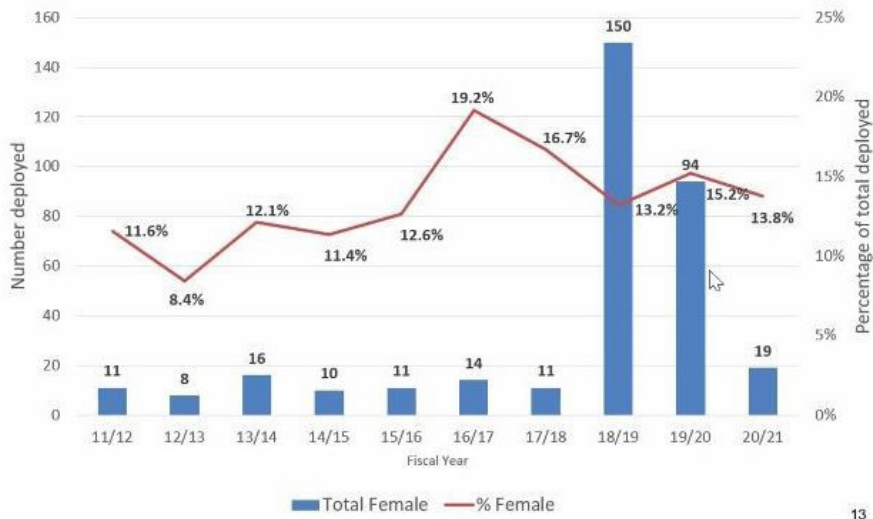
Canada has a long history of participation in peacekeeping operations, dating back to its involvement in the first peacekeeping mission in the Middle

East in 1948. Over the years, Canada has been one of the largest contributors of peacekeepers to UN missions and has played a leading role in promoting the ideals of peacekeeping and international cooperation (Chief of Defence Staff, 2016).

Canada’s contributions to peacekeeping efforts have taken many forms, including the deployment of military personnel, police officers, and civilians to conflict zones around the world. Canada has also provided financial and technical support to peacekeeping missions, and has played a leadership role in the development of new peacekeeping strategies and practices (World Bank, 2022).

Figure 2: Women in Canadian Armed Forces deployed to UN peace operations over the decade 2011-2021 by Fiscal Year

Number and Percentage of Women Deployed to UN Peace Operations, 2011/12 - 2020/21



Source: Davis et al, 2021; using data from Department of National Defence

In recent years, Canada has continued to be a major contributor to peacekeeping efforts globally, with Canadian peacekeepers serving in missions in countries such as Haiti, South Sudan, and Mali. Canada has also

been a strong advocate for peacekeeping reform and has called for the UN to enhance its peacekeeping capabilities, including by increasing the use of new technologies and strengthening partnerships with regional organizations (Chief of Defence Staff, 2019).

Canada has been a significant contributor to UNIFIL since its inception, and Canadian peacekeepers have played an important role in promoting peace and stability in southern Lebanon (Myers & Dorn, 2022).

UNIFIL's mandate has evolved over time to address the changing nature of the conflict in Lebanon. Initially, UNIFIL was tasked with confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon and restoring international peace and security in the area (Makdisi, 2014). Over the years, its mandate has expanded to include tasks such as supporting the Lebanese government in its efforts to disarm and demobilize armed groups, and promoting the rule of law and human rights in the country.

Canada's contribution to UNIFIL has been consistent over the years, and Canadian peacekeepers have served in a variety of roles, including as military observers, infantry personnel, and police officers. Canada has also provided financial and logistical support to the mission, and has played a leadership role in supporting the peacekeeping efforts of other countries (Canada Parliament House of Commons, 2019a).

Methodology

The study will use official UN documents, such as the annual reports of UNIFIL and other relevant peacekeeping missions, to provide a comprehensive overview of Canada's involvement in peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon. The study will also use government reports and policy documents, such as those produced by the Canadian Department of National Defence and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, to understand Canada's approach to peacekeeping and its policy priorities in the region. Media reports, including those from reputable news organizations, will be used to provide a broader understanding of the context of the conflict in Lebanon and the challenges facing peacekeepers in the region.

This study will use thematic analysis which involves identifying and coding common themes that emerge from the data, and organizing them into categories to gain an understanding of the central issues and perspectives related to Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. It will also use content analysis through systematically analyzing the content of documents and other written sources, such as official UN documents, government reports,

and media reports, to understand the evolution of peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon and Canada's contributions to these efforts.

Results

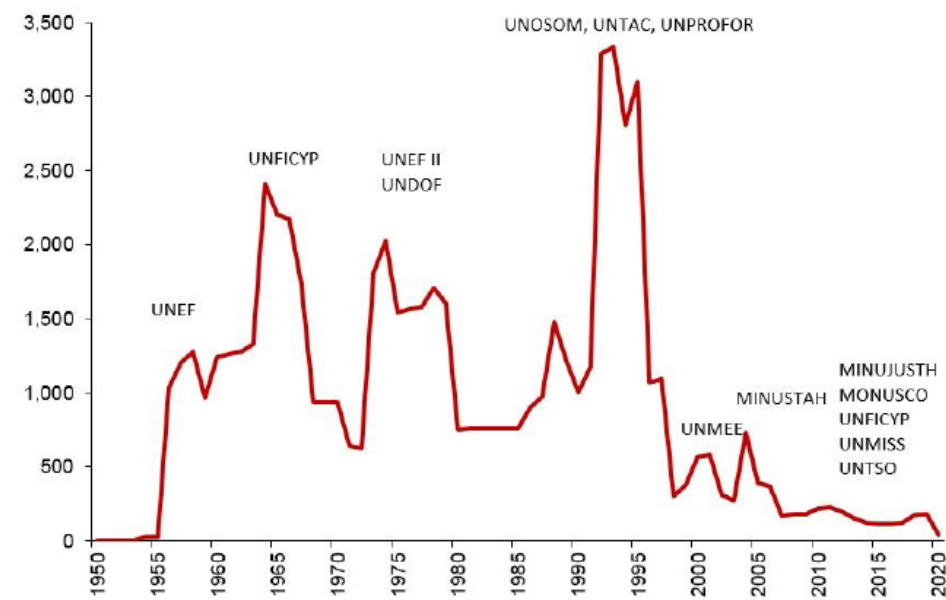
Overview of Canada's contribution to UNIFIL in Lebanon

Canada has been a significant contributor to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) since the mission's inception in 1978 (Shinar, 2009). Canada's contributions to UNIFIL include both financial and personnel resources.

Canada provides funding to UNIFIL through its contributions to the United Nations peacekeeping budget. This funding supports the mission's overall operations, including logistics, equipment, and the provision of necessary services to peacekeepers (Canada Parliament House of Commons, 2019b).

Canada has provided personnel to UNIFIL in various capacities, including military personnel, police officers, and civilian staff (see figure 2). Canadian military personnel have served as peacekeepers, providing security and stability in the mission area. Canadian police officers have contributed to the development of local policing capabilities and have helped to promote the rule of law. Canadian civilian staff have provided essential support to the mission, including administrative, logistics, and communications support (Hatto, 2009).

Figure 3: Canadian contributions of uniformed personnel from 1950 to 2020 (maximum of each year)



Source: Canada DND, Canadiansoldier.com, W. Durch, UN DPI

In recent years, Canada has consistently maintained a significant military presence in UNIFIL, with Canadian peacekeepers serving in a variety of roles, including leadership positions, liaison officers, and military observers. Canada's commitment to UNIFIL reflects its commitment to peacekeeping and to promoting peace and security in the region (Marta, 2009).

Canada's involvement in UNIFIL is aimed at promoting peace and security in Lebanon and the surrounding region. This is achieved through the presence of peacekeepers, who help to prevent and mitigate conflict, and through the provision of support to local authorities to strengthen their capacity to maintain security.

Canada's participation in UNIFIL is a demonstration of its support for the United Nations and its peacekeeping efforts. By contributing personnel and resources to the mission, Canada helps to ensure the success of UNIFIL and the United Nations more broadly.

One of the primary objectives of UNIFIL is to protect civilians and ensure their safety. Canadian peacekeepers play an important role in this

effort by monitoring the security situation, preventing violence, and working with local authorities to ensure the protection of civilians.

Canada's involvement in UNIFIL is also aimed at promoting the rule of law and supporting the development of local policing capabilities. This helps to create a stable and secure environment in which civilians can live free from fear and violence (Edström & Gyllensporre, 2013).

By promoting peace and security in Lebanon, Canada's involvement in UNIFIL helps to build stability in the region and contributes to the prevention of conflict and violence. This is an important objective for Canada, given the region's strategic importance and the potential for instability to spill over into other countries.

Impact of Canada's peacekeeping efforts on the peace process

There are a number of metrics by which to assess Canada's contribution to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the subsequent peace process in Lebanon. Canada's contribution to UNIFIL has helped reduce bloodshed and conflict in Lebanon, one of the country's most important outcomes. This has been accomplished through deploying peacekeepers to help avoid and lessen violent incidents, as well as by providing resources to help local governments increase their security forces' effectiveness (Shinar, 2009). Canada's participation in UNIFIL has aided in spreading the rule of law and bolstering the growth of local law enforcement. This has contributed to the overall peace process in Lebanon by making it more secure and safe for ordinary people to go about their daily lives without fear of reprisal. As a result of Canada's participation in UNIFIL, the humanitarian situation in Lebanon has improved.

Canada's contribution to the well-being of the populace may be traced back to the country's commitment to maintaining peace and order (Canadian Armed Forces, n.d.). The peace and security of the region has been bolstered by Canada's participation in UNIFIL, which has also contributed to the reduction of conflict and violence in the area. Considering the strategic importance of the region and the risk of a domino effect from insecurity, this is a significant development. Canada's presence in UNIFIL is an indication of the country's dedication to maintaining international stability and its backing of UN peacekeeping operations. Canada's participation in the operation, both in terms of personnel and funding, demonstrates the country's dedication to international security and peace (UNIFIL, 2021).

Through its participation in the UNIFIL, Canada has played a crucial

role in fostering peace and stability in the country. Multiple significant contributions have come from Canada toward this end. It has ensured the safety of civilians through the sending of troops to UNIFIL, where they seek to reduce violence and protect the populace. Canada has helped the Lebanese government strengthen its ability to keep the country safe and secure (UNSC, 2006). Efforts have been made to improve the effectiveness of local police and security agencies by giving training and other sorts of support.

As a member of UNIFIL, Canada has contributed to advancing the rule of law and protecting human rights in Lebanon (Canada Parliament House of Commons, 2008). This has included collaborating with regional leaders to foster the growth of police and legal systems that are open and transparent and uphold the rights of all citizens. Canada's contributions to Lebanon's stability go beyond financial aid. This has aided in the recovery of communities hit hard by violence and conflict, and improved the lives of citizens in such areas. To a large extent due to Canada's presence in UNIFIL, the region has become more peaceful and secure (Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, 2015). This has contributed to the region's safety and stability, which benefits both the local populace and the entire region.

Challenges and successes in maintaining peace in Lebanon

Canada has made major contributions to peacekeeping in Lebanon, but the country has faced various problems in upholding the peace there. Changes in government and political disputes between factions have created a highly unpredictable political climate in Lebanon. Canada's efforts to foster peace and stability in the country have been hampered by this lack of clarity regarding the identities and motivations of the main players (Murphy, 2007).

The amount of aid Canada can provide to peacekeeping in Lebanon is limited. Because of the reliance on national contributions, Canada's commitment to UNIFIL peacekeeping in Lebanon has had to be weighed against its participation in other international and domestic peacekeeping missions. Canada has had to foster peace in a difficult and at times hostile environment due to the extensive violence and strife that has plagued the country. The reluctance to change has also presented difficulties in Lebanon (Thakur, 2019). There are some groups within the country that are antagonistic to the presence of foreign peacekeepers and have been resistant to the United Nations' and other international players' peacekeeping efforts.

Peace and stability in Lebanon have been helped by Canada's

peacekeeping activities in a number of ways. Canada's participation in UNIFIL as a stabilizing force in Lebanon. Reduced violence and conflict, as well as an increased sense of safety for the local population, are direct results of the deployment of peacekeepers. Canada has worked with Lebanon's local groups and community leaders to support their efforts to foster peace in their communities. Together with municipal authorities and other players, Canada has helped enhance Lebanon's local institutions, contributing to the country's capacity growth and stability (UNIFIL, 2019). Canada's efforts to foster conversation and understanding across Lebanon's many populations have helped ease tensions and create a more peaceful environment. Canada has been a strong voice in favor of human rights in Lebanon, actively promoting the rights of marginalized groups and lending assistance to initiatives that safeguard civilians and advance peace (Goes & Leenders, 2006).

Broader impact of Canadian peacekeeping efforts on the international community

The effects of Canada's peacekeeping activities have spread well beyond the borders of the individual missions in which it has participated. The international community's dedication to fostering global peace and stability has been bolstered by Canada's participation in peacekeeping missions. The international community and the general public both recognize Canada as a top peacekeeper due to the country's extensive history of peacekeeping. The efforts of the United Nations to spread peace and stability around the world are bolstered by Canada's financial support of peacekeeping deployments (OECD, 2018). Canada's involvement in peacekeeping missions has contributed to a more peaceful world by bringing calm to areas plagued by war and bloodshed. Canada's peacekeeping operations have led to the development of collaborations and relationships with other countries and organizations, which will aid in the future promotion of peace and stability (Wagner, 2006).

As a symbol of Canada's dedication to promoting peace and stability on a worldwide scale, the country's peacekeeping activities have far-reaching consequences. As a result of Canada's involvement in peacekeeping missions, other countries have increased their own capabilities for peacekeeping. Canadian participation in peacekeeping operations bolsters the United Nations' efforts to maintain international tranquility and security (Global Affairs Canada, 2021). The international cooperation and coordination that Canada's peacekeeping operations have facilitated has the potential to significantly advance the cause of peace and stability in the years to come. The trust and relationships built by Canada's participation in peacekeeping

missions have aided in the resolution of conflicts and the promotion of stability. Canada has contributed to the creation of best practices in the field of peacekeeping through the use of its extensive experience and knowledge.

Discussion

The findings of the study add to the existing body of knowledge by providing new insights into the role of peacekeeping in promoting peace and stability in conflict-affected countries. By examining Canada's peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon, the study contributes to the understanding of the impact of peacekeeping on the peace process, the challenges faced by peacekeeping missions, and the strategies used to overcome these challenges. The findings can also provide a deeper understanding of the role of the international community in resolving conflicts and promoting peace. This can provide new directions for future research and inform policy-making decisions on peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

The findings of this research paper on Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon provide insights for the application of peacekeeping efforts in other conflict-affected countries. The lessons learned from Canada's involvement in UNIFIL, such as the importance of resources, personnel, and objectives in promoting peace and stability, can be applied to future peacekeeping missions. Additionally, the assessment of Canada's impact on the peace process and the identification of the challenges faced during the mission can inform future peacekeeping efforts in similar conflict situations. By analyzing the effectiveness of Canada's peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon, future peacekeeping missions can strive to adopt best practices and avoid potential obstacles in their pursuit of promoting peace and stability in conflict-affected countries.

Additional investigation of the function and impact of peacekeeping missions in promoting peace and stability in various conflict-affected nations can be recommended for future research in the field of peacekeeping and conflict resolution. The difficulties encountered by peacekeeping forces and the methods employed to overcome them can be investigated. In-depth analyses of how peacekeeping operations affect host populations and whether or not they are able to maintain peace over time. Local players and the contribution of civil society to peacebuilding can be investigated. The international community, neighboring countries, and non-state players are only some of the external actors whose participation in the success or failure of peacekeeping missions are investigated. Analyze how well peacekeeping

troops perform in protecting people, advancing human rights, and holding perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable in post-conflict countries. Examination of how recent developments in technology, such as unmanned aerial vehicles and remote sensing, have altered the nature of peacekeeping missions and their capacity to achieve their stated goals of establishing and maintaining calm in conflict zones.

Suggested research may address the effects of peacekeeping operations on the economic growth, political stability, and provision of public services in war-torn countries are the focus of this research. An examination of the difficulties encountered by peacekeeping missions in fostering stability in post-conflict settings, with a focus on the function of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs and the involvement of international actors in their implementation.

The findings of this study can inform further investigation into the following topics relevant to peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Testing how well various peacekeeping tactics work to restore calm to war-torn nations. Analyzing the effectiveness of various groups, such as the United Nations, regional organizations, and civil society, in maintaining peace. Examining how effective peacekeeping operations are in maintaining stability in post-conflict nations. Finding out what obstacles peacekeeping forces encounter and how they might be overcome is an important part of the job (Jung, 2009). Taking a look at how peacekeeping personnel interact with local populations, and how such interactions might be improved for the greater good of maintaining peace and stability. The effect of regional and international cooperation on peacekeeping and conflict resolution is investigated. Analysis of the effects of peacekeeping operations on post-conflict reconstruction and development over the long term. Evaluating how new technology may affect or improve peacekeeping missions and other forms of conflict resolution.

Conclusion

The following is a summary of the main points made in the analysis on Canada's peacekeeping deployment in Lebanon and its part in maintaining security there. The research gives a thorough introduction to the idea of peacekeeping, its history, and its function in preserving safety and tranquility. This research paper summarizes the background of the Lebanon conflict, and the development of peacekeeping efforts in the country. Canada's participation in UNIFIL in Lebanon is only one example of the many places across the world where Canada has helped maintain peace. The research examines Canada's

peacekeeping activities in Lebanon and their effect on the peace process using a variety of data sources and approaches. The research elucidates Canada's motivations for participating in UNIFIL and details the funds, troops, and equipment the country has provided for the peacekeeping operation. Canada's role in supporting peace and stability, as well as the problems it has experienced, are examined in this paper, together with their impact on the peace process as a whole. This research project takes a look at how Canada's peacekeeping activities have affected the world at large. The paper highlights the lessons learnt during Canada's peacekeeping deployment in Lebanon and makes suggestions for further research on the topic of peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

The significance of the findings of the study can be evaluated in terms of their impact on the existing body of knowledge, their implications for future peacekeeping efforts, and their contribution to the broader field of conflict resolution and peace studies. The findings can offer new insights into Canada's peacekeeping mission in Lebanon and its role in preserving peace and stability in the region, as well as the broader impact of peacekeeping efforts on the international community. The findings can also inform future peacekeeping operations by highlighting the successes and challenges experienced by Canada in Lebanon, as well as providing lessons learned and best practices for other countries to consider in similar contexts. Furthermore, the findings can contribute to the development of new theories and frameworks for peacekeeping and conflict resolution by identifying gaps in the existing literature and suggesting areas for future research.

Contributions to the field of peacekeeping and conflict resolution

The contribution of this study to the field of peacekeeping and conflict resolution lies in providing insight into the experiences and outcomes of Canada's involvement in UNIFIL in Lebanon. The study can provide valuable information about the effectiveness of Canadian peacekeeping efforts in promoting peace and stability in a conflict-affected country. Additionally, the findings of the study can be used to identify best practices and lessons learned from Canada's experience in Lebanon, which can inform future peacekeeping efforts by the Canadian government and military, as well as other countries and organizations involved in peacekeeping. Furthermore, the study can contribute to the existing body of knowledge by comparing its findings with existing theories of peacekeeping and conflict resolution and by highlighting any gaps or limitations in the existing literature. By doing so, the study can provide a foundation for future research and further advancement in the field

of peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

The study advances our understanding of peacekeeping efforts by providing insight into the specific experiences and outcomes of Canada's involvement in the peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, as well as the impact of these efforts on the peace process and on the stability of the region. By exploring the objectives, resources, and personnel contributed, the challenges faced, and the successes achieved, the study provides valuable information that can inform future peacekeeping efforts by Canada and other nations. Additionally, the recommendations for future research can guide future studies in the field to build on the findings of this study and further advance our understanding of peacekeeping efforts and their role in promoting peace and stability.

The study's findings can inform future investigations into peacekeeping and conflict resolution by providing a foundation for further research into related areas. Other peacekeeping missions in conflict-affected nations could be evaluated as a potential direction for future study. This can be useful for gauging the success of peacekeeping operations and figuring out where they might be strengthened.

In recent years, non-state actors including NGOs and civil society organizations have become increasingly active in peacekeeping (Dorn & Libben, 2018). Their contribution to the peace process can be studied in the future. Human rights are an important consideration when analyzing the effects of peacekeeping operations on a country experiencing war. To effectively promote and preserve human rights in peacekeeping operations, more study is needed to examine the effects of peacekeeping.

Examination of gender's impact on peacekeeping has been getting more and more study in recent years. To further understand how gender-sensitive peacekeeping might aid in the peace process and what measures can be taken to make peacekeeping operations more welcoming to all, more study is needed. The success of peacekeeping missions can be in large part gauged by examining how well their efforts to maintain peace can be maintained over time. For the sake of maintaining peace over the long term, future studies can investigate how to make peacekeeping operations more sustainable.

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ABSTRACT

Canada has a long history of participating in peacekeeping missions around the world, and has played an important role in maintaining peace and stability in many conflict-affected countries. This study aims to examine Canada's contributions to peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon, with a focus on the role Canada has played in preserving peace and stability in the country. The research will analyze Canada's involvement in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), including the impact of Canada's presence on the peace process, the challenges and successes Canada has faced in maintaining peace, and the broader impact of Canadian peacekeeping efforts on the international community. By examining Canada's peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon, this study aims to shed light on the ways in which Canada contributes to peace and stability around the world and to explore the effectiveness of Canadian peacekeeping in resolving conflict and promoting stability.

KEYWORDS

Canada, Peacekeeping, Lebanon, UNIFIL, Stability

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THE RISE OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Introduction

In recent years, right-wing populism has gained considerable traction across Europe, with populist parties achieving unprecedented electoral success in several EU member states. The rise of these movements has sparked widespread debate among scholars, policymakers, and the public. This paper investigates the multifaceted reasons behind the ascent of right-wing populism, its defining characteristics, and its potential impact on the future of the EU.

The rise of right-wing populism in the EU can be traced back to a series of socio-economic and political developments that have unfolded over the last few decades. The financial crisis of 2008, the refugee crisis of 2015, and the ongoing debates about national sovereignty and EU integration have all contributed to the growing appeal of populist rhetoric. Right-wing populist parties have capitalized on public discontent, presenting themselves as champions of the “common people” against the “corrupt elites” and external threats such as immigration.

Research Objectives

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the rise of right-wing populism in the EU by addressing the following objectives:

1. Identify the main factors contributing to the rise of right-wing populism in the EU.

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2. Examine the characteristics and strategies of right-wing populist parties.
3. Assess the impact of right-wing populism on EU integration and democratic values.
4. Explore the implications of right-wing populism for the future of the EU.

Structure of the Paper

This paper is structured as follows: the next section provides a detailed literature review, defining right-wing populism and examining its causes and consequences. This is followed by a methodology section outlining the research approach. The analysis section then delves into the economic, cultural, and political factors driving right-wing populism, supported by extensive case studies from various EU member states. The discussion section considers the broader implications of these findings for EU integration and democracy. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary of key points and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Right-wing populism is characterized by its opposition to the political establishment, emphasis on national sovereignty, and often xenophobic or anti-immigration rhetoric. Mudde (2007) defines populism as a “thin-centered ideology” that separates society into “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite.” Right-wing populists combine this ideology with nativism and authoritarianism, advocating for policies that prioritize the interests of native-born citizens over those of immigrants and minorities (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012).

The rise of right-wing populism in the EU can be attributed to a combination of economic disparities, cultural backlash, and political disillusionment. Economic factors, such as the financial crisis of 2008 and subsequent austerity measures, have exacerbated social inequalities and fueled anti-establishment sentiments (Kriesi & Pappas, 2015). Cultural factors, including fears over immigration and multiculturalism, have also played a significant role (Golder, 2016). Additionally, the perceived democratic deficit within the EU institutions has contributed to growing skepticism towards the EU (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2004).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, analyzing literature, election data, and case studies of right-wing populist parties across various EU member states. It aims to identify patterns and impacts of these movements on EU politics.

Data Collection

Data was collected from a range of sources to ensure a thorough understanding of right-wing populism in the EU. Academic journals provided theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, with key contributions from *European Political Science Review*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, and *West European Politics*. Books like Cas Mudde's *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* and Jan-Werner Müller's *What is Populism?* offered comprehensive analyses and historical perspectives on populist movements.

Policy reports from institutions such as the European Policy Centre, Chatham House, and Bertelsmann Stiftung supplied current analyses of political trends and the practical effects of populism on governance and EU integration. Electoral data from national and EU elections, sourced from official results and databases like the European Election Database and IDEA, facilitated quantitative analysis of voting patterns and populist support.

Case studies of right-wing populist movements in Hungary, Poland, Italy, Germany, and the UK provided in-depth examinations of their historical context, political landscapes, and specific characteristics. These included studies of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party in Hungary, the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in Poland, Lega in Italy, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), and UKIP in the UK, focusing on their impact on democratic institutions and EU policies.

By integrating these diverse sources, the study offers a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of right-wing populism in the EU.

Factors for the rise of the right in Europe ollection

Economic insecurity is one of the most critical drivers of right-wing populism in the EU. The 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent recession had a profound impact on European societies, leading to high unemployment

rates, especially among the youth, and increasing poverty levels. The austerity measures implemented by several EU governments further exacerbated social inequalities, creating fertile ground for populist movements.

Right-wing populist parties have capitalized on this economic discontent by blaming the economic hardships on globalization, EU policies, and immigration. They argue that traditional political parties have failed to protect the economic interests of the “common people” and have instead prioritized the interests of elites and foreign entities.

Cultural concerns, particularly regarding immigration and national identity, have also fueled the rise of right-wing populism. The refugee crisis of 2015 heightened fears of cultural dilution and security threats, which populist parties have exploited to garner support. The framing of immigration as a threat to national identity and economic stability has resonated with many voters (Betz, 2019).

Right-wing populist parties often emphasize the need to preserve national culture, traditions, and values, presenting themselves as defenders of the national identity against the perceived threats posed by immigrants and multiculturalism. This cultural backlash is particularly pronounced in countries with significant immigration flows, where populist parties argue that immigrants are eroding the social fabric and cultural homogeneity of the nation.

Political disillusionment and distrust in traditional political institutions have been pivotal in the rise of right-wing populism. Many citizens feel disconnected from the EU’s decision-making processes, perceiving a lack of transparency and accountability. Populist parties have capitalized on these sentiments by positioning themselves as defenders of national sovereignty against an overreaching EU (De Vries & Edwards, 2009).

The perceived democratic deficit within the EU institutions has also contributed to the rise of Euroscepticism, with populist parties arguing that the EU is an undemocratic and bureaucratic institution that undermines national sovereignty. This sentiment is particularly strong in countries where there is a perception that EU policies are imposed without adequate consideration of national interests and public opinion.

Consequences of Right-Wing Populism

The rise of right-wing populism poses several challenges to the European Union (EU). These include potential threats to democratic norms, increased nationalism, and challenges to EU integration and cohesion. The

Brexit referendum and the success of parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Italy's Lega illustrate the growing influence of populist movements on national and EU-wide politics (Hobolt, 2016).

Right-wing populism often undermines democratic norms by promoting governance styles that favor authoritarianism, reducing checks and balances, and eroding the independence of key institutions. Populist leaders frequently attack the judiciary, media, and other democratic institutions, claiming that these entities are controlled by corrupt elites and do not represent the will of the people. This erosion of democratic norms can lead to significant shifts in how democratic processes function and are perceived by the public. Mudde (2007) argues that populist movements often thrive on the idea of a monolithic people versus a corrupt elite. This dichotomy can lead to the delegitimization of opposition voices and critical institutions.

In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party have systematically dismantled democratic institutions. Since coming to power in 2010, Orbán's government has passed laws to centralize power, curtail judicial independence, and restrict press freedom (Batory, 2016). The Hungarian government has also used state resources to promote its agenda and suppress dissent, undermining the principles of democratic governance. Similarly, in Poland, the Law and Justice Party (PiS) has pursued policies that undermine judicial independence and concentrate power. The party's reforms of the judiciary have sparked significant domestic and international criticism, with many arguing that these changes threaten the rule of law in Poland (Sadurski, 2019). The EU has initiated proceedings against Poland for these actions, highlighting the tension between national sovereignty and EU principles of democracy and rule of law.

The rise of right-wing populism is closely associated with a surge in nationalism. Populist parties often emphasize national sovereignty and identity, advocating for policies that prioritize the interests of the native-born population over those of immigrants and minority groups. This increased nationalism can lead to xenophobia, anti-immigration policies, and a general climate of exclusion and intolerance. Increased nationalism also manifests in economic policies that favor protectionism and oppose globalization, which populist parties argue harms national industries and workers.

The Brexit referendum is a prime example of how increased nationalism can have far-reaching consequences. The Leave campaign successfully framed the EU as a threat to British sovereignty and identity, arguing that leaving the EU would allow the UK to "take back control" of its laws, borders, and economy (Clarke, Goodwin, & Whiteley, 2017). The success of the Brexit referendum has not only led to the UK's departure from the EU

but has also emboldened other Eurosceptic movements across the continent. The rise of Eurosceptic parties like the AfD in Germany and Lega in Italy further illustrates the growing influence of nationalism in European politics.

The success of right-wing populist parties poses significant challenges to EU integration and cohesion. Populist parties often oppose deeper integration and advocate for the repatriation of powers from Brussels to national governments. This opposition complicates efforts to achieve greater political and economic unity within the EU. For example, the AfD's platform includes strong opposition to the euro and calls for a referendum on Germany's EU membership (Lees, 2018). Similarly, Lega has criticized the EU's economic policies and advocated for greater national control over fiscal and monetary policy (Albertazzi, Giovannini, & Seddone, 2018).

The rise of right-wing populism also threatens the cohesion of the EU by fostering divisions between member states. Populist parties often frame the EU as an elitist project that serves the interests of a few powerful countries at the expense of others. This narrative can deepen existing divisions within the EU, making it more difficult to achieve consensus on critical issues such as migration, economic policy, and climate change. The Visegrád Group countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia), for instance, have frequently clashed with other EU members over issues such as migration policy and the rule of law, driven in part by the influence of right-wing populism in their domestic politics (Vachudova, 2019).

The rise of right-wing populism presents a complex set of challenges to the EU, threatening democratic norms, increasing nationalism, and complicating integration and cohesion efforts. The success of populist movements like the Brexit campaign, the AfD, and Lega highlights the growing influence of these forces on both national and EU-wide politics. Addressing these challenges will require a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening democratic institutions, promoting social cohesion, and fostering greater solidarity among EU member states.

Democratic Implications

The rise of right-wing populism also raises concerns about democratic backsliding. Populist governments in countries like Hungary and Poland have implemented policies that undermine judicial independence, restrict media freedom, and weaken democratic institutions. These actions threaten the democratic values upon which the EU is founded (Batory, 2016).

Right-wing populism often manifests in an erosion of the rule of law,

as populist leaders seek to consolidate power by weakening the checks and balances that are essential to a functioning democracy. In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government has systematically dismantled the independence of the judiciary, bringing the courts under tighter political control. Since coming to power in 2010, Orbán's Fidesz party has passed laws that allow the government to appoint and promote judges, undermining judicial independence (Bánkuti, Halmai, & Scheppele, 2012). The government has also packed the Constitutional Court with loyalists, reducing its ability to act as a check on executive power.

Media freedom is another critical area where right-wing populist governments have made significant inroads. In Hungary, the Orbán government has used a combination of legal and financial measures to control the media landscape. State advertising has been directed towards pro-government outlets, while independent media have faced harassment and financial pressure. The establishment of a Media Council, staffed by government loyalists, has further tightened control over the press (Bajomi-Lázár, 2013). These actions have led to a significant decline in media pluralism and freedom, as noted by international watchdogs like Reporters Without Borders.

Poland has seen similar trends under the Law and Justice Party (PiS). Since coming to power in 2015, PiS has implemented a series of judicial reforms that have sparked widespread concern both domestically and internationally. These reforms include changes to the Constitutional Tribunal that undermine its independence, as well as measures that give the government greater control over the appointment and discipline of judges (Sadurski, 2019). These actions have led to protests and legal challenges, with the European Commission launching infringement procedures against Poland for violating EU law.

Media freedom in Poland has also been under threat. The PiS government has pursued a strategy of "repolonization" of the media, aiming to reduce foreign ownership and increase government influence. Public media have been transformed into government mouthpieces, with editorial lines closely aligned with PiS policies. Independent journalists and outlets face significant pressure, including legal harassment and economic challenges (Glowacki & Kus, 2019). These measures have contributed to a decline in media freedom and pluralism, similar to the situation in Hungary.

The actions of these populist governments threaten the democratic values upon which the EU is founded. The EU's response has included initiating Article 7 proceedings, which can ultimately lead to the suspension of a member state's voting rights in the Council of the EU. However, these

measures have had limited success in reversing the democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland. The EU faces significant challenges in enforcing its democratic norms, particularly when member states are resistant to external pressure and enjoy domestic support for their populist agendas (Kelemen, 2017).

Democratic backsliding in Hungary and Poland also has broader implications for the EU. It undermines the EU's credibility as a promoter of democratic values and human rights both within and outside its borders. The erosion of democratic norms in member states can embolden other populist movements and leaders, leading to a potential contagion effect. This threatens the cohesion and stability of the EU, as democratic backsliding in one member state can have ripple effects across the Union (Rupnik, 2016).

In conclusion, the rise of right-wing populism raises significant concerns about democratic backsliding in the EU. The actions of populist governments in Hungary and Poland, including undermining judicial independence, restricting media freedom, and weakening democratic institutions, threaten the foundational democratic values of the EU. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort by the EU to uphold its principles, support democratic institutions, and ensure that member states adhere to the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights.

Impact on EU Integration

Right-wing populism has had a significant impact on EU integration efforts. Populist parties often oppose deeper integration and advocate for the repatriation of powers from Brussels to national governments. This opposition has complicated efforts to achieve greater political and economic unity within the EU (Hix, 2008).

One of the core tenets of right-wing populism is the emphasis on national sovereignty and the rejection of supranational governance structures. Populist parties argue that EU integration undermines national sovereignty and democratic accountability, positioning themselves as defenders of national interests against an overreaching EU bureaucracy. This stance resonates with voters who feel that their concerns are not adequately addressed by distant and seemingly unaccountable EU institutions.

The Brexit referendum serves as a prominent example of how right-wing populism can disrupt EU integration. The Leave campaign, led by figures such as Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), framed the EU as a threat to British sovereignty and identity. The campaign's slogans, such as

“Take Back Control,” encapsulated the populist narrative that EU membership compromised national self-determination. The success of the referendum in 2016 led to the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, marking the first time a member state had left the Union (Hobolt, 2016). This event has had profound political, economic, and social implications, creating uncertainty and division within both the UK and the EU.

The rise of populist parties in other EU member states further illustrates the challenges to integration. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) has gained significant electoral support by opposing the euro and advocating for a referendum on Germany’s EU membership. The AfD’s platform includes strong Eurosceptic positions, arguing that the EU imposes undue constraints on national sovereignty and economic policy (Lees, 2018). The party’s success has influenced the broader political discourse in Germany, pushing mainstream parties to adopt more critical stances towards the EU.

Similarly, in Italy, the Lega party, under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, has criticized the EU’s economic policies and advocated for greater national control over fiscal and monetary policy. Lega’s rise has been driven by public discontent with the EU’s handling of the eurozone crisis and the perceived negative impact of EU policies on Italy’s economy. The party’s Eurosceptic stance has resonated with voters who feel that EU membership has not delivered the promised economic benefits (Albertazzi, Giovannini, & Seddone, 2018).

The success of populist parties poses significant challenges to EU integration efforts by fostering divisions among member states. Populist parties often frame the EU as an elitist project that serves the interests of a few powerful countries at the expense of others. This narrative can deepen existing divisions within the EU, making it more difficult to achieve consensus on critical issues such as migration, economic policy, and climate change. The Visegrád Group countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia), for instance, have frequently clashed with other EU members over issues such as migration policy and the rule of law, driven in part by the influence of right-wing populism in their domestic politics (Vachudova, 2019).

The opposition of populist parties to deeper integration has also affected the EU’s ability to respond to crises effectively. For example, during the eurozone crisis, populist parties capitalized on public discontent with austerity measures imposed by the EU, arguing that these policies prioritized the interests of creditor nations over those of debtor countries. This narrative undermined support for EU solidarity and complicated efforts to implement cohesive and effective responses to the crisis (Bickerton, Hodson, & Puetter, 2015).

The rise of right-wing populism has also had implications for the EU's external relations. Populist parties often advocate for a more isolationist foreign policy, arguing that the EU should focus on protecting its own borders and interests rather than engaging in global governance and international cooperation. This stance can undermine the EU's efforts to promote stability and development beyond its borders, as well as its ability to address transnational challenges such as climate change and migration (Zielonka, 2018).

Right-wing populism has had a significant impact on EU integration efforts by opposing deeper integration and advocating for the repatriation of powers to national governments. The success of populist movements like the Brexit campaign, the AfD, and Lega highlights the growing influence of these forces on both national and EU-wide politics. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort by the EU to strengthen its democratic institutions, promote social cohesion, and foster greater solidarity among member states.

Case Study: Greece and the Golden Dawn

Greece experienced severe economic hardship during the financial crisis, resulting in high levels of unemployment and poverty. The far-right Golden Dawn party capitalized on these economic woes, gaining support by blaming immigrants and the EU for Greece's problems. Their anti-austerity and nationalist rhetoric resonated with many Greek citizens who felt betrayed by mainstream political parties (Ellinas, 2013).

The Greek financial crisis began in 2009 when the government disclosed a much higher budget deficit, leading to international bailouts with stringent austerity measures. These measures deepened economic hardship, causing widespread social unrest. Golden Dawn, marked by violent rhetoric and neo-Nazi symbolism, gained significant electoral support by positioning itself as a defender of Greek identity against external and internal threats.

Severe austerity measures led to increased poverty and unemployment, creating fertile ground for Golden Dawn's message. The party capitalized on public discontent, presenting itself as a nationalist alternative to mainstream parties. However, Golden Dawn's violent tactics eventually led to its downfall. In 2013, several members, including its leader, were arrested and charged with running a criminal organization, leading to convictions in 2020.

Despite the party's decline, its legacy continues to influence Greek politics, with other right-wing populist parties attempting to fill the void. Golden Dawn's rise and fall underscore the dangers of economic crises in

fueling extremist movements and highlight the need to address economic and social grievances to prevent such rises in the future.

Cultural Factors

Cultural concerns, particularly regarding immigration and national identity, have also fueled the rise of right-wing populism. The refugee crisis of 2015 heightened fears of cultural dilution and security threats, which populist parties have exploited to garner support. The framing of immigration as a threat to national identity and economic stability has resonated with many voters (Betz, 2019).

Right-wing populist parties often emphasize the need to preserve national culture, traditions, and values, presenting themselves as defenders of the national identity against the perceived threats posed by immigrants and multiculturalism. This cultural backlash is particularly pronounced in countries with significant immigration flows, where populist parties argue that immigrants are eroding the social fabric and cultural homogeneity of the nation.

Case Study: Sweden and the Sweden Democrats

The Sweden Democrats have successfully used cultural concerns to gain electoral support, emphasizing immigration as a threat to Swedish culture and values (Rydgren, 2018; Mudde, 2007). Their strong anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism stance has resonated with voters who feel their cultural identity is under siege, particularly in areas with high immigration and perceived social tensions (Kitschelt & McGann, 1995).

Sweden's liberal immigration policies have led to significant inflows of refugees, creating tensions in some areas. The Sweden Democrats argue that immigration strains public services, increases crime rates, and threatens Swedish culture (Norris, 2005). Initially a fringe party, they have mainstreamed their message, focusing on welfare, security, and national identity, attracting a broader base of disillusioned voters (Rydgren, 2010).

Their strategic use of cultural narratives has resonated deeply with segments of the population, particularly in rural and suburban areas where the presence of immigrants is seen as more disruptive (Inglehart & Norris, 2016). The party has softened its extremist image to gain legitimacy, emphasizing welfare and security to attract voters sympathetic to their stance on immigration and cultural preservation (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018).

The rise of the Sweden Democrats highlights the importance of cultural issues in political discourse and the need for mainstream parties to address voters' concerns about cultural and demographic changes without resorting to exclusionary tactics (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012).

In conclusion, the Sweden Democrats have effectively leveraged cultural concerns to gain electoral support, showing the significant role cultural factors play in the rise of right-wing populism in Europe. Their success underscores the importance of addressing cultural anxieties to promote inclusion and social harmony.

Case Study: Germany and the Alternative for Germany (AfD)

The AfD has capitalized on cultural anxieties related to immigration and national identity. The party's anti-immigration stance and criticism of Chancellor Angela Merkel's refugee policy have resonated with voters who feel threatened by cultural changes and economic competition from immigrants (Berbuir, Lewandowsky, & Siri, 2015).

The AfD's rise can be traced back to its opposition to the EU's handling of the refugee crisis. The party has portrayed itself as a defender of German culture and sovereignty, appealing to voters who feel that their concerns about immigration and integration have been ignored by mainstream parties (Arzheimer, 2015). The AfD's electoral success, particularly in former East Germany, highlights the regional variations in support for right-wing populism and the importance of cultural factors in shaping political preferences (Hansen & Olsen, 2019).

Germany's decision to admit over a million refugees during the 2015 crisis was praised by some but also sparked significant backlash (Triadafilopoulos & Zaslove, 2017). The AfD has exploited this discontent by framing the refugee influx as a threat to national security, economic stability, and cultural identity. The party's rhetoric has resonated particularly well in areas with high levels of immigration and in economically disadvantaged regions, where concerns about competition for jobs and resources are more pronounced (Betz, 2018).

The AfD's success in recent elections has been marked by its ability to attract a broad coalition of supporters, including former non-voters, disillusioned supporters of mainstream parties, and individuals with far-right sympathies. The party's platform combines anti-immigration policies with Euroscepticism, social conservatism, and economic nationalism, appealing to a wide range of voters who feel alienated by the political establishment

(Golder, 2016).

The party's rise is indicative of the broader cultural anxieties that have been brewing in Germany and other parts of Europe. The influx of refugees in 2015, many of whom came from predominantly Muslim countries, stoked fears about cultural integration and the potential erosion of traditional German values (Vieten & Poynting, 2016). The AfD has effectively used these fears to galvanize support, emphasizing the need to protect German culture and identity from perceived external threats (Oesch, 2008).

Furthermore, the AfD's success underscores the regional disparities in Germany, particularly between the former East and West Germany. In the East, where economic development has lagged and unemployment rates are higher, the AfD's message of nationalism and protectionism has found a particularly receptive audience. The economic frustrations of these regions have intertwined with cultural anxieties, creating a potent mix that the AfD has been able to exploit (Hansen & Olsen, 2019).

The AfD's critique of Merkel's refugee policy has been a central component of its platform. The party has consistently argued that the government's decision to admit a large number of refugees was misguided and has had negative consequences for Germany. This message has resonated with voters who feel that the refugee influx has strained public services, increased competition for jobs, and led to a rise in crime. By framing these issues in terms of national security and cultural preservation, the AfD has been able to appeal to a broad spectrum of voters concerned about the direction of the country (Arzheimer, 2015).

The party's Euroscepticism also plays a significant role in its appeal. The AfD criticizes the EU for overstepping its bounds and infringing on national sovereignty. This message has resonated with voters who feel that Germany's interests are not adequately represented in Brussels and that the EU imposes policies that are detrimental to the country. The AfD's call for a return to national sovereignty and control has struck a chord with those who are skeptical of further European integration and feel that Germany should prioritize its own interests (Mudde, 2007).

In conclusion, the AfD has effectively capitalized on cultural anxieties related to immigration and national identity, as well as economic frustrations and regional disparities. By framing immigration as a threat to national security, economic stability, and cultural identity, the party has been able to attract a broad coalition of supporters. The AfD's success highlights the importance of cultural factors in shaping political preferences and the complex interplay between cultural and economic grievances in driving support for right-wing populism.

Political Factors

Political disillusionment and distrust in traditional political institutions have been pivotal in the rise of right-wing populism. Many citizens feel disconnected from the EU's decision-making processes, perceiving a lack of transparency and accountability. Populist parties have capitalized on these sentiments by positioning themselves as defenders of national sovereignty against an overreaching EU (De Vries & Edwards, 2009).

The perceived democratic deficit within the EU institutions has also contributed to the rise of Euroscepticism, with populist parties arguing that the EU is an undemocratic and bureaucratic institution that undermines national sovereignty. This sentiment is particularly strong in countries where there is a perception that EU policies are imposed without adequate consideration of national interests and public opinion.

Case Study: Brexit and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)

The Brexit referendum is a prime example of political disillusionment leading to the rise of right-wing populism. UKIP, led by Nigel Farage, successfully framed the EU as a bureaucratic institution undermining British sovereignty. The party's campaign tapped into widespread frustration with traditional political elites and a desire to reclaim national control, ultimately contributing to the UK's decision to leave the EU (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2017).

UKIP's rise was fueled by its ability to channel public dissatisfaction with the political status quo into support for Brexit. The party's message of taking back control resonated with voters who felt that their voices were not being heard in Brussels. UKIP's success in the 2014 European Parliament elections and its role in the 2016 Brexit referendum highlight the importance of political factors in driving support for right-wing populism.

The Brexit campaign was marked by its ability to tap into a wide range of grievances, including concerns about immigration, economic inequality, and national sovereignty. UKIP and other Leave campaigners framed the EU as an undemocratic institution that imposed burdensome regulations and allowed uncontrolled immigration. This message resonated with voters who felt that their interests were being ignored by the political establishment.

UKIP's strategic messaging effectively capitalized on the sentiment

of national disenfranchisement. The party emphasized the need for the UK to regain control over its laws, borders, and finances, arguing that EU membership limited British autonomy. The slogan “Take Back Control” encapsulated this sentiment, appealing to voters’ desire for greater national sovereignty and self-determination. This narrative was particularly powerful in regions that felt economically neglected and culturally marginalized by the political elite.

The success of the Leave campaign and the subsequent decision to exit the EU have had profound political, economic, and social implications for the UK and the EU. The Brexit process has highlighted the deep divisions within British society and raised questions about the future of European integration. It has also emboldened other Eurosceptic movements across the continent, demonstrating that it is possible to challenge the status quo and achieve significant political change.

Brexit has not only altered the political landscape in the UK but also had a ripple effect throughout Europe. The decision to leave the EU has sparked debates about national sovereignty, the benefits and drawbacks of EU membership, and the future of the European project. In other EU member states, right-wing populist parties have used Brexit as a case study to argue for similar referendums and renegotiations of their relationship with the EU.

The aftermath of the Brexit vote has been characterized by significant political and economic uncertainty. Negotiations between the UK and the EU have been complex and contentious, highlighting the challenges of disentangling the UK from the EU’s legal and regulatory frameworks. This process has revealed the deep interdependencies that have developed over decades of integration and has raised concerns about the potential economic and social costs of Brexit.

The political landscape in the UK has also been transformed by Brexit. The referendum exposed and exacerbated existing divisions within British society, including those between urban and rural areas, young and old, and different socio-economic groups. These divisions have continued to influence British politics, contributing to ongoing debates about national identity, immigration, and the role of the UK on the global stage.

In conclusion, the Brexit referendum is a prime example of how political disillusionment can lead to the rise of right-wing populism. UKIP’s ability to channel public dissatisfaction with the political status quo and frame the EU as a bureaucratic institution undermining British sovereignty played a crucial role in the UK’s decision to leave the EU. The Brexit campaign’s success in tapping into a wide range of grievances has had profound political, economic, and social implications, both in the UK and across Europe,

highlighting the importance of addressing the underlying causes of political discontent to prevent the rise of populist movements.

Case Study: Italy and Lega

Italy's Lega, formerly Lega Nord, under Matteo Salvini's leadership, has transformed into a prominent right-wing populist force. The party's anti-immigration stance and Euroscepticism have resonated with many Italians, contributing to its electoral success. Lega's rise illustrates the significant impact of political disillusionment and economic grievances on the support for right-wing populism (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2015).

Lega's shift from a regionalist to a nationalist party under Salvini's leadership has broadened its appeal to voters across Italy. The party's criticism of the EU's handling of immigration and its calls for greater national sovereignty have struck a chord with voters who feel that Italy's interests are not being adequately represented in Brussels. Lega's success in the 2018 general elections and its participation in the coalition government highlight the growing influence of right-wing populism in Italian politics.

Italy has faced significant economic challenges in recent years, including high levels of unemployment, particularly among the youth, and slow economic growth. These economic grievances have fueled public discontent and provided fertile ground for Lega's populist message. The party has also capitalized on public frustration with political corruption and inefficiency, presenting itself as a clean and effective alternative to the traditional parties.

Lega's anti-immigration stance has been a central element of its platform, appealing to voters who are concerned about the impact of immigration on Italian society. The party has framed immigration as a threat to national security, economic stability, and cultural identity, resonating with voters who feel that the government has failed to address these issues adequately.

Lega's rise to power has had significant implications for Italian politics and the EU. The party's participation in the coalition government has allowed it to influence national policy, including on issues such as immigration, economic reform, and EU relations. This has led to tensions with the EU, particularly over issues such as budgetary rules and immigration policy, highlighting the challenges of managing the relationship between national sovereignty and EU integration.

Synthesis of Findings

The analysis reveals that the rise of right-wing populism in the EU is driven by a complex interplay of economic, cultural, and political factors. Economic insecurity, cultural anxieties, and political disillusionment have all contributed to the appeal of populist parties. These factors are often interconnected, with economic hardships exacerbating cultural and political grievances.

The case studies of Greece, Spain, Sweden, Germany, the UK, and Italy illustrate how these factors play out in different national contexts, highlighting the importance of understanding the specific circumstances and dynamics that drive support for right-wing populism in each country. This nuanced understanding is crucial for developing effective policy responses to address the root causes of populism and mitigate its impact on EU integration and democratic values.

Discussion

The rise of right-wing populism in the EU presents both challenges and opportunities. While it threatens the EU's cohesion and democratic values, it also forces a re-evaluation of EU policies and governance structures. Addressing the root causes of populism, such as economic inequality and cultural insecurity, is crucial for the future stability of the EU.

Right-wing populism has had a significant impact on EU integration efforts. Populist parties often oppose deeper integration and advocate for the repatriation of powers from Brussels to national governments. This opposition has complicated efforts to achieve greater political and economic unity within the EU (Hix, 2008). The success of right-wing populist parties has led to increased calls for national sovereignty and a reduction in the powers of EU institutions, making it more difficult for the EU to implement policies that require member state cooperation and consensus. The rise of populism has also fueled Euroscepticism, with some parties advocating for their countries to leave the EU altogether (Hobolt, 2016).

The Brexit referendum is a clear example of how right-wing populism can disrupt EU integration efforts. The UK's decision to leave the EU has had significant political, economic, and social consequences, creating uncertainty and division within the Union. The rise of Eurosceptic parties in other member states poses a similar threat, as these parties often push for policies that undermine EU cohesion and solidarity.

The rise of right-wing populism also presents an opportunity for the EU to address its perceived democratic deficit and reconnect with its citizens. By increasing transparency, accountability, and responsiveness, the EU can counteract populist narratives and build greater public trust in its institutions. Reforms aimed at addressing economic inequality and improving social cohesion can also help to mitigate the appeal of populist parties (Schmidt, 2019).

The EU's response to the challenges posed by right-wing populism will be crucial in determining its future trajectory. By addressing the underlying causes of populism and demonstrating a commitment to democratic values and social justice, the EU can strengthen its legitimacy and resilience. This will require a comprehensive approach that involves both policy reforms and efforts to engage with citizens and address their concerns.

The rise of right-wing populism raises concerns about democratic backsliding. Populist governments in countries like Hungary and Poland have implemented policies that undermine judicial independence, restrict media freedom, and weaken democratic institutions. These actions threaten the democratic values upon which the EU is founded (Batory, 2016). Under the leadership of Viktor Orbán, Hungary's Fidesz party has exemplified this trend, implementing policies that centralize power and restrict civil liberties (Batory, 2016). The EU has initiated legal proceedings against Hungary for these violations, but the effectiveness of such measures has been limited.

Similarly, Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS), led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, has pursued a nationalist agenda that challenges EU norms on judicial independence and media freedom (Stanley, 2019). The EU's response has included threats of sanctions and legal action, highlighting the tension between national sovereignty and EU integration. However, the effectiveness of these measures has been limited, raising questions about the EU's ability to enforce democratic standards among its member states.

The broader implications of the rise of right-wing populism in the EU extend beyond immediate political and economic challenges. This phenomenon has the potential to reshape the EU's identity, influence its global standing, and alter the dynamics of international relations. The rise of right-wing populism challenges the EU's identity as a promoter of liberal democracy, human rights, and multiculturalism, potentially undermining its legitimacy and its role in global governance (Manners, 2002).

As right-wing populism gains ground within the EU, the Union's global standing may be affected. Internal divisions and the rise of Eurosceptic governments could compromise the EU's ability to act as a unified actor in international affairs, weakening its influence in global governance

and diminishing its capacity to address transnational challenges (Biscop, 2016). Populist parties often advocate for more nationalist and protectionist policies, which can lead to tensions with other countries and international organizations. This shift could impact the EU's relationships with other major powers and its efforts to promote collective action on global issues such as climate change, trade, and security.

Addressing the rise of right-wing populism requires a multifaceted approach that includes economic, social, and political measures. Economic policies should focus on reducing inequality and promoting inclusive growth to address economic grievances and reduce the appeal of populist parties (Rodrik, 2018). Social policies should aim to foster social cohesion and address cultural anxieties by promoting integration and inclusion of immigrants, combating discrimination, and strengthening community ties (Banting & Kymlicka, 2017). Political reforms should focus on enhancing democratic accountability and transparency, increasing citizen participation in decision-making processes, and addressing the perceived democratic deficit within the EU (Norris, 2011).

In conclusion, the ascent of right-wing populism in the EU is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. By understanding its causes and implications, policymakers can develop strategies to counteract its negative effects and strengthen the EU's democratic foundations. Future research should focus on the long-term impact of right-wing populism on EU integration and the effectiveness of policy responses in mitigating its rise.

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ABSTRACT

The rise of right-wing populism in the EU over the past two decades has reshaped European politics. This paper explores the causes, characteristics, and impacts of this trend, focusing on political, economic, and social factors. The 2008 financial crisis, the 2015 refugee crisis, and debates on sovereignty and EU integration have heightened the appeal of populist rhetoric. Right-wing populists frame themselves as defenders of “common people” against “corrupt elites” and immigration. Case studies from Greece, Spain, Sweden, Germany, the UK, and Italy highlight how these parties gained traction and their effects on EU cohesion and democratic values. Addressing these challenges involves strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing solidarity among EU member states.

KEYWORDS

Populism, European Union, EU integration

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A NEW SCRAMBLE? GEOPOLITICAL ECONOMY OF MULTI-POLARITY IN THE SAHEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA'S ECONOMIC SOVEREIGNTY

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Introduction

Africa is at a critical juncture in its political history. The political destinies of most of its states are currently being negotiated and threatened by forces internal or external to its existence. Internally, there has been spiralling waves of terrorism and allied violent extremisms in many African countries (Gaye, 2018; Okoli, 2023). There has also been a resurgence of military coups in parts of the continent (Omotola, 2023). Externally, Africa has been the new site for multipolar geopolitics, essentialized by opportunistic statecraft and geostrategic disputes involving the global superpowers.

The Sahel (re)presents the microcosm of Africa's current political travails. According to the 2023 Global Terrorism Index, the Sahel has become the global epicentre of violent extremism (IEP, 2023). The region has also become the world's hotbed of violent and unconstitutional regime changes, commonly evidenced in the occurrence of military coups. No fewer than ten (10) military coups have occurred in the region since 2020 (Omotola, 2023). At present, six (6) of the countries of the region are under effective military rule, namely: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, Guinea, and Sudan. The resurgence of military coups in the region has earned it the appellation of 'the coup arc' of Africa (Omotola, 2023).

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Apart from the incidences of terrorism and violent regime changes, the Sahel has equally been a continental hub of organized crime and illicit transnational dealings (Gaye, 2018). There has been a high incidence and prevalence of armed trafficking, drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal extractivism, smuggling, banditry, and other forms of transnational organized crime in the region (Gaye, 2018; Okoli, 2024). These criminal patterns have not only prevailed; they have also, over time, coalesced and converged into a nebulous mix and nexus. This is evidenced in the flourishing dynamics of crime-terror opportunism in many parts of the region (Okoli & Nwangwu, 2023; Okoli, 2023).

More recently, the Sahel has further become a theatre of volatile multi-polar geopolitics (Pollichieni, 2024). Following the emergence of new geopolitical actors, interests and stakes, there have been shifts and counter-shifts in diplomatic and geo-strategic alignments in the region. The shifting alliances and relations have been associated with some critical outcomes such as the rising anti-French / Western populism and resentment, increasing pro-Russo-China diplomatic alignment, and fracturing of the regional bodies (Okoli, 2024).

The new military boards in the region have deployed populist de-colonial rhetoric to gather legitimacy amid the endeavours of the Western powers to discredit them. Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have withdrawn membership from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) following the latter's bid to sanction them over breach of the Protocol on Democracy and Governance (ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Governance, Article 45, 2001). These countries have also launched out of the G5 Sahel, and have since formed for themselves the Alliance of Sahel States (AES/ASS).

The geopolitical developments in the Sahel and their concomitant local dynamics hold fundamental political and economic implications for the member states as well as the (sub)regional authorities in the region. While a number of studies have been undertaken on the political dimensions of the problem (Degterev, 2024; Okoli, 2024), the economic implications have scarcely been explored. More importantly, the dynamic interplay of political, economic and geo-strategic imperatives that undergird the situation, and how they bear on the sovereign virtues of African states have been hardly investigated. It is in the light of this fact that this paper proffers a political economy of multi-polar geopolitics in the Sahel, positing that such holds both positive and negative implications for Africa's economic sovereignty.

Conceptual Briefing: Geopolitics, geopolitical economy,

multipolarity, economic sovereignty

Colin (2022) defines geopolitics as the struggle for the control of geopolitical entities within international and/or global space and the use of such entities for political advantage. In other words:

Geopolitics looks at the means and use of power within globally competitive spheres, with reference to how states and non-state actors compete to control and exploit such spheres for the advancement of their competitive strategic interests (Okoli, 2024, p.121).

Geopolitics, therefore, explains the actions and inactions of states, but also other formal and non-formal actors, in relation to geostrategic competition, contestations, and control (Okoli, 2024). To say the least, geopolitics seeks to understand how the aforementioned actors pursue their competitive and contestable interests in global geopolitical terrains.

The notion of geopolitical economy, simply, refers to the political economy of capitalism in the era of multipolarity (Desai, 2015). Yet, there are much nuanced conceptions, such as that of the World Association of Political Economy (WAPE):

Rooted in the classical Marxist tradition, critical of many of its current avatars, putting the understanding of capitalism and its contradictions and of imperialism and anti-imperialism at its core, giving states their rightful due, alongside classes, as key actors shaping the modern capitalist world, drawing on classical political economy and other traditions critical of neoclassical economics, geopolitical economy aims to investigate the international relations of the capitalist world in a historical materialist manner (WAPE, 2024, p.1).

Polarity derives from the notion of 'pole of power'. This "refers to a state or an alliance of states that wields an enormous power to influence the behaviour of other states in the context of international politics" (Okoli, 2024, p.119). Ashford and Cooper (2023) see polarity as the distribution of power in the international system and how that changes in the course of time. The present world system is multipolar because there is an appreciable diffusion of hegemonic influence in a set of big, middle, and rising global powers. None of these powers wields a predominating economic, military, and political

leverage to assert itself as an ultimate global hegemon.

Economic sovereignty encompasses the right to continue and preserve economic activities closely linked to the existence of the state. It is principally determined by a number of factors, including: 1) the interference with a pre-existing fundamental state policy; 2) the relationship between the party to the dispute and the state policy; and 3) the presence or threat of injury to the state itself” (Walker & Simon 1985, 8). Put differently, economic sovereignty implies the “ability of a state to impose the rules of appropriation, exchange and use of resource” (Savanovic 2014, cited in Okoli & Atelhe, 2021, p.233) within its area of jurisdiction without external constraints.

Theoretical Premise: The Political Economy of Geopolitics and the ‘New Scramble’

Political economy is primarily concerned with understanding the intricate relationships between politics and the economy (Ake, 1981, Okoli, 2001; Okoli, 2014; Okoli, 2017). Its subject matter revolves around “the systematic inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations” (McLean & McMillan 2003, p. 415). Essentially, Political Economy probes the economic determinants and implications of power relations in the contexts of domestic and international affairs.

The conception of Political Economy in the context of the present paper is, by and large, consistent with its international application. In that regard, Political Economy offers a framework for the understanding of the gamut of nexuses that underpin state-economy relations in the international system. It embodies all facets of the politics of international economy, and conversely, economics of international politics (Oatley 2019). More fundamentally, encompasses the multidimensional nexuses that define the politico-economic dialectics of contemporary international relations.

In this paper, a political economy of geopolitics is espoused. It focuses on how power, influence, stakes, and resources are competed for in a geo-strategic space. It also highlights how the interactions among various geopolitical actors within a geo-strategic space compete, cooperate, or contend in pursuit of their strategic interests. This covers aspects of politics of international economics relations, economics of foreign policy and diplomacy, and other dimensions of production-and-market relations that shape the wealth of nations. Simply put, the political economy of geopolitics enables us to come to terms with the complex intersection of forces of geography, politics and economics, and how that determines global power dynamics, resource

sharing and international economic relations.

The political economy of geopolitics in the Sahel explains the *realpolitik* of the ‘new scramble’ in the region. The meaning of the new scramble relates to the increased involvement and competition of global and regional actors in the region. The scramble is characterized by geopolitical plus geostrategic competition and contestations, reminiscent of the 19th Century ‘scramble for Africa by the imperial powers’ (Ake, 1981). The new scramble is driven by a number of imperatives, as highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Factors in the New Scramble in the Sahel

Factor	Commentary
Economic interests	Competition over access to strategic natural resources: oil and gas, solid minerals, agro-forestial resources, maritime resources, etc.
Geostrategic interests	Location and protection of military bases, security and counter-terrorism concerns, protective military presence, etc.
Geopolitical interests	Maintenance of competitive influence and stakes
Commerce and development	Involvement in trade and investment as well as infrastructural development.

Source: Author’s original compilation (2024).

The new scramble involves conflicts and collusions of geostrategic interests among the various foreign and regional actors in the region. The actors include the hitherto dominant players and the emerging ones whose interests straddle variously the spheres of security, trade, investment, infrastructure, and military strategy. Table 2 is instructive in this respect.

Table 2: Key Actors in the Sahel's New Scramble

Actor	Commentary
France	Maintaining its historical geopolitical dominance amid rising anti-French populism
China	Seeking expansion in economic and infrastructural investments
USA	Pursuing security and counter-terrorism concerns
EU	Supporting governance in the areas of development, security, migration, and humanitarian concerns
ECOWAS	Seeking regional integration and stabilization
Turkey	Expanding economic and political influence through strategic partnerships in defence and economic diplomacy
Russia	Seeking greater economic and military presence and influence through military basing and undercover interventions
African Regional Powers (Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa)	Seeking to assert their stakes and influence through multilateral platforms such as the AU and ECOWAS.
Saudi Arabia	Increasing its influence through soft-power diplomacy

Source: Authors' original compilation (2024).

Perspectives on the Multipolar Geopolitical Economy of the Sahel

Multipolar geopolitical economy in the Sahel refers to the nexus of foreign interests and local dynamics in the context of the multipolarizing geopolitical order in the region, and how such forces affect the workings of the state and the economy in member countries (Okoli, 2024). It consists in complex and multifaceted interactions between global powers, regional actors, and local interests (Abdulle, 2024). More importantly, it highlights how local, regional, and global forces interplay to bring about dynamics that affect, and are affected by, the stakes and interests of both state and non-state actors.

The multipolar geopolitical economy in the Sahel manifests in a number of dimensions. Firstly, there is an increasing multipolar competition and contestations. As global powers, such as the United States, France, China, and Russia, engage in competitive struggle for strategic influence, stakes, interests and resources, the region experiences tense geopolitical ambience that reflects the exigencies of *realpolitik* (Abudulle, 2024). A dangerous trend in this development is the use of proxies, mercenaries, and clandestine agents to advance geo-strategic pursuits (cf. Table 3). A case in point is the disruptive

undercover role of the Russia-aligned Wagner Group in parts of the region (Matusevich, 2019; Gruzd & Ramani, 2022).

Secondly, regional bodies, such as ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel are seeking to play important roles in shaping the region's geopolitical destiny amid challenges arising from the prevailing multipolar political dynamics. ECOWAS has been fractured following the exit of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger from its fold. This was in a bid to protest ECOWAS' sanction against them for unconstitutional change of regime in violation of the organization's Protocol on Democracy and Governance (ECOWAS, 2021). This group of countries has not only withdrawn from ECOWAS; they have also withdrawn from the sub-regional collective security regimen known as the G5 Sahel. Today, the three countries have constituted themselves into a rival sub-regional body called the Alliance of Sahel States (AES / ASS).

Thirdly, there is a growing quest among the Sahelian states to assert their agency and decolonize from the West (Degterev, 2024). This is evidenced in the waves of anti-French/ West resentments and populism across the region. The military boards in the region have capitalized upon the narrative arising from this development to galvanize popular legitimacy amid the endeavours of continental and extra-continental powers to pressure them back to the path of constitutional order. The de-coloniality rhetoric appears to have gained both currency and traction following the gamut of sponsored disinformation and propaganda by both Russia and China, which seeks to discredit electoral politics and democratic processes in the region (Elbassoussy, 2023).

Fourthly, there has been a resurgence of military rule in the Sahel. Six countries of the region — namely Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, and Sudan — are currently under effective military regimes (Omotola, 2023). There have been instances of aborted coups in the region, such as the 2022 Gambian example. Some of these coups have been allegedly instigated by the global powers, which are engaged in opportunistic statecraft, tailored towards their vested interests (Duursma & Masuhr, 2022).

Fifthly, the Sahel has been the global epicentre of terrorism and allied violent extremism (IEP, 2023). Numerous indigenous and internationally-affiliated terrorist groups operate in the region, including Boko Haram and its splinter groups, Al Qaeda and its affiliates, the Islamic State, et cetera (Okoli, 2023). There is also a rising incidence of terrorism financing and franchising, which has sometimes implicated state and non-state actors alike in the region (Okoli, 2023). The involvement of foreign actors or interests in the Sahel's terror conundrum is a critical dimension to its current geopolitical volatile dynamics.

Beyond terrorism, there are high incidences of organized crime and

armed violence in the Sahel (Gaye, 2018; Okoli & Nwangwu, 2023). The activities of drugs and arms traffickers, bandits, pirates, smugglers, and other anti-state elements in the region have impacted rather adversely on its stability and development. Besides, they have created conditions that undermine the functionality of the state and the economy, in addition to bringing about conditions that reinforce and reproduce state fragility syndrome (Okoli & Nwangwu, 2023).

Sixthly, the prevailing geopolitical dispensation in the Sahel has been characterized by a shift in the pattern of external alignments among member states. The traditional pro-Western posture of foreign policy in many of the states is being altered and substituted by a pragmatic orientation that tilts toward the erstwhile eastern bloc of allies - notably China and Russia (Okoli, 2024). The military regimes in the region have been more manifestly inclined to foster diplomatic relations with these countries, apparently in a bid to spite the West for its antagonism.

Lastly, the Sahel's geopolitical economy presents a context where disparate actors deploy desperate strategies to pursue desperate ends. Among these actors are foreign entities, which are not only after their own interests, but are also interested in gaining zero-sum strategic advantage over others. Coupled with the activities of various armed criminal and violent groups, what plays out in the region is a morass of geopolitical opportunism in which sovereign interests of the member countries are, more or less, jeopardized.

Table 3: Mixed Actors in the Sahel's Current Geopolitics

Category of Actor	Examples
State actors	• National government and militaries • Political regimes • Multilateral and minilateral bodies • Foreign diplomatic and military missions
Clandestine actors	• Terrorists • Insurgents • Terror franchises • Transnational organized crime syndicates
Businesses	• Industries/ firms • Investments
Foreign agents	• Proxies • Spies • Mercenaries
Civil society actors	• Charities • Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) • Humanitarian workers

Source: Okoli (2024, p.121).

Sahel's Economic Sovereignty amid the Multipolar Geopolitical Dynamics: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger

The current wave of multipolar influence in the geopolitics of Sahel region has far-reaching economic implications on the economic dynamics of the region – especially in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The scramble to gain influence and control of the resources and polity of these countries by internal (Nigeria, South Africa, ECOWAS) and external (France, The United States, China, Russia, and the European Union) forces has unprecedented implications for the economy of the countries and for Africa in general (Góes & Bekkers, 2023). The dynamics affect economic indexes of the Sahel region.

In a multipolar geopolitical context, Burkina Faso's economic sovereignty is influenced by various global and regional powers. The global powers wield control on critical sectors of the economy and polity of the Sahel region. France maintains significant economic, military, and cultural influence due to historical and colonial ties, while China commands an increasing investment in infrastructure, mining, and agriculture, to challenge French dominance. Moreover, the US has a heavy military presence which focuses on

counter-terrorism efforts, with some economic interests in the region. In the same vein, the European Union engages in numerous trade agreements with countries of the Sahel and provides development aid to them for the purpose of promoting economic integration, which will enable Europe unfettered access to the resources and political manipulations of the countries.

Furthermore, the Regional Powers in Africa equally take part in the geopolitics of the Sahel. Nigeria is a regional hegemon with significant economic influence, particularly in West Africa while South Africa is the economic powerhouse with interests in mining and infrastructure sectors of the Sahel countries, especially Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Morocco is another regional player with economic and security interests, particularly in the Sahel region. Ghana and Algeria are regional neighbors, and regional trade partners of the Sahel countries with economic ties and cooperation in areas like agriculture and energy respectively. This explains the complex multipolar geopolitics in the Sahel region.

The multipolar geopolitics is associated with incessant political instability, civil unrest, military conflict, tensions, terrorist threat in the Sahel region emanating from different world powers which contest for control and influence on the region (Caldara & Iacoviello, 2022; Góes & Bekkers, 2023). This has an unprecedented effect on the economies of the affected countries, especially Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The influence is exerted through the channels of financial institutions and markets, trade relations and global commodity price. The financial market influence is wielded through direct and indirect capital controls and financial sanctions which increase uncertainty, high risk premia and generate asset price surge and fluctuations (Gurvich & Prilepskiy, 2015).

Equally, the trade flows of the countries of the Sahel region are usually altered because of increased trade restrictions associated with the tension emanating from the disruption of peace and democracy often exacerbated by the dynamics of the multipolar geopolitics. Also, multipolar geopolitics disrupts supply chains in the region. Trade restrictions create supply shortages and obstruct the flow of critical resources such as oil and gas and mineral resources, which are the mainstay of the economies of the countries of the Sahel region. For instance, Burkina Faso and Mali are gold-dependent economies while Niger's economy is heavily reliant on uranium exports, making the countries vulnerable to global commodity price fluctuations. This is inimical to industrial production and economic sovereignty of the countries. However, the multipolar geopolitics provides ample economic opportunities for economic diversification, new diplomatic relationships, economic integration and wide market for the Sahel countries.

The expository analysis in this paper provides insights on the nexus between the geopolitics and the economic sovereignty and sustainable progress of the selected Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger). The dynamics of the nexus between geopolitical risks and economic sovereignty are examined using pair-wise correlation analysis. The correlation coefficients are presented in table 4. The results show that global geopolitical risks and the US-China tensions, as well as the unilateral (country-specific) geopolitical tensions, threats, and uncertainties emanating from France, China, Russia, the US are negatively related with economic growth and positively associated with unemployment, inflation and state fragility (failure) of the Sahel countries especially Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This implies that increase in multipolar geopolitics results in decline economic growth, and rise in unemployment, inflation of the Sahel countries, and expose their economies of the countries to shocks and global economic and political uncertainties, thereby reducing their economic sovereignty. The influence of the multiple world powers on the Sahel countries reinforces each other mutually and harm the economies of the countries by generating uncertainties that result in higher inflation, unemployment and lower economic growth (Góes & Bekkers, 2023; Catalán, & Tsuruga, 2023).

On the other hand, regional geopolitics (represented by South Africa's geopolitical risk index) is positively associated with economic growth and inversely related to unemployment, inflation and state economic fragility. This suggests that the influence of regional powers will improve the economic sovereignty of the Sahel region.

Comparing the geopolitical and economic sovereignty indices of the unipolar (2007) and multipolar (2023) eras, it is revealed that the geopolitical threats and opportunities of the current multipolar geopolitics are greater than that of the unipolar era. This is presented in Table 5. While the geopolitical threats are manifest in poor economic performance and foreign dominance, the opportunities of economic diversification, infrastructural development, stronger and new diplomatic relationships, and wider economic integration are also available for the Sahel region (Flint, 2021). For instance, due to the multipolar geopolitics, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger experienced increase in economic and trade diversification and, the countries' extensive margins of exports – number of products in export list have increased over the years (Table 5 and Figure 1-4). This presents an opportunity for the countries to expand their trade and promote sustainable economic growth and development.

Table 4: Relationship between Geopolitical and economic sovereignty indices – Pairwise correlations coefficients

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
(1) Economic growth	1.000													
(2) Unemployment	-0.054	1.000												
(3) Inflation	-0.109	0.077	1.000											
(4) Economic freedom index	-0.203	0.558	-0.036	1.000										
(5) US-China tensions	-0.110	0.140	0.028	0.445	1.000									
(6) Geopolitical risk	-0.143	0.118	0.121	0.283	0.535	1.000								
(7) Geopolitical risk from China	-0.185	0.168	0.002	0.351	0.877	0.544	1.000							
(8) Geopolitical risk from France	-0.090	0.060	0.018	0.156	0.197	0.747	0.185	1.000						
(9) Geopolitical risk from Russia	-0.034	0.157	0.302	0.303	0.649	0.676	0.547	0.362	1.000					
(10) Geopolitical risk from the US	-0.163	0.152	0.131	0.317	0.679	0.923	0.741	0.489	0.708	1.000				
(11) Geopolitical risk from South Africa	0.188	-0.033	-0.136	-0.112	-0.348	-0.127	-0.231	0.055	-0.111	-0.164	1.000			
(12) Fragile state index	0.084	0.083	0.032	0.132	0.330	0.226	0.168	0.234	0.292	0.181	-0.086	1.000		
(13) Fragile economy index	0.159	-0.218	0.002	-0.498	-0.753	-0.414	-0.621	-0.255	-0.599	-0.490	0.154	-0.041	1.000	
(14) Fragile economic inequality index	0.228	0.285	-0.091	0.236	-0.009	0.048	-0.107	0.090	0.034	-0.021	-0.010	0.403	-0.185	1.000

Source: Authors' computation. Note: Data on economic growth, unemployment and inflation are sourced from World Bank, World development Indicators, economic freedom index is obtained from Fraser institute database, geopolitical risks indices are obtained from Federal Reserve Board database while Fragile state indices are obtained from The Fund For Peace dataset.

Table 5: Geopolitical and economic sovereignty indices of unipolar (France era) and multipolar era in Sahel region

Geopolitical and economic sovereignty indices	Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	Mali	Mali	Niger	Niger
	2007 (Unipolar -France era)	2023 (Multipolar era)	2007 (Multipolar era)	2023 (Unipolar -France era)	2007 (Unipolar -France era)	2023 (Multipolar era)
Economic growth	4.11	2.96	3.49	5.24	3.14	2.50
Unemployment (as % of labour force)	3.30	5.29	1.37	3.01	2.03	0.55
Inflation rate	-0.23	0.74	1.41	2.06	0.05	3.70
Economic freedom index	5.88	6.14	5.99	5.80	5.39	5.80
US-China tensions	77.61	147.42	77.61	147.42	77.61	147.42
Global Geopolitical risk	97.92	104.27	97.92	104.27	97.92	104.27
Geopolitical risk from France	0.27	0.56	0.27	0.56	0.27	0.56
Geopolitical risk from Russia	0.33	1.97	0.33	1.97	0.33	1.97
Geopolitical risk from the USA	2.37	2.41	2.37	2.41	2.37	2.41
Geopolitical risk from China	0.40	0.55	0.40	0.55	0.40	0.55
Fragile state index	89.70	94.00	91.20	93.40	75.50	99.50
Fragile economy index	8.20	7.00	9.20	6.60	8.70	7.70
Fragile economic inequality index	8.90	8.30	7.20	7.80	6.60	7.20
External intervention index	7.00	8.70	8.00	7.40	6.90	9.50
Trade diversification index	0.76	0.88	0.84	0.90	0.79	0.84
Number of products in export list	97.00	117.00	136.00	173.00	104.00	97.00

Source: Authors' computation. Note: Data on economic growth, unemployment and inflation are sourced from World Bank, World development Indicators, economic freedom index is obtained from Fraser institute database, geopolitical risks indices are obtained from Federal Reserve Board database while Fragile state indices are obtained from The Fund For Peace dataset.

Figure 1: Geopolitical risk indices

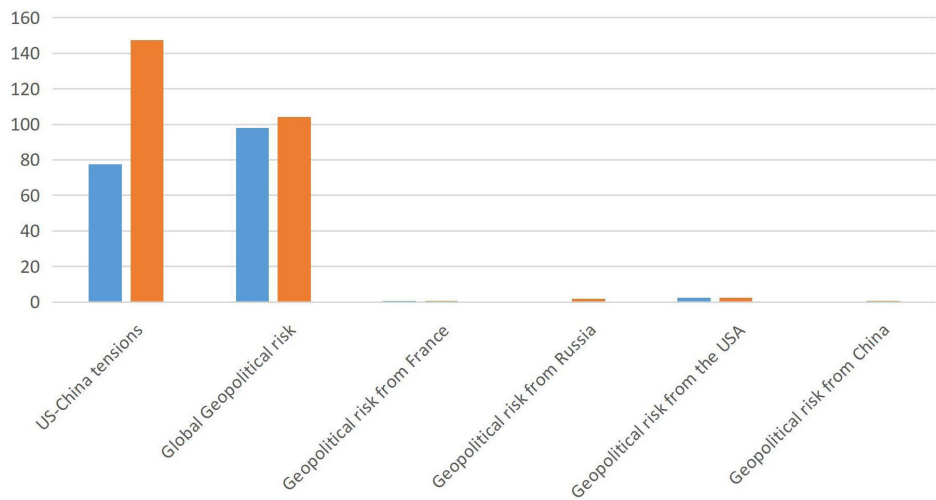


Figure 2: Burkina Faso - Economic sovereignty indices

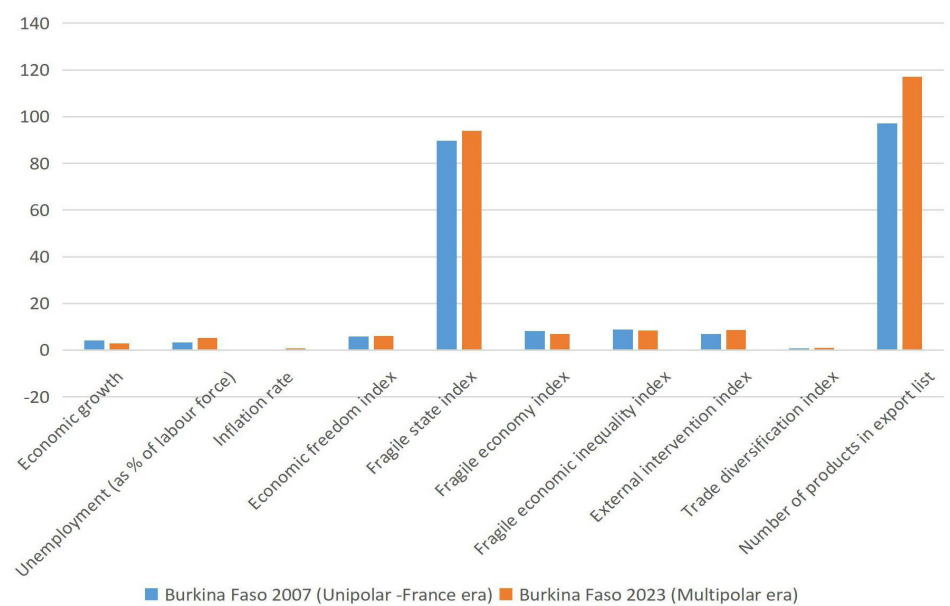


Figure 3: Mali - Economic sovereignty indices

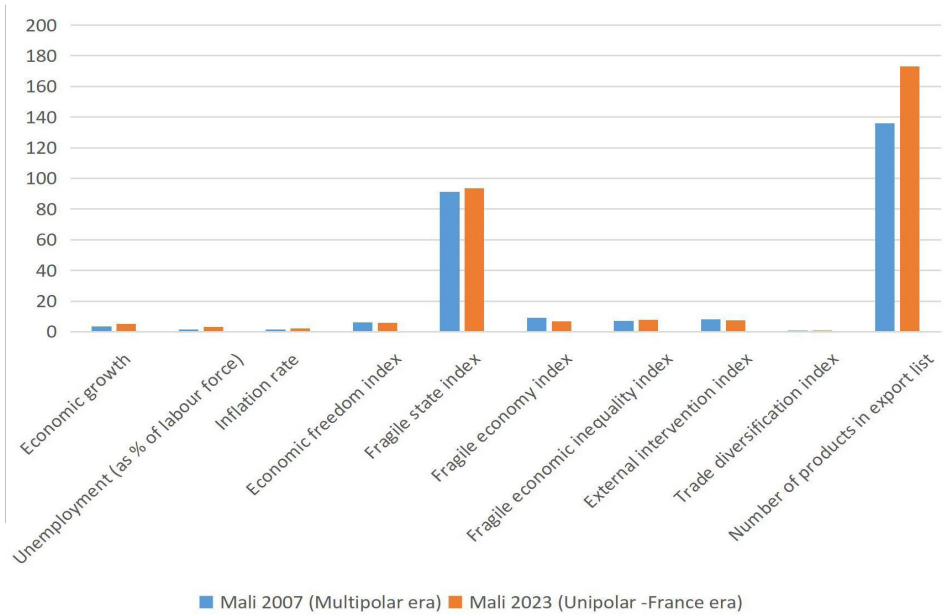
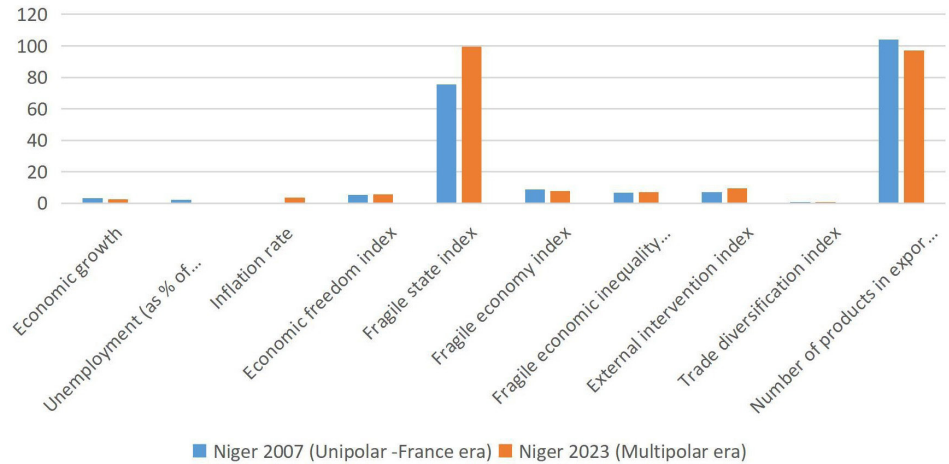


Figure 4: Niger - Economic sovereignty indices



Conclusion: Implications for Africa's Economic Sovereignty

The new multipolar geopolitics in Africa offers the continent the prospects of a geopolitical economy of fair competition and diversification. Depending on how the continent plays within the context of the evolving dynamics, it stands to gain or lose. For the Sahel, the emergence of new big global powers, particularly Russia and China, presents the member states with new opportunities for more favourable geostrategic bargains. Put differently, it comes with the prospects of more competitive geopolitical space in which the interests of African states may be more favourably negotiated and advanced. How does this apply to the Sahelian states?

First, by offering the Sahelian states the opportunities for diversified and more competitive strategic partnerships, it empowers them to engage with multiple global powers on new terms. Thereby reducing the over-dependency on individual countries or a bloc of countries as the case was hitherto. The traditional politico-economic alignment of the Sahel's state to the French and its western allies is being radically altered by the current state of geopolitics in the region.

Secondly, the geopolitical changes in the region are increasing the bargaining power of member states in negotiating a better, fairer, and more strategically advantageous deal with the global powers. The competition between the United States and its Eastern counterparts (Russia and China) presents opportunities that states in the region could exploit to maximize their strategic advantage. Sahelian states should leverage on such opportunities to bolster their wins in terms of economic diplomacy.

Thirdly, the multipolar order in the region is opening up new markets and trade opportunities for the Sahelian states. This is exemplified in the burgeoning trade and investment stakes of China and Russia in that context (Hassen, 2023). Apart from reducing the historical reliance of the Sahelian states on the West, this development also offers the states an ample opportunity to negotiate viable trade and investment deals.

In spite of the aforementioned possibilities, the multipolar geopolitics in the Sahel is equally associated with some negative outcomes. It is stoking waves of great power rivalry, thereby making the region a battleground for geopolitical contests. The use of proxies, strategic disinformation and other opportunistic tactics by the contending global powers to advance their competitive strategic interest has been a veritable driver of the prevailing instability in the region.

There is also the danger of another pattern of post-colonial exploitation by the new geopolitical powers in the Sahel. China's exploitative tendencies as evidenced in its policy of extractivism is a relevant concern in this regard (Okoli, 2024). In addition, there is the concern of multi-source debt and aid dependency. With the new entrants in the region's geopolitical space, the likelihood of multiple indebtedness by member states is high. As a consequence, these states may be pressured to compromise their policy space, priority, and agency in keeping with the exigencies of their debt burden.

To navigate the challenges imposed on Africa by the multi-polar geopolitical dispensation and ensure the protection of its economic sovereignty, the Sahelian states need to take a number of actions:

- i. Develop a stronger and more unified sub-regional economic agenda to promote their collective economic aspirations
- ii. Diversify global partnerships by engaging with more global players and blocs
- iii. Negotiate fair deals and protect their sovereign economic virtues from all ramifications of neo-colonial exfoliation and control
- iv. Bolster their agency and sovereignty through economic diplomacy and nationalist statecraft

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how the Sahel has emerged as a contested space for influence, competitive stakes, resources, and markets. The paper posits that the Sahel's geopolitical economy is characterized by a new scramble – a multi-polar struggle by the global and regional powers – for dominance and strategic advantage, with far-reaching implications for the sovereignty of the member states as well as regional stability and development. The paper underscores the nuanced issues that underpin the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Sahel and what they hold African agency and sovereign virtues, especially in the realms of economy and geo-strategy.

KEYWORDS

Geopolitics, Global Powers, Multi-polarity, Political Economy, Sovereignty, the Scramble

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ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE ARGENTINA-CHINA RELATIONSHIP: INTERESTS, COOPERATION AND CHALLENGES¹

Julian Bilmes²

Introduction

Relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), in general, and Argentina, in particular, have been increasing considerably in the past two decades. In 2022, trade between China and LAC reached a record US\$485 billion, and by the end of 2021, the stock of Chinese investment in the region reached US\$693 billion, accounting for a quarter of total Chinese investment abroad (ECLAC, 2023). Energy, food and raw materials represent the main interest of China in Latin America, based on its outstanding endowments in those areas and the Chinese needs for its food, energy and supply security.

In the case of Argentina, as well as its historic outstanding role in agricultural production, the country has world-class resources of lithium (one of the critical minerals for the energy transition), hydrocarbons (oil and gas) and some renewables energies as solar and wind, along with important capabilities and resources in other energetic sources as nuclear and hydroelectric. That explains why energy and natural resources (NR) have represented one of the main topics of the bilateral relationship in the last years.

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Argentina and the PRC have diplomatic relations since 1972,³ and from the end of the past century they started a process of strengthening their relationship by signing numerous bilateral agreements on investment and trade. Already in the new century, and within the Chinese Going Out policy, the two countries signed a Strategic Partnership in 2004, followed in subsequent years by other instruments as the Strategic Dialogue for Economic Cooperation and Coordination, in 2010, and the scaling of the bilateral association with the sign of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2014. More recently, Argentina entered to Chinese-based international initiatives as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), in 2020, and the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), in 2022, with occasion of the Year of Friendship and Cooperation China-Argentina (due to the 50° anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic ties). Additionally, due to an effort by Brazil and China, the country was invited in 2023 to join the expanded BRICS+ forum. However, the current Argentine government, which came into power in December 2023, refused to accept this invitation managed by the former government.

Along this process of strengthening of the bilateral relation, the trade between Argentina and China increased from two billion dollars by 2000 to more than twenty-five in 2023, that is, multiplied 15 times, which led the PRC to become the second trade partner of the former. At par, China has played in the last years a key role for the Argentine economy as destiny for its exports, main financier of great energy and transport infrastructure projects and the expansion of the Central Bank's reserves (through the swap mechanism).

There are several approaches in the specialized economic literature about the link between national resources (NR) and development (Altomonte & Sánchez, 2016; Schteingart, 2017; Katz, 2021). In this regard, briefly, the following positions may be noted: A) the postulate of Latin American structuralism regarding the trend deterioration of the terms of trade, whereby the pattern of specialization in the export of primary goods of the peripheral countries makes it difficult to overcome the condition of underdevelopment; B) the theory of comparative advantages of the neoclassical school and its liberal postulate under which each country benefits by specializing in that activity for which it has better conditions and where it is more efficient, whether it is NR or manufacturing; C) the theories of the “curse” of NR and the postulates

3 As Oviedo (2023) points out, that year the Argentine Republic recognized the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of the country. Until then, the country recognized the so-called Republic of China –Kuomintang's government confined in Taiwan since the revolution– as the legitimate one since 1945, date of the first establishment of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

that the abundance of these resources would lead to the deepening of unequal international relations, corruption, economic backwardness, macroeconomic volatility and/or environmental depredation; D) certain neo-structuralist and neo-Schumpeterian postulates that affirm that NR can be levers for development and innovation in the case of achieving greater productive diversification based on linkages with other activities and with national innovation systems. Additionally, some recent perspectives question the above postulates, considering that a large part of the development strategies supported by NR and innovation are affected multidimensionally by new center-periphery relations that strain the ideas of sovereignty and economic development (Sztulwark, 2020; Bilmes et al., 2022; Kataishi & Brixner, 2023).

For some scholars, China recreates in Latin America the process of dependency, positioning most countries as suppliers of NR in the global value chains controlled by the Asian giant, while the region maintains its historic extractivist character and peripheral insertion in the world economy (Svampa & Slipak, 2018). Some facts of the bilateral relation could support this perspective (taken from ECLAC, 2023), given that, on par with the increasing economic relation of China-Latin America in the last two decades, there has been a trend of reprimarization of the regional export pattern, since basic raw materials went from representing, on average, 31% of total exports in the three-year period 2000-2002, to 80% in the period 2020-2022. In contrast, exports of natural resource-based manufactures fell from 48% to 14%, and a breakdown of bilateral trade by level of technological intensity shows that the region only has a surplus in primary goods. If such a link with China is pursued, there are certain economic risks of deepening a primary export profile without added value at origin, deindustrialization and loss of economic complexity for local productive matrices.

Noting the precedent facts but with a different perspective, it has been suggested the existence of hybrid geoeconomics of China in South America (Salgado Rodrigues, 2021), which presents a paradoxical cooperation, whose benefits can also be harmful for industrial structure and productive matrix, due to asymmetries, involving both development and dependence (or development of underdevelopment, in terms of André Gunder Frank, 1967). So, the question arises here of how to transcend western-based world system logics of uneven and combined development of the process of accumulation of wealth and power, the core-periphery dynamics and the rules of the game of neoliberal globalization, so harmful for Latin America (Martins, 2020). In this sense, and in line with Fernández et al. (2023), some articulated challenges for the bilateral agenda can be proposed, in terms of value-addition

and development of local capabilities and complexity, connections with local production networks, technology transfer and cooperation in R&D, relations with local communities and socio-environmental impacts mitigation, etc.

In this framework, the objective of this article is to analyze the role that energy and NR play in the Argentina-China relationship to inquire what type of development is outlined, considering the interests and bets of each side, and the achievements and obstacles of the numerous cooperation agreements in these fields. The preliminary questions posed are the following ones: What are the state of situation, tensions, obstacles and challenges for this bilateral agenda? How much is there of the proclaimed South-South Cooperation and win-win international relations or of reproduction of classic core-periphery relationship? The theoretical perspective is based on certain postulates of the dependency and world-system schools, heterodox and Latin-American structuralist political economy, articulated with the geopolitical perspective. The methodological strategy adopts a hybrid approach, combining the revision of documentary, institutional and journalistic sources with the analysis of economic indicators and information taken from some key informant interviews, along with the review of specialized literature.

This article is structured in the following way. After this introduction, it is analyzed the contemporary China's rise and its massive efforts on energy and NR provision, an area in which Latin America and Argentina have huge endeavors. Then, the strengthening of Argentina-China relationship is presented, highlighting the prominent role that energy and NR play in it. The next section consists of an overview of the main areas of bilateral interest and cooperation: oil and gas, nuclear and hydroelectric energy, wind and solar energy, mining and the outstanding position of lithium, the "star mineral" for current energy transition agenda. After that, an analytical balance sheet is drawn up, observing the main type of achievements, obstacles and challenges that arose from that overview. Finally, the final remarks are presented, with the considerations arising from the study conducted and prospects for the bilateral relationship.

Contemporary China's rise and its relations with Latin America

According to the reading here, in this XXI Century, the world system is experiencing a historical-spatial transition, based on the decline of Anglo-American and western hegemony along with the rise of the emergent and multipolar forces with center on Asia-Indo-Pacific, Eurasia and China (Author

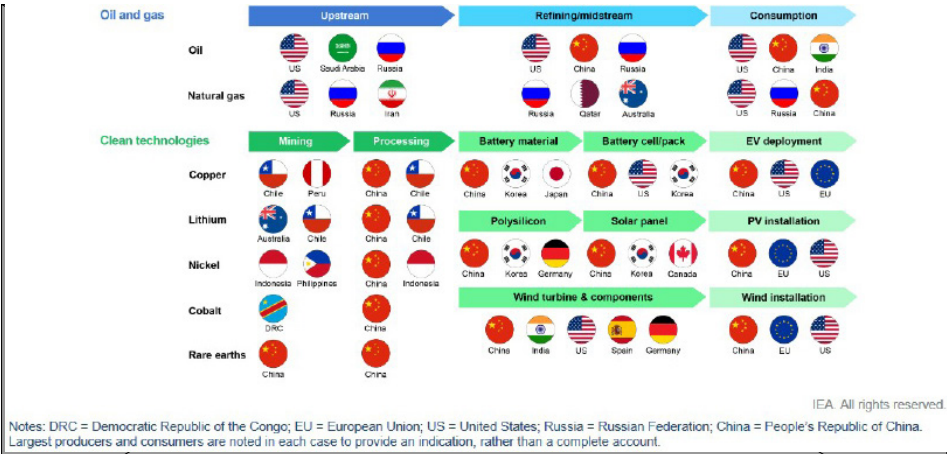
et al., 2024). The PRC implemented, since the beginning of this century, its Going Global strategy, complemented a decade after with the BRI, to expand its global presence around the globe, in which the promotion of infrastructure projects for energy and NR sourcing as hydrocarbons and minerals play an increasingly important role.

An important engine for this process is the energy transition agenda, based on the climate change phenomenon. The PRC has boosted massive plans of de-carbonization, including its foreign investments, which drive a global energetic reconfiguration, given that China alone accounts for about one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions and pledges carbon neutrality, i.e. that its emissions will be neutralized by the absorption of its territory, by 2060. To see this process in some data, it suffices to note that China's economic growth in 2023 was driven by clean energy industry, including sectors as solar, wind and nuclear energy, electric vehicles, energetic efficiency and storage, hydrogen, railroads and power grids (Myllyvirta, 2024).

At par, these Chinese efforts in the energy transition are also enrolled in the race around the new ongoing techno-productive revolution (the so-called “Fourth Industrial Revolution” or “Industry 4.0”), in which the PRC has positioned itself as one of the main players. In this sense, a sort of “key core technologies” have been codified in top-level economic planning documents, as the Fourteenth Five Year Plan, in 2020, implying the bet to construct national research-industrial complexes for them, and “oil and gas field technology” and “nuclear power” are included in the ten technologies for 2020, and “emerging energy sources” is one of the nine key core technologies for 2030 (The Center for Strategic Translation, 2022).

As Nedopil (2023) shows, energy appears as BRI's main sector of investment, with around one-third and half of total investment along the first decade of the initiative. In the beginning, coal and oil had an important role, around half of this energy investment, but it has decreased strongly, especially coal, while renewable sources as solar and wind increased its participation (from near 5% to more than 40%), and others as hydro and gas oscillated around 10/30% each one. At par, the geopolitics of energy has begun to play a major role in world politics in the last years, especially because of the global systemic chaos and the intensification of the dispute for strategic natural resources because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the new stage of the war in Ukraine. In that framework, it can be observed a trend of geopolitical fragmentation of supply chains according to the increasing presence of Western national security goals at the expense of the economic imperatives of globalization of the last decades. The prominent role of China in this global competition can be observed hereafter.

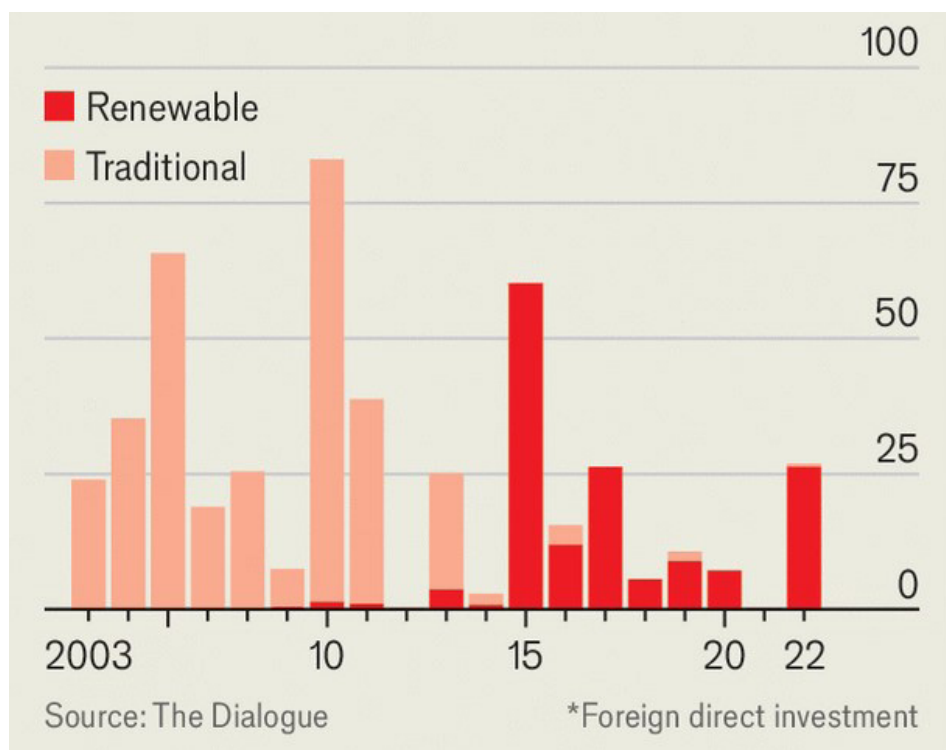
Figure 1: Indicative leaderships of supply chains of oil and gas, selected critical minerals and clean energy technologies



Source: International Energy Agency (2021).

As the world's great industrial workshop and a huge consumer market in full expansion, China is the world's largest importer of raw materials. In this sense, the relationship with Latin America, a major producer of this type of critical goods such as food, energy and minerals, is structural. This translates into numbers: the volume of trade between China and Latin America increased 35 times in this century, from \$14 billion in 2000 to \$500 billion in 2022 (ECLAC, 2023). According to data from the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, this region is the second largest destination for foreign investment from China, with more than 2,700 Chinese companies operating in the region (Rey, 2022, cited in Sales, 2023). There has been a massive and growing Chinese disembarkation in the region through trade, investments, loans, acquisition of enterprises and lands, and joint agreements and projects along the last two decades. In the base of the growing Chinese demand and several bilateral agreements, China became the second trade partner of LAC, after the USA, and the first of South America. At the same time, energy has represented a relevant item of Chinese FDI to the region, as it can be seen hereafter.

Figure 2: Chinese energy FDI into Latin America and the Caribbean



Note: it is measured as percentage of total Chinese FDI to the region.
Source: The Economist (2024a).

As Cao et al. (2020) point out, since 2012 Latin America has continuously enhanced its position in China's diplomatic outlook. The item "Energy and resources" has appeared both as one of the six areas of cooperation priorities of the framework of pragmatic China-Latin America cooperation, known as "1+3+6", that Xi Jinping proposed during his visit to the region in 2014, and also figured as one of the ten areas of the Joint Action Plan for Cooperation in Key Areas China-CELAC (2022-2024). Nevertheless, China's investment in Latin America has bet on transcending energy and NR to encompass more diversified ways of production, cooperation and exchange, in ambits like high education, culture, tourism, sports and science and technology. In 2018, the Latin American countries were invited to integrate the BRI as a "natural extension" of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Nowadays, 22 countries of the region have already joined it, while twelve have signed a strategic or

comprehensive strategic partnership with the PRC (Gao, 2023, cited in Juste, 2024).

Argentina-China relationship: prominent role of energy and natural resources

Argentine Republic was the first of the big countries of the region to join the BRI, signing in February 2022 the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and thirteen secondary agreements between state agencies and enterprises of each side in different areas, three of them referred to the topics of this research: A) cooperation in clean energy and sustainable development; B) cooperation in nuclear energy with emphasis in nuclear medicine; C) agreement for creating a China-Argentina Geoscience Cooperation Center. In that event, an important amount of investment in order of 23 billion dollars was announced, which would be obtained in two tranches: one, already approved, for 14 billion dollars under the mechanism of Strategic Dialogue for Economic Cooperation and Coordination (DECCE, by its Spanish acronym) and another for approximately 9.7 billion dollars, which Argentina would present to the Ad Hoc Group created for its entry to the BRI. In the DECCE portfolio, energy plays a crucial paper, considering the following seven of the ten total projects: the Patagonian Dams “Kirchner-Cepernic”, the fourth nuclear plant “Atucha III”, the wind and solar park “Cerro Arauco”, the expansion of the photovoltaic plant “Cauchari”, the second phase of the big pipeline “Transport.Ar”, the electric power transmission line “AMBA I”, and the electric transmission line and pipeline “Cierre Energético Norte” (DangDai, 2023).

Then, in June 2023, both countries went beyond, signing the Cooperation Plan for BRI, which implies a “road map” of the Argentine entry to the initiative with a list of specific joint projects. In that list, which presents a prominent role of infrastructure (railways, routes, bridges, aqueducts, etc.), energy and NR occupy an important place, with four of the six priority projects: the wind farms “Antonio Morán” and “El Escorial”, the hydroelectric plant “Potrero del Clavillo – El Naranjal”, an electric transport system in Buenos Aires province and the project of regenerative energy “Bio Futuro”; and several of the seventeen complementary works, as the photovoltaic plant and lithium salt lake “Tres Quebradas”, the photovoltaic plants “Villa María de Río Seco” and “Cura Brochero”, the photovoltaic plant “Ibarreta” and the thermoelectric plant “Manuel Belgrano II” (China Observatory, 2023a, 2023b).

Other events of 2023 also illustrate the relevant paper of energy and NR in the intensification of the bilateral cooperation agenda. In first place,

Argentina presented twenty projects of renewable energy with Chinese funding –being much of them the same that integrates the Cooperation Plan for BRI– into the Green Belt & Road and the Global Civilization Initiative, which have been launched by the PRC in the last years. In effect, in front of the global agenda of energy transition and on the base of its great potential in different types and sources of clean energy, the country has seen China as a key ally for this mission. In the second term, it was approved the first loan of the AIIB for the country, destined to the construction of “Río Grande” wind farm in the southernmost province of Tierra del Fuego, for 65 million dollars. Thirdly, a MoU of Sci-Tech cooperation on natural resources and energy transition was signed, on occasion of the official mission of the then Argentine Minister of Science and Technology in China, and it was agreed to promote Chinese investment in the industrialization of Argentine lithium for the automotive industry. Finally, it was announced the construction of two plants in Bahía Blanca to produce fertilizers (urea and NPK) by China Potassium Chemical Group, for around \$1250 million, along with the signing of R+D+I cooperation agreement for production of fertilizers using potassium of Argentine brines.

Chinese investment in the country grew rapidly in the last decade, because of the strengthening of the bilateral relationship, and it has become one of the main receivers of Chinese investment and financing in Latin America. According to the AidData’s Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset of the “William & Mary’s” Global Research Institute, Argentina was the third receiver of Chinese financing of the region between 2000 and 2017, with the same level of Ecuador and much lower than Venezuela and Brazil (Sales, 2023). Between 2007 and 2020, Argentina received around US\$13 in investment from Chinese companies (Treacy, 2023). More than half of the Chinese investment announced was destined to mining (58%), followed by real estate (27%), energy (4%), industrial machinery, equipment and tools (4%), automotive and motorcycles (3%) and food and beverages (3%). At the same time, between 2000 and 2020, Argentina received loans from Chinese banks and government agencies over US\$28 billion, in which the generation of energy appeared as the main sector of Chinese loans in the country (33%), followed by transport and storage (22%), and industry, mining and construction (6%) (Moretti & Fernández, 2022). At the subnational level, eight of twenty-three Argentine provinces have China as the main destiny for its exports (D’Angelo et al., 2023, cited in Juste, 2024).

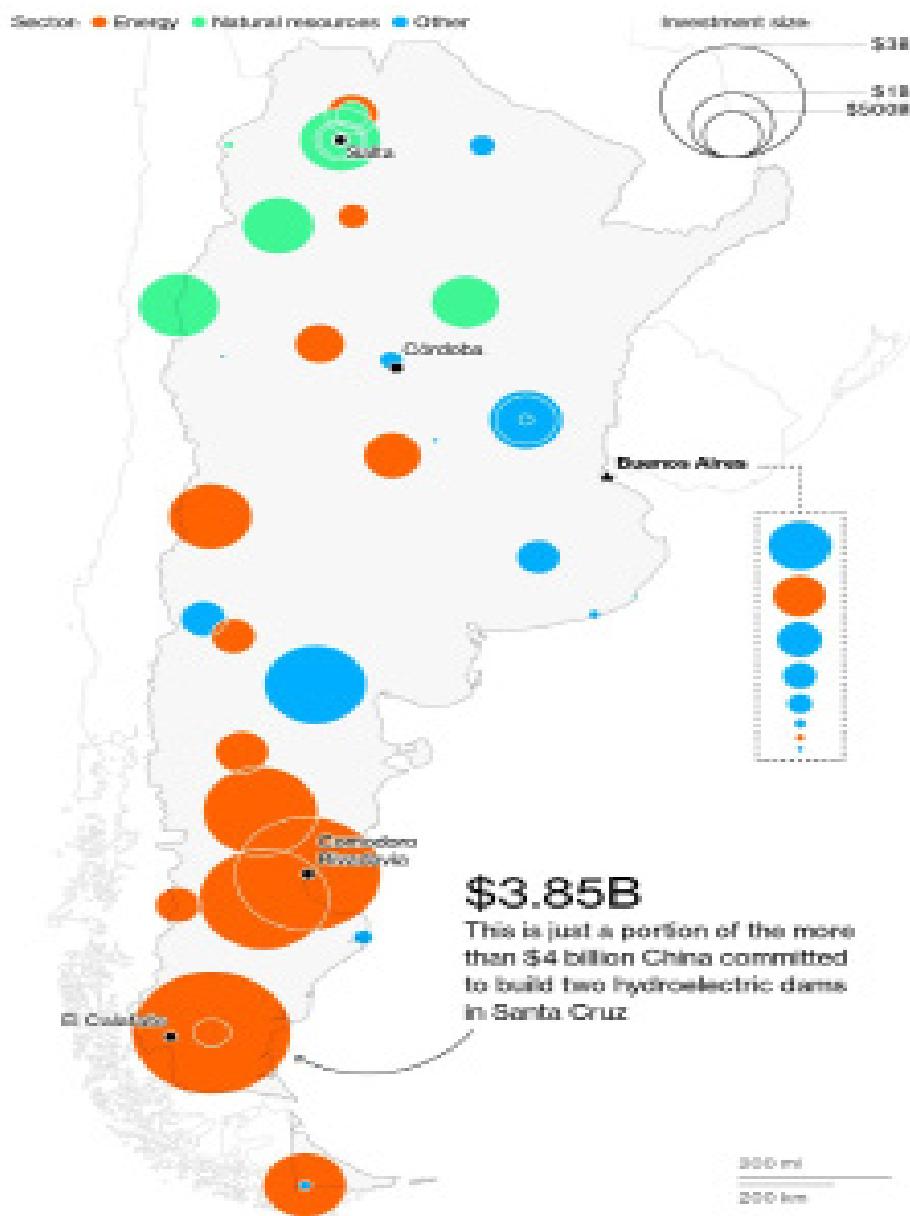
Argentine productive matrix suffered a deindustrialization process since the late 70s along with an increasing demand for raw materials related

to NR.⁴ In the last decade, it has been raised the bet on establishing new export-complexes providers of currencies, an item that appears as the main problem of the macroeconomic stability of the country (the so called “external restriction to growth”), based on Argentine great positioning in terms of energy and mining in the contemporary world economic scenario. In this framework, a struggle of strategic orientations exists about the specific way this process could assume and around the development strategies.

In the following image the relevance of these topics for China can be observed.

⁴ The participation of the industry in Argentine GDP reached a top level of above 50% ca. 1976 and a minimum level around 22% ca. 2017 (Haro Sly, 2023).

Figure 3: Chinese investments in Argentina and the prominent role of energy and natural resources



Source: Gilbert & Tobias (2024), based on data taken from Millennium Nucleus on the Impacts of China in Latin America and the Caribbean.

By observing the data of the bilateral trade in 2023, it can be noted that Argentine exports to China are concentrated on a few products, around 45% each one for both primary products as manufactured goods of agricultural origin (China Observatory, 2023a), and the main products consisted of soybeans derivatives, frozen bovine meat, sorghum and barley grains, shrimps and lithium carbonate. Chinese imports, for its part, are more diversified, around 25/30% each for intermediate goods, capital goods and parts and accessories for capital goods, and the rest was composed by vehicles and fuels, and the main products consisted of components for smartphones, televisions and other electrical artifacts, automobiles and auto parts, fertilizers and electric generators. Since 2008, there has been an increasing bilateral trade deficit, as can be seen in the following image for the last five years:

Figure 4: Trade balance between Argentina and China



Source: Gilbert & Tobias (2024).

This deficit is one of the biggest concerns of Argentine leaders and policymakers. In this sense, the Head of Investment & Trade Section of the Argentine Embassy in China expressed the following ideas:

Argentina has not fully exploited its comparative advantages and its extreme complementarity with China, unlike other countries in the region, which I believe have a better understanding of this. We should observe what neighboring countries, such as Brazil or Chile, have done, which have totally surplus balances in their relationship with China,⁵ and the way was to bet on mining and energy. Argentina's problem is that these two sectors are totally underdeveloped, so therein lay the great opportunity for the country if we want to have a balanced trade with China. Argentina has to create the conditions for these sectors to be competitive and to balance trade with China; otherwise, we will have a deficit relationship (personal communication, December 5°, 2023).

In this sense, in 2023, along with the signing of the Cooperation Plan for BRI and several high-level visits to China which included meetings with the main Chinese mining companies, a commitment was expressed to boost Argentine lithium great potential, a key critical mineral for the global energy transition. The first Argentine Chinese Chamber of Commerce was launched, and the Argentine leaders expressed a will to establish a type of mining with local value-addition, jobs, providers and capabilities, links with local communities and compliance with environmental standards. At the same time, with the aim of accelerating the trade relationship and eliminating intermediation, it was announced the opening of direct trade between the two countries through RMB, and –not casually– the first operation of direct investment through the Chinese currency in the country took place, by the Bank of China and for boosting the Chinese mining business, especially on lithium (DangDai, 2023).

Energy and mining: overview of the main areas of bilateral interest

⁵ Observing available data for sizing this idea, these large surpluses in 2020 amounted to forty billion dollars for Brazil, eight billion for Chile and even, also, three billion for Peru (Bustelo & Rubiolo, 2023).

It is well known the Argentine energetic potential, due to its great solar radiation in the mountain range area for photovoltaic energy production, some of the best winds on the planet in the Patagonia region for on-shore wind energy, the Vaca Muerta field and its massive unconventional oil and gas reserves, the third largest lithium reserve in the world, along with some promising new sources of generation and storage of energy as its maritime potential for wave and tidal energy development, green hydrogen, biofuels and more. A general overview of the main sectors is presented hereafter, detailing the Chinese companies' presence, bilateral projects and cooperation agreements.

Hydrocarbons

It is a popular saying that Argentina is a country with oil and gas (O&G) but not a petroleum country, like Venezuela and Middle East countries. That idea started to be contested, since 2010 with the boom of "Vaca Muerta" geologic formation, located in the mid-west of the territory, rich of unconventional hydrocarbons: shale and tight gas and oil, mainly. Its world-class resources have been estimated by the US Energy Information Administration as the second biggest resource of unconventional gas (around 308 trillion cubic feet of gas) and fourth in terms of unconventional oil (around 16 billion barrels of oil), placing Argentina as the third country in the world in terms of technically recoverable shale gas resources, after China and US.

China, for its part, is an important player in the hydrocarbons industry, being the second biggest consumer of oil and third of natural gas, the second in terms of oil refining capacity and located at the top ten in terms of production of oil and gas. A large part of its capacities is controlled by state-owned companies as its National Oil Companies (NOC) China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) –and its subsidiary PetroChina–, China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec) and China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC). In Argentina, Chinese investment in the energy sector began to play an important role between 2010 and 2011, when two of the three major NOC entered the Argentine oil and gas sector: Sinopec bought the Argentine subsidiary of US company Occidental Petroleum for US\$ 2.45 billion, reaching the fifth place in terms of extraction of oil in the country some years later, and CNOOC acquired a 50% stake in Argentine company Bidas, for US\$ 3 billion. This local company is part, together with BP, of Pan American Energy, which operates the biggest oil field of the country, "Cerro Dragón".

Spanish company Repsol, which controlled the historic Argentine NOC, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales (YPF), since its privatization between 1993 and 1999, launched a promotion campaign of Vaca Muerta formation since 2010, and by 2012 it was negotiating with transnational companies as CNOOC and Sinopec for selling its 57% stake in YPF, valued because of the boom of Vaca Muerta. Notwithstanding, due to the responsibility of Repsol in front of YPF on national energetic deficit, and regarding the global positioning of the unconventional hydrocarbons of Vaca Muerta, the Argentine government of that moment decided the expropriation of YPF, in a measure we have characterized as a hybrid renationalization (Bilmes, 2023).

The new administration tried to establish joint ventures with Chinese companies, between others, to boost investment in Vaca Muerta, and in 2015 YPF firmed a MoU with Sinopec, days before the Argentine presidential trip to China in which both countries signed a series of bilateral cooperation agreements to deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The bet was to diversify the geopolitical interests' allies for the development of Vaca Muerta, in which US, British, French and German companies had started to operate. However, the agreement between YPF and Sinopec was rendered ineffective under the following government of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019), which announced a revision of the terms and conditions of all agreements signed with the PRC in the previous years, in the framework of an important restructuring of the development strategy, external policy and international cooperation of the country.

In 2017, Bridas, BP and CNOOC agreed to merge its assets, creating Pan American Energy Group (PAEG), which became the biggest private company of O&G in the country and entered Vaca Muerta. The development of this promising geologic formation was boosted in massive scale by the renationalized YPF in association with US company Chevron since 2013, and nowadays the Argentine NOC has a major part of the blocks (above 40%, mostly in joint ventures with other companies). PAEG, in which CNOOC has 25% stake, is one of the main players there, and the second oil producer of the country. Sinopec, for its part, left the country in 2021, when it sold its Argentine assets to local company CGC, and some suppliers explained that due to problems with the labor unions and the Argentine energy policy and macroeconomics (Bidegaray, 2021).

During the Alberto Fernández presidency (2019-2023), the relation with China took strength again, and different types of agreements were signed for building the infrastructure of distribution of Vaca Muerta exponential increasing production, especially a pipelines system and a train, both for self-supply as for exporting, and considering the high capital costs

and huge need of funding and infrastructure that the Argentine energy sector has (FARN, 2022). Between 2020 and 2023, different types of negotiations and agreements were reached between the Argentine government and the companies China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC), Railway Construction Corporation Limited (CRCC), CRRC Corporation Limited and Yutong, for amounts around US\$ 900 million, for the project of readjustment of the Norpatagonic Train, which link the city of Añelo (“heart” of Vaca Muerta) with Bahía Blanca port (an 800 km route) in order to facilitate the logistics of supplies for O&G production.

At the same time, in 2021 a MoU was signed with the companies PowerChina and Shanghai Electric for the engineering, design, equipment provision and funding for the so-called Transport.Ar pipelines system (which included the construction of two pipelines and extension of several old pipelines), for more than US\$ 3 billion and with the projected funding of Chinese banks for 85% of the works. In 2022, another MoU was signed with PowerChina, for almost US\$ 2 billion, for building the second phase of this pipelines system project, especially the construction of the so called “Néstor Kirchner” pipeline (from Salliqueló, in Buenos Aires province, to San Jerónimo, in Santa Fe province, of almost 500 km), being a project included in DECCE portfolio. However, the first stage of the pipeline was assigned to the Italo-Argentine company Techint, thanks to the bidding terms and conditions, whereby the Chinese companies that were to participate did not even submit their proposals (FARN, 2022).

Finally, in 2023, in the Argentine high level visit to China when the Cooperation Plan for BRI was signed, YPF President, Pablo González, exposed the main Argentine projects (Valli, 2023): Vaca Muerta production and infrastructure system, like “Vaca Muerta Sur” oil pipeline; “Palermo Aike”, the second biggest unconventional play, in Santa Cruz province, with potential of resources of one-third of Vaca Muerta and which was starting its first exploratory well; the liquefied natural gas (LNG) hub project in Bahía Blanca;⁶ and the second round of offshore exploration bidding in the Argentine Sea, which represents one of the more extensive exploratory frontiers, with resources to discover in order of dozens billion barrels according to institutional information. González established high level meetings with the aim to invite Chinese companies to invest in those projects: with CNPC and CNOOC, China Communications Construction Company (China’s leading port infrastructure company that specializes in regasification port terminals), COFCO (leader of Chinese agricultural industry and one of the world’s leading agri-businesses), and ICBC and CICC banks. In line with this last point, it

6 Since 2021, China has become the top LNG importer in the world.

was announced that YPF could go public in Hong Kong Stock Exchange, expanding opportunities for Chinese companies to acquire YPF shares.

Notwithstanding, despite this sort of bilateral agreements and approaches, nothing of all of that prospered, and all the bilateral agenda was paralyzed by the new Argentine president, Javier Milei (2023-present days), who have blamed China as a communist dictatorship in the electoral campaign and who have made a subordinated alignment with the US and the western bloc.

Nuclear energy

In this clean and promising energy source, key for the energy transition, Argentina has a mature nuclear industry, guided by a Nuclear Plan and a strong role of the State since the 1950s. Nowadays, it is one of the few countries in the world with design and manufacturing capabilities in this area, having three nuclear power plants in operation and being able to produce and export small modular reactors (Hurtado & Haro Sly, 2023). China, for its part, has strong nuclear power construction capabilities and has established a comprehensive nuclear industry system, and it appears as the main player in this field, considering that its construction of nuclear reactors surpasses the rest of the world and it is planned to build 150 nuclear reactors in the next decade and a half, which represents more than what have been built in the entire world in the last 35 years (Bloomberg, 2022).

The two countries cooperation in this area goes back to 1985, with the signing of a cooperation agreement on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which was deepened in 2014 on Xi Jinping's visit to Argentina, when it was signed an Intergovernmental Agreement on Sino-Argentine Cooperation in Construction of Heavy Water Reactor Nuclear Power Plant in Argentina (Cao et al., 2023). Between 2014 and 2015, during the last years of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner government, there were signed preliminary agreements for the construction of two nuclear power plants, called "Atucha III and IV", four decades after the last one constructed in the country, but since then the initial plans have been modified several times (González Jáuregui, 2021). Even though in 2016, under Macri government, it was signed a MOU for advance in both projects, two years later, after the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because of the financial crisis triggered that year, Atucha IV project was cancelled⁷ and it was changed the contractual scheme

⁷ That first project consisted of a CANDU type central, with natural uranium and heavy water, and could have implied 70% of national participation. It was affected by the mobilization of

for Atucha III, which went from a consortium between the companies Nucleoeléctrica Argentina (NASA) and China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) that included technology transfer in the field of PWR reactors, to a turnkey contract (Hurtado & Haro Sly, 2023).

In 2022, in the framework of the Argentine entry to BRI, NASA and CNNC signed an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract for the building of the fourth Argentine nuclear power plant (Atucha III) in Lima, Buenos Aires province, with 1200 MW of energy generation (registered at DECCE portfolio). This constitutes the biggest Chinese investment project in Argentina and of world-class in the sector, valued around 9.2 billion dollars and which contemplates planned funding of 85% by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and the rest by Argentine national treasury. It has been planned for this plant to adopt the HPR1000 reactor enabled by Chinese Hualong One technology, using enriched uranium as fuel and light water as coolant and moderator, with 1200 MW raw power. Estimates were announced regarding the creation of more than seven thousand direct jobs and the integration of around 40% of national suppliers for this project, including technology transfer for Argentine fabrication of fuel assemblies.

At the same time, the Argentine company of high technology Investigaciones Aplicadas (INVAP) and the Chinese company State Power Investment Corp. (SPIC) signed, in the framework of BRI, a cooperation agreement on nuclear medicine, deepened some months later with the agreement between INVAP and Jiangxi Nuclear Power and Shanghai Engineering Research and Design Institute for export of reactors and the production of medical isotopes. The following year, this was strengthened with another agreement for Argentine export of nuclear technology to its Chinese counterparts, specifically on design and construction of radioisotope production plants and technetium generators for nuclear medicine, with Argentine technology (Glezer, 2023). Also, NASA signed another contract with CNNC to provide technical assistance (engineering services) to support retubing work for the refurbishment of China's Qinshan Nuclear Power Plant, because of Argentine knowledge on CANDU technology. These cases can be seen as a milestone and virtuous example for Argentina, considering that in this area it can export and transfer technology and, so, break the classic position of a peripheral country (it is one of the few Latin American countries able to export this type of technology), on the base of Argentine critical mass, techno-productive capabilities and power of the entrepreneur State on this topic

local communities against the project due to its socio-environmental impacts, around 2017, which led to the prohibition the installation of nuclear plants in Río Negro province, where the project was planned to locate.

(Hurtado & Haro Sly, 2023). In this sense, INVAP and the Argentine National Commission of Atomic Energy have global recognition for the capacity and experience of export research reactors, supplies as radioisotopes and qualified nuclear components to several countries as Australia, Netherlands, India, Egypt and Algeria.

Notwithstanding, all this cooperation generated alarms in the US, which expressed its disagreement over the construction of Atucha III, the Hualong I plant and Chinese financing, adducing the potential theft of information by China and the possibility that the construction of this plant could generate nuclear accidents, and it has been evident the pressures to stop it (Blinder & Vila Seoane, 2023). That is why a project as Atucha III has been paralyzed, along with other factors as the Argentine macroeconomic instability, the agreement with the IMF because of the huge loan of 2018, domestic political disputes and the complexity of the financial and institutional procedures needed. Finally, in 2024 Milei committed to the US to stop or cancel this project and has paralyzed all the development of the Argentine nuclear sector.

Hydroelectric energy

This type of energy represents the world's largest source of electricity from renewable resources –water in this case–.⁸ Chinese power in this type of energy is well represented in the iconic “Three Gorges” Dam, located in Yichang, over the Yangtsé River, inaugurated in 2003 and which appears as the biggest of the world in extension and installed capacity. Chinese funding for large-scale hydroelectric infrastructure, as dam building, have been increasing in the last two decades, and this type of energy generation represent the second in terms of investment and funding from Chinese development banks, around 20% of the total amounts in the world since 2000 (Gallagher, 2020, cited in González Jáuregui, 2021).

Patagonian Dams “Néstor Kircher - Jorge Cepernic” in Santa Cruz River are the biggest energetic Chinese project in the region, estimated as the highest latitude dams with the highest productive capacity in South America, with 950 MW and 360 MW, respectively. They were planned to take advantage of the constant flow of the Santa Cruz River, the country's largest river. They are valued at USD 4700, also part of DECCE portfolio and represent the

⁸ As the large-scale hydroelectric projects could negatively affect water availability, alter ecosystems and populations, in Argentina, only small-scale hydroelectric projects (until 30/50 megawatts) are considered renewable.

biggest Chinese investment in progress in the country (DangDai, 2023). The first agreement was signed in 2015 between Fernández de Kirchner and Xi, after a public bidding process opened in 2012, but then it was paused during the following government.

The project was retaken by Fernández government, in 2020, with a slow rhythm of advance, in charge of the joint venture Represas Patagonia, integrated by Chinese company Gezhouba (54%) and its Argentine counterparts Eling Energía –formerly named Electroingeniería– (36%) and Hidrocuyo (10%), and contemplated funding of Chinese Development Bank, ICBC and the Bank of China. Cepernic Dam reached a progress of 42% of the planned work and Kirchner Dam around 20%, but the project has been paralyzed again by the Milei government. As González Jáuregui (2021) shows, it has been widely criticized because of its environmental and social negative impacts by different organizations of Argentine civil society, and some NGO presented a precautionary measure in the courts, but the national government lifted it in 2017 and approved the Environmental Impact Assessment of the project, although the juridical dispute did not stop.

Another project with Chinese incidence is the hydroelectric complex “Potrero del Clavillo - El Naranjal” (125MW), located in the provinces of Catamarca and Tucumán, estimated as the biggest hydric project in the north of the country, valued around US\$ 1 billion. This is one of the projects included in the BRI Cooperation Plan, planned to be constructed by a joint venture between Power China and Panedile Argentina and in search of international funding. A joint venture of both companies is already building the “El Tambolar” dam in San Juan province, with a capacity of 70 MW.

Wind and solar energy

Argentina has world-class resources of solar and wind energy, with some of the best photovoltaic (PV) power potential in Andean and sub-Andean regions and some of the best winds in its Patagonian region. As González Jáuregui (2021) points out, the country has become a relevant recipient of Chinese investment and financing for the deployment of these types of energy, while China has seized this opportunity to participate in Argentina's energy transition strategy. This obeys to the leading role the PRC has assumed in the energy transition process, explaining a very relevant measure of the manufacturing of key clean energy technologies such as solar PV (between 60 and 90%) and wind turbines (40%) (Bian et al., 2024). China appears as the world's leading producer and exporter of solar panels, exporting them

to LAC together with photovoltaic products such as silicon wafers, cells and photovoltaic modules, and wind turbines (Cao et al., 2020).

Argentina has several wind and solar projects in the bilateral mechanisms described. First, the Cauchari PV solar plant, located in Jujuy province, which appears as the highest in the world (above four thousand meters of altitude) and the biggest Chinese PV park in LAC. The provincial company JEMSE, in charge of the project, contracted PowerChina and Shanghai Electric for the engineering, acquisition, construction and start-up, and Talesun provided the panels. The projected extension of capacity, from 300 to 500 MW (stages IV and V), is part of DECCE portfolio (DangDai, 2023). Another DECCE project is the wind/solar park “Cerro Arauco” expansion, in La Rioja province (200 MW), in charge of Power China too. Then, the wind parks “El Escorial” and “Antonio Morán”, located in Chubut province and 233 MW projected capacity, are part of BRI portfolio, with Chinese company Gezhouba in charge. Also, as complementary projects to discuss in BRI portfolio, figures the PV plants “Villa María de Río Seco” and “Cura Brochero”, located in Córdoba province (35 MW and 30 MW respectively) and the PV plant “Ibarreta”, in Formosa province - 100 MW (China Observatory, 2023a).

In the RenovAr Program, designed for the supply of electricity from renewable energy sources, Chinese companies obtained 27% of total assigned in its three stages, between 2016 and 2017, and this Chinese investment was distributed 57% for solar PV, 42% for wind and 1% for biogas (Núñez, 2020). Also, Chinese company Goldwind, second global manufacturer of wind turbines, acquired the wind parks “Loma Blanca” I, II and III, in Chubut (150 MW) and another one in Miramar, Buenos Aires province (96 MW). Power China, the Chinese biggest operator in those segments of renewable energy, built solar parks as “Cafayate” (Salta province, 101 MW), “Diaguitas” and “Tamberías” (San Juan province, 2 MW and 4 MW). Envision Energy won contracts for building several parks: “García del Río” and “Vientos del Secano” (Buenos Aires province, 10 MW and 50 MW), and “Los Meandros” (Neuquén province, 125 MW). Jinko Solar won a contract to build solar park “Iglesia Estancia Guañizuil” (San Juan province – 80 MW). And, finally, Sinohydro also won a contract for building the wind park “Pampa” (Buenos Aires province – 100 MW), but it was cancelled later because of delays in the start of the construction phase (González Jáuregui, 2021). Finally, China-LAC Cooperation Fund, Energy China and China Huadian Engineering participate in the building of the wind park “Viento Reta” (Buenos Aires province – 100 MW).

In short, the PRC has become an important player in the Argentine

renewable energy sector in terms of technology provision, construction and operation of wind and solar parks, and equipment sales (Lewcowicz, 2022).

Mining and the star mineral: lithium

Argentina has a great mining potential, with a low grade of exploitation if it is compared with its neighbors Chile and Peru, two of the biggest minerals producers, with whom it shares the Andean Mountains. Although mining has been a minor activity in its history, since the end of the past century it began to be strongly powered. The most relevant minerals (in economic terms) in Argentina are copper, gold, silver and lithium, while other minerals, such as potassium, iron, uranium, boron, molybdenum, vanadium and zinc, could have opportunities for development (Bustelo & Rubiolo, 2023).

Meanwhile, China is an important player in this field, leader in terms and reserves and extraction of some of the so-called critical minerals, and especially about processing, a segment in which dominates strongly for several of those, for which depends on the import of concentrates and raw materials, so the security of supply is a major concern (Bian et al., 2024). The presence of the PRC in Argentina has acquired a great relevance in the last years, scaling its presence since the 50% stake bought of “Veladero” mine (San Juan province, of ore and silver) by Shandong Gold, in 2017. According to data taken from Argentine Mining Secretariat (2023), since 2020, China appears as the second country in importance in terms of investment announced, after Canada, reaching more than US\$ 3 billion. Chinese mining companies, such as Hanaq, Shandong, MCC and CAM, have a strong presence in Argentina, in projects and investments covering a wide range of minerals in several provinces of the country. From Jujuy to Chubut, these initiatives include the extraction of lithium, gold, silver, copper, zinc, iron and lead, positioning China as a key player in the Argentine mining sector.

Nowadays, the major interest is centered on lithium, which have positioned in the last decade as the “star mineral” for the energy transition due to its uses for the emerging green economy, especially in batteries: both for electronic devices and electric vehicles (EV), the latter being one of the fastest growing and most globally competitive areas in recent years.⁹ Argentina is part of the “Lithium Triangle” (with Bolivia and Chile), where it is estimated

⁹ The PRC has set a target that at least 20% of new cars sold annually by 2025 should be renewable energy vehicles, and by 2035 this type should become the “mainstream” of new car sales, and Chinese electro-mobility market represents half of the world’s electric vehicle sales (The Economist, 2024b).

that more than half of the world's lithium resources are concentrated. At par, the country appears as the world's second in terms of resources, third in reserves and fourth in production, while it presents a bigger potential than its neighbors because of the great quantity of projects (more than 40 currently) compared with them (Author et al., in press). In 2022, Argentina exported more than US\$ 300 million in minerals to China, and above 92% of that amount corresponded to lithium carbonate, followed by silver and its concentrates. The PRC appeared as the main lithium exports destination, with almost 42% of the total (Argentine Mining Secretariat, 2023).

Chinese companies have achieved a leading role in the global value chain of this coveted mineral, both in terms of production and processing (as Tianqi and Ganfeng) and ion-lithium battery manufacturing and EV production (as CATL and BYD, respectively). According to González Jáuregui (2024), Chinese companies present peculiarities compared with the other enterprises: their interest in Argentine lithium is not limited to a financial business neither profitability in short or medium term, but they point to control lithium carbonate battery-grade that the plants will produce for exporting to China and use it there for fabrication of batteries and other related products. In the last years, Chinese companies as Ganfeng, Tsingshan, Zijin, Zangge, Tibet Summit Resources, Hanaq y Revotech acquired an important position in the lithium Argentine sector through different measures as mergers and acquisitions and joint ventures with Western counterparts, and they have participation in thirteen projects, mainly in advanced stages.

At par, in contrast to other types of management of the local tensions generated by this "lithium fever" in the North of the country, Chinese companies (as well as Canadians ones) have signed agreements with all affected indigenous communities in the territories where each project is placed. These agreements imply investments and donations for building or repairing schools, libraries, community centers, providing internet access and PCs, job provision, training and monetary compensation (González Jáuregui, 2021). In effect, this is a sensitive problem for all types of extractive project related to NR and energy, given the relevant anti-extractivist movement and social opposition to them along the country, due to the lack or deficiencies of environmental impacts studies; free, prior and informed consent processes and public controls to extractive projects.

Finally, it can be noted a set of agreements signed between 2021 and 2023 by Argentine governments and companies at both the national and provincial levels with Chinese counterparts to advance industrialization at source through the location of battery factories, the provision of equipment and machinery, and scientific and technological cooperation, although many

of these agreements have not materialized (Author et al., forthcoming). Notwithstanding, as González Jáuregui (2024) notes, despite the proliferation of recent cooperation agreements, they do not include specific clauses of technology transfer and/or joint technological and industrial development between the Chinese companies and its Argentine counterparts, be it the State, the scientific system and/or local companies.

General balance: achievements, obstacles and challenges

As can be observed throughout the previous reconstruction of the main areas of bilateral interest and cooperation, there is an important heterogeneity of situations, with different types of initiatives and cooperation instruments, firms positioning and unequal progresses and results in each case. Hereafter it is presented an articulated summary of this diverse situation picture, highlighting the tracks with more and less success.

The successful instruments are presented in first place: 1) Chinese firms positioning through market mechanisms like mergers and acquisitions and joint ventures, especially in O&G, wind energy and mining –not exempt from problems, like Sinopec's departure from the country–. 2) Chinese firms positioning through biddings, especially in wind and solar energy, a sector where they have become important players in matters of technology provision, the building and operation of parks. Then, the instruments that have not resulted successful, at least until now, refer to: 3) Different types of cooperation agreements in matter of O&G –either production or distribution infrastructure building–, nuclear and hydroelectric energy –plants and dams' construction–, and lithium –joint investments and industrialization projects for ion-lithium batteries–.

So, there are still difficulties in the process of cooperation. As Povse & Pedrosa (2023) notes, agreements, memorandums, expressions of intent and even contracts with suppliers abound, but few projects are financed, and even fewer are carried through to completion, estimating almost sixteen billion dollars that are expected to be disbursed and used for the mutual benefit of China and Argentina.

This represents a key issue, and, in this regard and on the base of the precedent overview of the main areas of bilateral interest and cooperation, some explanatory factors are postulated hereafter: A) Geopolitics, given the US' pressures, in a transparent way in some cases (like around the nuclear sector) and in an underhanded way in others, in order to cut either paralyze Chinese strategic projects in the country; B) Argentine macroeconomic

instability since 2018, which have implied currency tensions, taxes and related problems, and a chronic and uncontrollable inflation; C) Social license issue, given the resistance of civil society groups like local communities of the regions where some projects are designed to be emplaced and members of the important anti-extractivist movement in the country; D) Management, related to political alternation of governments that paralyze or modify certain bilateral agreements, either regulatory issues, lack of efficiency and certain «one egg in each basket» logic (given that some BRI projects have been negotiated at the same time with other international funding organisms like the Interamerican Development Bank –Álvarez et al, 2024–), among others.

To present major details of some of the precedent factors, it can be noted the following extracts of certain protagonists, on the basis of some interviews to them, both made by the author's research and taken from newspapers. In the first place, the Head of Investment & Trade Section of the Argentine Embassy in China expressed that, generally, the country reached mere political agreements, but few reached to commercial stage (EPC contracts) and less to financial steps to concrete. At par, the following ideas are eloquent to be cited at length:

There is a great willingness on the Chinese side to cooperate, but this cooperation often remain at a purely political level, partly because it is difficult for Argentina to find the conditions for the State to articulate with private actors, partly because when it comes to State actors it is difficult for the State to translate policy into concrete actions, and partly because the macroeconomic conditions of recent years were not in tune to make this type of investments that are of a longer term (personal communication, December 5°, 2023).

In addition to this appreciations, it can be observed, from the Argentine side, the lack of a planned and coordinated strategy in the relationship with China, existing different State agencies, companies and civil groups without centralized coordination, a problem directly related to the strategic and political struggles about the development model, the geopolitical interests and international insertion of the country in the current world (dis)order.

On the other hand, Tu Shuiping, former president of PowerChina's Argentine subsidiary and currently Latin America Director of State Power Investment Corp. (SPIC), interviewed for this research, expressed several obstacles for the numerous projects that the company has in the country (being 32 in total: 20 already finished and 12 in project state) related to

economic or political viability of the projects. He said that Argentina is very complex, presenting huge opportunities but with a limited business, remarking conflicts with labor unions. Also, having lived many years in the country he could learn the Argentine culture and he marked as guidelines the necessity of establishing plans and projects with competitiveness, reliability and efficiency, meeting deadlines and goals (personal communication, December 6°, 2023).

In a similar line, Ling Peitian, the general manager of Goldwind Argentina expressed that investing in the country implies an extra risk compared with other countries of the region, due to the volatility of legal and regulatory issues and foreign exchange restrictions, among other factors. Notwithstanding, this does not detract from the “very high attractiveness” of this market, with excellent resources, growth potential, and laws and regulations that support the development of clean energy (Lewcowicz, 2022). Finally, Zheng Weihui, co-chairman of the Silk Road International Cooperation Summit Forum, director of the Belt & Road Cooperation Center in Argentina and general director of the Chamber of Chinese Businessmen and Traders in the country, expressed the high capacity of Argentine qualified labor force and that the interest on Latin America and Argentina is not reduced to its raw materials but also to its industrial development, which may serve as platforms for enter products to United States and Europe (Nesci, 2024).

Then, as different authors note (Núñez, 2020; González Jáuregui, 2021; Rozengardt, 2023; Juste, 2024), it has been a learning process from the Chinese side to include subnational Argentine actors (governments and companies) in the joint projects in order to transcend the problems related to political transitions, in a multilevel and multi-actor strategy that position Chinese interests through enterprises, banks, diplomatic representatives and cultural agencies and its links with Argentine counterparts. At par, it can be observed the preference for including a local strategic partner in joint ventures, like Argentine provincial companies or private companies, with successful experiences especially in the renewables sector and in O&G, hydroelectric and nuclear energy. Reinforcing this idea, the Head of Investment & Trade Section of the Argentine Embassy in China expressed that an error that Chinese actors had in the oil and gas sector –with respect to Sinopec’s problem and exit of the country in 2021– was that they did not find the right local partner and operated alone, and concluding: “I think they have learned that and they are now always going to look for local partners for investments” (personal communication, December 5°, 2023).

For other part, this sort of obstacles to the bilateral cooperation, especially those related to joint efforts over industrialization, sci-tech and

value addition at origin to NR affect the possibility to Argentina to gain techno-productive capabilities to scale positions in the global value chains, while the exports of the resources without processing –or in low levels– grow strongly. Meanwhile, many cooperative projects, especially around renewable energy and lithium, are carried out under a turnkey model, in which China assumes financing, planning, engineering, equipment and supplies acquisition, construction and commissioning, with a linkage model that promotes the dependency to Chinese capital and companies in most cases, with none or little technology transfer and know how (Bustelo & Rubiolo, 2023; Juste, 2024). In this line, Treacy (2023) points out the existence of a logic of cooperation and dependency that the relation with China offers for Argentina, and the dependence derives from a structural condition given the necessity of the country to attract capitals for needed investments for development and, at par, importing supplies, manufacturing and technology.

However, important exceptions to this trend exist, as previously stated about the first agreements around the nuclear power plants, then modified by the following Argentine government in a pernicious way for national industry and technology, and Argentine nuclear technology export to China as an important milestone. On occasion of this last event, the former Argentine Ambassador in China, Sabino Vaca Narvaja, expressed that Argentine companies as Nucleoeléctrica, INVAP, ARSAT, YPF, Inti, Nuclearis and SpaceSur were cooperating in sci-tech matter with Chinese counterparts (Glezer, 2023). In this respect, around 40% of bilateral agreements documents refers to sci-tech cooperation (with nuclear energy and NR as part of the main areas), and it is included the possibility of develop joint products, patents and bi-national companies, although, at par, only 11% of the agreements explicitly mentions technology and knowledge transfer (Haro Sly, 2017b and 2019, cited in Hurtado & Haro Sly, 2023).

In short, summarizing the results of this research in line with the guiding questions stated in the beginning, it can be supported that there is space in the bilateral agenda for a more relevant place for Argentine techno-productive capabilities, in order to tension the historic peripheral position of the country in the international labor division and to materialize the South-South Cooperation principles in this topic, but it depends on the national coordination, planning and consensus, which represents a very difficult matter nowadays. So, an important Argentine deficit exists in this point, and it implies a key challenge to press for the establishment of learning processes from Chinese know how, the inclusion and promotion of local sci-tech resources and a bigger participation of local companies and technologies in the Chinese-funded projects for the sake of capabilities diversification and

scaling up of the productive framework.

In this sense, the strengthening of the Argentina-China relationship, the BRI and other Chinese-based global initiatives, and the increasing energy transition agenda can become a window of opportunity as a vector of development, as Hurtado & Haro Sly (2023) states, if Argentina is capable of sustaining strategic national objectives and making a qualitative leap in its institutional framework, as well as in its capacities for coordinating policies, public-private partnerships and the generation of conditional incentives for productive and infrastructure investment. So, far from the idealization or demonization of China, conceived either as a menace or salvation, it results key the existence of a project of sovereign and autonomous development, to benefit from these windows of opportunity but as a geopolitical option, with the social forces able to support that project (Fernández et al., 2023; Author et al., 2024).

Conclusions and final remarks

As it has been analyzed, in the framework of the increasing relations between China and Argentina, and on the base of the huge potential of the southern country in terms of energy and natural resources, these topics represent one of the main interests in the bilateral relation. This obeys to an Argentine bet to counter the trade balance deficit with PRC and to build new export complexes providers of currencies (one of the most sensitive chronic problems of the country), as well as this is intertwined with Chinese needs for its energy and supply security. This is why energy and NR have a great relevance both at Argentine entry to Chinese-based initiatives as BRI, the existing bilateral cooperation mechanisms, Chinese investments in the country and in the bilateral trade balance.

Then, having analyzed the main areas of bilateral interest and cooperation (oil and gas, nuclear, hydroelectric, solar and wind energy, and mining), it can be noted an important heterogeneity of situations, with different types of initiatives and cooperation instruments, firms positioning and unequal progresses and results in each case. As a general conclusion, it can be noted that Chinese presence grew considerably on its own (either through mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures or biddings), while bilateral cooperation found a sort of obstacles that impeded to concrete the numerous agreements signed in each area. We have postulated some explanatory factors for these obstacles: A) Geopolitics, B) Argentine macroeconomic instability C) Social license issue, D) Management problems. In order to transcend these

obstacles, it has been a learning process from the Chinese side to include subnational Argentine actors (governments and companies) in the joint projects, and an important challenge consists of materializing the numerous agreements on each area. From the Argentine side, we understand as a key challenge the assignment of a more relevant place for its techno-productive capabilities, to tension the historic peripheral position of the country in the international labor division and to materialize the South-South Cooperation principles in this topic, but it depends on the national coordination, planning and consensus, which represents a very difficult matter nowadays.

Finally, concerning the future perspectives of the bilateral relationship, it appears a big question related to the changes in course given the geopolitical orientation of the current Argentine government, totally aligned with the US in its dispute against the increasing Chinese positioning in Latin America, a region conceived as its backyard. The current president Milei, auto-assumed as liberal-libertarian and anarcho-capitalist, not only has expressed several declarations against China but has paralyzed almost all type of bilateral cooperation (excepting the swap, given the Argentine chronic currency crisis), especially on the most strategic projects and on the base of US pressures in this regard (Lewcowicz, 2024). In effect, the intense and increasing geopolitical struggle has a relevant point on the control and access to strategic natural resources, and it concerns strongly the Argentine ones, which have a huge potential in the middle of the current race for the energy transition and the ongoing techno-productive revolution.

Notwithstanding, geoeconomic dynamics could change governments' orientations, as it happened previously with Macri's government or in the neighbor Brazil with Jair Bolsonaro, when both domestic economic interests and the need for sustaining the huge Chinese investment and trade involved a moderation of hard pro-Western initial positions and new pragmatic approaches towards China, to the detriment of ideological concerns as function of joint businesses. Currently, there are also indications to this effect at present, and the Argentina-China relation could be retaken again, prevailing pragmatism on both sides. At par, it is important the Chinese positioning in the main areas of energy and natural resources, beyond bilateral cooperation, as it has been analyzed here, and it constitutes an important asset difficult to dismantle.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to analyze the outstanding role that energy and natural resources play in the increasing relationship between China and Argentina to inquire what type of development is outlined. These topics have a central role in terms of the bilateral trade balance, investment, funding and around cooperation mechanisms, due to the Argentine bet to build new export complexes and Chinese needs for its energy and supply security. Oil and gas, mining and different types of energy generation are analyzed: nuclear, hydroelectric, solar and wind, highlighting Chinese firms positioning as well as bilateral cooperation agreements, its obstacles and challenges.

KEYWORDS

Development, Geopolitics, Energy Transition

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ECOPOLITICS AND ECOLOGICAL TRENDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. REALISM OR UTOPIA?

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Introduction

Ecopolitics, understood as a political orientation whose ideology is based on the existence of an active civil society which is aware of its rights and developing in the spirit of sustainability, since the 1970s has been shaping the political arenas of particular states of the broadly conceived Western civilisation and has had a permanent and increasing impact on them, but has also become a widespread phenomenon in the social thought. At the start of the third decade of the 21st century the so-called ecological trend has become such a common phenomenon in Western countries that it has grown into an element of fashion or a stylish way of life in accordance with the principle “you are eco-friendly – you are trendy”. However, while ecopolitics, social ecological trends as well as the work of the so-called Green parties (certainly with different political effectiveness in various states) have become a *fait accompli* in the European perspective, in other regions of the world – especially those where the sphere of social or political movements, including in particular civic movements, is non-existent – the establishment and functioning of such movements, if it happens at all, faces major obstacles in the form of political barriers set up by the authoritarian regimes, which perceive such movements as a threat to their own political existence.

The aim of this article is to present the origin, evolution and functioning of ecological trends and ecopolitics focused on the objectives of sustainable development in selected states in the Middle East, as well as to determine the chances for the intensification of their social, religious and political impacts in the region in the third decade of the 21st century. The research problem will

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be resolved through providing answers to the following research questions: is Islam an obstacle to developing eco-trends in the Middle East?; what is the correlation between Islam, politics and eco trends in the Middle East countries?; what factors contribute to the establishment of environmental (Green) movements in Middle Eastern states?; what determining factors constitute a barrier for the political, religious and social existence and further development of ecological trends and ecopolitics in the Middle East?; if religious factors and circumstances guarantee effectiveness of ecological trends in the Middle East?; do Western states that have close relationships (sometimes alliance relations, e.g. the USA) with states in the region pursue an effective policy for supporting the Green movements and groups in Middle Eastern states?; does ecopolitics in the Middle East remain aligned with the interests of the states from outside the region which pursue their interests in this part of the world?

The hypothesis to be verified in this article is contained in the assumption that there is a close correlation between religious and political circumstances and low effectiveness of environmental movements and groups as well as poor efficiency in the pursuit of their objectives and postulates. Due to the specificity of authoritarian regimes, a limited scope of civil liberties, as well as marginalisation of the influence of Western media (including political control over social media), there are no favourable circumstances for the effective development of ecological trends and pursuit of the objectives of ecopolitics in Middle Eastern states. The Greens are perceived by the authorities as a threat to their own stability and state security, and consequently, as an element of opposition, which has no place in the states in this region. Middle Eastern societies are not mentally prepared for the participation in the Green movements, and the occasional waves of their popularity – the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Nejati and Salamzadeh and Salamzadeh 2011) – are of incidental and transitory nature.

The research problem will be resolved and the hypothesis will be verified with the use of the following research methods: the comparative method, factor analysis, content analysis and systemic analysis. The research problem is original and has not yet been analysed in the academic literature from the perspective presented in the article.

Ecopolitics and ecological trends – The specificities of theoretical approach

Responsible progression of each country, based on the principles of

sustainable development, implies meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the chances of future generations to meet their own needs. Constructive and conscious policy of economic growth dynamisation requires adequate expertise, an innovative approach to solving socioeconomic problems and efficient management of non-renewable resources. The idea of sustainable development and environmental responsibility is already deeply rooted in the awareness of the largest global brands, innovative companies and huge corporations, but above all it has become a part of everyday life of individuals (Pihkala 2020). Being “eco-friendly” has become trendy, while not following ecological trends has simply become passé. Conscious societies have moved from the stage of the “eco-friendly attitude” to the “eco-shaming phase” (eco-shaming, eco-guilt, green-shame).

However, while the notions of sustainability and ecopolitics have become deeply rooted in the socioeconomic reality of the countries in the broadly conceived West, this model of functioning seems to be still far from being achieved in the countries outside of Western civilisation, including Middle Eastern states. Environmental activism, commitment to environmental protection and eco-innovation defined as a new or significantly improved product (good or service), process, organisational or marketing method that bring environmental benefits as compared to alternative solutions, are not trendy in non-Western civilisations, thus they do not determine their social, economic and political functioning. Therefore, fundamental questions are raised as to the possibility of expansion of Western ecological trends to other, in this case, Middle Eastern societies and ruling elites (Stoett 2023, 172, 191).

It should be stressed that it is primarily the self-awareness and pressure put by young people that make manufacturers apply faster and better solutions related to sustainable development, but also force organisations, institutions and other international bodies as well as state and local authorities to adopt ecological solutions. Greta Thunberg, a Swedish climate activist, who at the age of fifteen started protesting outside the Swedish parliament building against climate change in 2018, has in a way become the face of such ecological campaigns in recent years (Gould 2022). Greta Thunberg’s protest, fitting into and even radicalising the ecological revolution which had already begun and its constituent parts in the form of spreading ecological trends, struck a chord with other young activists all over the world.

An analysis of the newest ecological trends makes it possible to identify six dominant trends which have appeared or become more powerful over recent years (5 Trends 2021).

The first of them, and at the same time one of the newest trends, is “Flygskam”, which means the feeling of shame about travelling by plane.

This attitude results from the awareness of the negative impact of the aviation industry on climate and the environment (Mkono 2020: 223-226). The aviation sector belongs to the group of ten sectors responsible for the highest global emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and production of various waste and pollutants (Timperley 2022). Awareness of this state of affairs has given rise to the global discussion on the adverse environmental impact of flying, which has resulted in a number of eco-friendly actions. In June 2019 KLM Royal Dutch Airlines initiated the “Fly responsibly” campaign (KLM 2022), in Spain the “Zero Cabin Waste” project was started to reduce cabin waste (Evolution 2022), and in 2020 the international programme Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation was implemented, aiming at offsetting around 80% of the CO₂ emissions above 2020 levels by 2035 (Reducing 2022).

Another ecological trend can be described as “ecological fashion”. Its key feature is a trend for good quality clothes, but with the emphasis that they do not cause environmental harm. The brands that build their image on being eco-friendly (11 Eco-Friendly 2022) point out that this ecological trend is based on the manufacturer’s and consumer’s awareness that fashion can be approached responsibly, with the implementation of solutions reducing its negative impact on the environment. The eco-friendly fashion industry uses certified, innovative, environmentally-friendly and recycled materials, promotes the minimalist style and also values traditional tailoring, rejecting mass production of low quality clothing (Chan 2021). Again, it is the young generation that chooses ecological fashion, which gives some hope for the future.

The third, slightly older ecological trend can be described as “Impossible Food” or the “meatless meat”. This trend promotes the alternative culture of vegetarianism or veganism as an element of a healthy lifestyle. The promoters of Impossible Food emphasise that industrial animal agriculture is one of major factors causing climate changes due to the fact that it is responsible for approximately 18% of man-made greenhouse gas emissions, which is more than the whole transportation sector generates (Reiley 2019). In 2016 the New York restaurant Momofuku Nishi was the first in the world to introduce the Impossible Burger, the flagship product of Impossible Foods Inc., which is an interesting example of permanent development of the Impossible Food concept (Holpuch 2016). Since then a network of restaurants and companies connected with Impossible Foods Inc., such as Burger King with its Impossible Whoopers, has been created. They are famous for serving various kinds of plant-based food, including pizza and sausages.

“Sustainability” and “Ecological entrepreneurship” constitute the

fourth ecological trend. It defines and determines marketing activities which would allow modern companies whose customers are the environmentally-aware consumers to gain and maintain a privileged market position (Rodríguez-García, Guijarro-García, Carrilero-Castillo 2019: 7-8).

The fifth ecological trend, which to a great extent draws on ecological entrepreneurship, can be termed as “being happy”. This is a relatively new trend where people pay more attention to themselves and their own lives, while employers – to their employees. This attitude is related to the problem of burn-out addressed by the World Health Organization in May 2019. According to WHO, overworking, stress and lack of motivation have a negative impact on the well-being and health of workers. This is why in 2020 a new job position called “happiness manager” started to appear in many corporations. The manager’s main duty is to ensure a friendly atmosphere and proper communication and to fight workaholism at the workplace (Messinger 2016). The “being happy” trend shapes the environment based on the assumption that only a happy employee is capable of working effectively and responsibly, and this can guarantee attainment of sustainable development objectives.

The last of the above-mentioned ecological trends has been named “Be Like Generation Z”. Generation Z is broadly defined as people born after 1995. They grew up in the digital world and virtual reality. Importantly, members of Gen Z have already entered the labour market and turned out to be a creative and entrepreneurial generation, to whom work is an integral, but positive part of their lives. They are opponents of workaholism. This is a generation that has its own opinions and is not afraid to express them. Members of Gen Z can collect, analyse and synthesise data, draw conclusions and work with passion (Parker, Igielnik 2020). Their strength was visible in marches and protests in the streets of many capitals during successive UN climate summits.

Having presented six most important and most popular ecological trends among the societies of the broadly conceived West, it is worth considering the issue of their permeation into culturally different societies. The crucial point in the case in question is the presence or absence of ecological trends in the Middle East.

The Middle East (Islam) and Western ecological trends – assimilation or resistance?

Explosion of environmental activism in Middle Eastern states occurred in the first three decades of the 21st century. It is thus a relatively new phenomenon in this region, which is why it remains an understudied element

in the broader sociopolitical landscape of this part of the world. Importantly, however, the spread of environmental activism in Middle Eastern states reflects changing political circumstances in this region, including attempts to build civil societies in their Western meaning, as well as long-term structural changes in the economic and social spheres of these states, including permanent population growth, increasing urbanisation (almost 70% of the region's population lives in towns) and industrialisation, a progressive growth in the enrolment rates, increased participation of women in the political and economic life or migration processes related to the awareness and desire for the best possible living conditions. However, Joannie L. Sowers is right arguing that “not surprisingly, the expansion of environmental contestation has been most evident in countries with semicompetitive political systems and long histories of collective action, such as Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Israel, and Iran. Environmental activism has also emerged to a lesser degree in authoritarian states considered inhospitable to activism, such as those of the Persian Gulf, while routine forms of civic engagement have become almost impossible in war-torn Syria, Yemen, and Libya” (Sowers 2018). This argument remains fully compatible with the principles and objectives of the Green movement, which is becoming increasingly widespread all over the world, although its foundations are related to values characteristic of democracy. Environmental activists base their work on four key pillars being the antithesis of authoritarian state, which is an inherent element of the Middle Eastern political landscape: sociology based on theoretical foundations of ecology, social justice, participatory democracy (equal participation of the society in the functioning of a state) and nonviolence. It is worth adding that in April 2001 72 countries adopted The Global Greens Charter in Canberra, committing themselves to global partnership based on six fundamental principles, which constitute environmental activism in the 21st century. The principles to follow are: ecological wisdom, social justice, participatory democracy, nonviolence, sustainability and respect for diversity (Global Greens 2021).

It is important to note that Middle Eastern states are far from meeting the globally adopted environmental objectives, including especially the targets which the UN set to the world in 2015 to achieve by 2030 within the framework of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Transforming 2015). This is a conclusion from the UN's 2020 “Arab Sustainable Development Report”, in which progress on each of the seventeen goals of Agenda 2030 is assessed (Schaar 2020). However, this does not mean that environmental activation, at least in certain countries in the Middle East, is not progressing,

as some Middle Eastern societies are aware of the challenges and threats to the environmental and food security typical of this part of the world, such as: excessive consumption of water, which is hard to find in the desert environment and which is scarce in the region (it is estimated that all Arab countries are likely to face the most serious water deficits by 2040–2050) (El-Zein 2014); rapid global warming, which is likely to exacerbate water stress and at the time intensify heat waves and droughts; overfishing and pollution of ecosystems; soil degradation, which has a negative impact on biodiversity, limits the development of agriculture and food production and contributes to severe sand storms and starvation (Al-Sarihi 2022); rapid urbanisation and economic development connected with the increased consumption of fossil fuels, water and other non-renewable natural resources, as well as with the excessive CO₂ emission into the air in connection with the growing demand for energy (Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are among the world's largest per capita CO₂ emitters – lobbying against fossil fuels is regarded by the authorities as a threat to state security and eliminated or ignored completely); lack of infrastructure and expertise on issues related to environmentally friendly policies and sustainability (Hawkins 2020).

Public environmental awareness is thus the essential condition, but it does not constitute a sufficient basis for environmental sustainability in Middle Eastern countries. The development and promotion of ecological trends are hindered by the following factors and circumstances: numerous and long-lasting regional conflicts (Özalp 2011: 5-9); the problem of refugees and humanitarian disasters (for example civil wars in Yemen or Syria); rivalry for influence between regional powers (such as Turkish policy of cutting down trees in Syrian and Iraqi Kurdistan) (Abdulla 2022); terrorist activities; or the rivalry for economic, political and military influence in the region between the outside powers (the USA, Russia, China, India), to whom the ecological values of the region are of secondary importance (Del Sarto, Malmvig, Lecha 2019: 35-36).

Therefore, awareness of environmental problems in the Middle East is highly insufficient as it lacks a broader conceptual basis. There is a lack of political thought focused on how to fight, and how to prevent damage to the environment in the Middle East. As Hafsa Halawa rightly remarks, language and literature have not yet provided intellectual thought on the issues of environmental challenges and threats as well as the forms of addressing them in the MENA region. The direction of Middle Eastern ecopolitics is still unclear and its targets undefined. Although the governments of all the MENA states have adopted some kind of national environmental protection legislation and established agencies or ministries of environmental protection, such

ministries are frequently no more than an institutional facade of little practical significance and the funds at their disposal are extremely modest. What is more, analysts and environmental activists often face misunderstanding resulting from combining environmental civil society (focused on water security and air quality) with climate activism (direct targeting of emissions, and action to address and reduce climate change), which leads to the inability to differentiate between the short- and long-term actions. “Almost nowhere is there a deep appreciation of these topics as they relate to broader civil society activism, rights, and economic and political security and engagement” (Halawa 2020).

Therefore, while analysing the phenomenon of environmental activism in Middle Eastern countries it should be pointed out at the very beginning that there is a noticeable contradiction as far as environmental mobilisation of Middle Eastern societies is concerned. On the one hand, the goal set for themselves by the authoritarian ruling elites (Danahar 2015: 22-24), understood as dynamic social, political and economic development leading to the modernisation of the states and the ability to meet Western competition, requires attracting private investors that use innovative technological solutions. That means prioritising ecological solutions, in line with the common Western assumption that the future of our planet depends and is based on environmentally friendly patents and on the implementation of the sustainable development concept. On the other hand, however, the authoritarian Middle Eastern authorities permanently suppress any social activity by controlling universities and non-governmental organisations, thereby preventing the rise of civil societies that are aware of their rights and using censorship as an instrument to control social awareness, which does not promote the development of social and political movements, including the Green movement. This state of affairs is due to the fact that environmental activism is perceived by the political decision-makers in the Middle East as a threat to security, internal order and territorial integrity of the states, and above all as a threat to the political status quo, which in some cases is decades-old (Esposito, Sonn, Voll 2016: 238-240). It may also be seen as a risk of increased influence of external (Western) actors, which is associated with a loss of some sovereignty and a return to the mandate system, colonial or even postcolonial era.

However, despite common resistance, conservatism and concerns of the ruling elites in Middle Eastern states, there has been a steady rise in the awareness of the necessity to adopt and implement ecological solutions, both among the Middle Eastern societies and some of the political decision-makers. It is a very positive trend and all the signs are that it will continue

both in the short- and mid-term perspective. Therefore, it will be an extremely demanding and difficult task for the Western world elites pursuing their political, economic and military interests in the Middle East to exert a positive pressure and raise the awareness of the significance of environmental mobilisation and gradual implementation of the objectives related to the Green movement among Middle Eastern decision-makers.

Therefore, as the study of the environmental activism phenomenon in the Middle East has shown, it is possible to pose a hypothesis that it develops in two different ways. This is why environmental activism can be considered both in broad and narrow terms.

The narrow approach to environmental activism in the Middle East pertains mainly to the urban population that more and more frequently lives in the proximity of industrial plants, landfills, waste incineration plants and other harmful industrial facilities, with a meagre standard of living and quality of life. There has been a steady rise in the incidence of chronic diseases and mortality rates, and the availability of professional health care services and tests, as well as the possibility to change the place of residence, remain highly limited. It should therefore be stressed that environmental activists in Middle Eastern states have achieved certain success not so much at the central level, but just at the local level. Being close to the environmental problems, feeling the effects of environmental degradation on their own lives, they can mobilise themselves and other people to take initiatives for improving their quality of life. Local social environmental movements are the best evidence of this phenomenon. Acting in particular districts or broader communities, the local environmental activists focus on the most pressing problems, such as poor waste management and the insufficient water infrastructure. Such initiatives may be well exemplified by the Egyptian non-governmental organisation Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA), whose activity is not focused on the environmental problems of the entire country, but on the protection of the Egyptian part of the coral reefs and the biodiversity of the Red Sea in connection with the permanent increase in tourism and the economic development in this region of Egypt posing a threat to the ecosystem. HEPCA carries out multiple projects and social initiatives extremely effectively and is actively engaged in activities related to raising environmental awareness, targeted at the local community, schools, tourism industry and service providers operating in the Red Sea region (HEPCA 2022).

It is therefore important to note that globalisation and widespread mediatisation, including especially expansion of the Internet and social networking sites or blogs, have made people who engage in activities at the local level become more and more aware of the reasons for deteriorating health and

lack of prospects for the future. Comparing their own standard of living with the possibilities offered by the West, they can see an opportunity for change for future generations. This is why it is the young, highly educated generation that is becoming particularly active in the sphere of ecological solutions. This is the generation which can be compared to the Western Generation Z. This generation focuses on green solutions in fashion, dietary habits or the “being happy” aspect in the professional sphere. This generation is aware of its values, needs and the necessity of change. This is the generation that constitutes the Middle Eastern Green movements. And finally, this is the generation that has no communication barriers, since – as described by Marshall McLuhan – it has become a part of the global village. Members of Generation Z should be seen as a chance for an effective and successful environmental change in the Middle East, provided, of course, that authoritarian authorities do not brutally stifle their enthusiasm for environmental mobilisation.

On the other hand, the broader approach to Middle Eastern environmental activism should be analysed in terms of ecopolitics at the level of central authorities. The problem is that the issue of ecopolitics at this level remains a secondary or even tertiary concern in the Middle East. What is more, central authorities are not favourably inclined towards eco-friendly activities. Environmental activists, as well as journalists addressing the issues of environmental protection, are subjected to surveillance and repressions. Their fundamental rights and freedoms are restricted and many of them have been imprisoned or forced to leave the country. Furthermore, at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, non-governmental organisations involved with environmental protection remain under pressure from authoritarian regimes, and their ability to act is usually highly limited. It is worth recalling that the civic-minded reforms in Middle Eastern states, which also pertained to environmental activists, took place only for a short time following the Arab Spring of 2011 (Amin 2016: 45-62). In practice, however, the Arab Spring ended in a fiasco, and after a decade of the uprising there is a return to the status quo ante in the countries in the region (Brownlee, Masoud, Reynolds 2015: 226-228). To confirm this point, it is worth recalling that when citizens took to the streets to protest over water shortages in 2018 or July 2021 during one of the most severe droughts in Iran, many political decision-makers in the Islamic Republic of Iran began to perceive environmental activism as a dangerous source of mass ideological mobilisations which could threaten political stability and the rule of the Shiite clergy. Therefore, the protests met with attempts at their violent suppression (Esfandiari 2021). Suppressing environmental activism at the central level can be perfectly exemplified by the case of Egypt under the rule of general Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The

Egyptian president, through his radical policy to limit political pluralism, has marginalised the freedom of association and placed severe restrictions on NGOs, including environmental organisations. In May 2017 al-Sisi ratified a new NGO law, which almost entirely eliminated the possibility of functioning of civil society from Egyptian public space and marginalised the functioning of non-governmental human rights organisations and associations. The adopted law criminalised NGOs' work, introducing the penalty of up to five years in prison for non-compliance with its provisions, such as receiving external funds without government approval. The law also allowed for permanent surveillance and monitoring of NGOs' daily activities by state officials. Furthermore, the authorities imposed travel bans on human rights defenders and NGO workers. In November 2020 members of one of the few non-governmental organisations remaining in Egypt, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), were arrested (Human Rights Watch 2020).

It is worth adding that an interesting approach to the issue of environmental mobilisation in the Middle East has been presented by Joannie L. Sowers, who identified three dominant groups of modes of state and society engagement in environmental issues. According to J.L. Sowers, the first are informal and include small-scale, localised actions, focusing on the activities of small groups of community members, rural and urban residents, who block roads and public places, file petitions to local officials and attempt to pressure state authorities in order for adequate measures to be taken to prevent degradation of natural environment in their closest surroundings. These modes of activism, as pointed out by J.L. Sowers, generate small changes in the pro-environmental state and corporate behaviour and policies. The second group is of a more institutionalised nature and focuses on environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS). An interesting fact is that over the recent years the number of ENGOS has rapidly grown in such states as Iran, Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, Egypt or Palestine, although the level of popular support in particular countries varies considerably. The effectiveness of their activities is mainly limited by the fact that they operate in authoritarian regimes, which entails an array of government restrictions and strict control, including stringent requirements related to receiving funds for their activity. The third group of modes, which according to J.L. Sowers appear to be the most effective due to their flexible, diffused nature, has been termed as resistance campaign (*hamla*). This type of environmental activism is often accompanied by social campaigns, the activity of local committees, lobbying and cooperation with the media in order to get local and nationwide publicity concerning their environmental activities (Sowers 2018). This group of modes bears a strong resemblance to professional work of Western

environmental activists. However, the main difference in their effectiveness lies in the fact that while Western countries support, or at least do not hinder grassroots environmental activities, the Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes, which possess instruments of police repression and hindrances in the form of bureaucratic pathologies, become the main obstacles to successful ecopolitics.

The practical side of sustainable development and ecological trends in the Middle East

As mentioned above, the Middle East is not a part of the world where special emphasis is placed on ecological trends, the Green movement or the sustainable development policy. The fact is that both the authorities and some societies are aware of the importance of environmental problems, however, the approach to addressing these problems is extremely limited and diversified but, most of all, it is dependent on a number of various internal and external factors and circumstances. Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that despite numerous barriers and challenges, which hamper or slow down the progress of the sustainable development policy and the Green movements' activities, measures and projects are being undertaken in most states in the region, which may be perceived as a turn in the right direction – towards ecological trends and the principles of sustainable development. Therefore, it is worth presenting at least a few examples of the practical side of ecopolitics in the Middle East.

Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting examples is Egypt (Hussein, Pollock 2019), where the totally eco- friendly New Administrative Capital (NAC) is under construction. It is commonly named “the new Cairo”, although the new capital cannot ultimately bear this name as one of Cairo's districts has already been named like that.

It is interesting to note that NAC is a city built from scratch, while president al-Sisi himself was the project initiator. According to the project, which originated as early as March 2015, the new capital – smart city – will accommodate about 7 million people. All the key state institutions will be transferred there. NAC is expected to replace the overpopulated Cairo. Justifying the need for the construction of a new capital city, Egyptian authorities pointed out that the overcrowded Cairo was no longer able to function efficiently, and the excessive number of tourists, immigrants, as well as the expansion of slums definitely make it difficult for the old capital to function properly. What is important, however, is the fact that ecology became a significant characteristic and distinctive feature in the design of the new city

(El Hakeh 2021).

Thus, most importantly, the new smart city is to be technologically advanced and have extraordinary architecture, with the tallest skyscraper in Africa, the largest Christian church (a Coptic church) in the Middle East and the biggest mosque in Egypt. Additionally, the administrative and business districts and the Green River Park – the largest park along the river in Africa, which is to resemble the Nile River – are also architecturally unique and modern. Twenty parks and green areas are to be created in the city, which will ensure that over 15 square metres of green space will be allocated per inhabitant, which is several times the number in Cairo. The new authorities constructing the smart city argue that they prioritise environmentally friendly solutions and sustainable development. The city is to use energy from the sun, city transportation is to be based on electric train lines and payments will be cashless. Stefano Boeri, who is famous for his designs of buildings integrated with greenery, designed three unique structures, which apart from their residential function, will also be home to a vertical forest spread over several storeys. The above undertaking in NAC is expected to attract over two million tourists per year (BOERI 2022).

According to the authorities and the city constructors, NAC, due to its innovative character and ecological solutions, is to become the First Smart Sustainable 4th Generation City in Egypt (ACUD 2022). There are claims that Egypt follows the pattern of the so-called Dubaisation – building new, artificial cities based on ecological solutions. The Egyptians themselves stress that they are proud of great projects, yet a huge part of the society emphasises at the same time that such projects do not meet the current needs and priorities of the Egyptian society struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic, economic problems, shortcomings of education system and health service, and additionally the effects of the increasing pathology of the authoritarian regime.

While analysing the practical side of ecological solutions in the Middle East, it is also worth mentioning some collective and individual actions taken in that area by respective states. It is important to highlight the fact that in view of growing concerns regarding the environment, such as global warming and the depletion of fossil fuel deposits, the states in the region are taking steps to reduce their dependence on natural resources such as oil or natural gas. Extensive investments in renewable energy and solar and wind energy have become an ecological alternative in this case. Significantly, the climatic conditions in the region are favourable for such investments. The Middle East lies within the Global Sun Belt, which gets the most sunlight and the least rainfall. Therefore, states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait or the United

Arab Emirates are investing in a number of renewable energy schemes aiming to achieve from 15% to 30% of their power generation from renewable energy sources by 2030. It is also worth noting that the above-mentioned states are taking proactive measures to control the waste generation by introducing sustainable energy and reasonable waste management projects (e.g. waste recycling). For instance, the UAE, which has achieved a 70% recycling rate in less than ten years, is a pioneer and at the same time the most active state in that area, having reached one of the key environmental trends in its policy referred to as the zero waste. Interestingly, Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates has adopted the initiative named Estidama, which is the Arabic word for sustainability, within the framework of ecological solutions and trends. It is an extremely visionary programme which provides guidance on how to design innovative buildings in order for them to be more sustainable and remain in accordance with the ecological standards. The Estidama programme is fully in line with the innovative project “Abu Dhabi Vision 2030” (Tukan 2022).

What is more, one of the most interesting projects adopted in the Middle East concerns construction and functioning of the smart city named Masdar, located in the United Arab Emirates, which is to be the most sustainable eco-city in the world. Masdar is the first and so far the only city in the world powered entirely by renewable energy and without traffic emission pollution. This is the first city in the world with zero-emission, noiseless urban transport, not compromising the visual side of the city, as it is based on electric vehicles that run on magnetic tracks and operate mainly underground. Interestingly, even the name of the city is not accidental. Masdar is the Arabic word for “source”, which together with its location in the desert and energy self-sufficiency, forms a coherent whole. Masdar is thus to become the flagship example for other cities of how to undergo the process of fast urbanisation through effective use of water, waste and renewable energy, constantly engaging in sustainable development and climate change mitigation. Masdar City, whose construction began in 2006, is a kind of experiment initiated by the emir of the United Arab Emirates (Masdar, 2022).

The practical side of the ecological solutions focuses also on actions in the legal and institutional fields, which are aimed to demonstrate that the principles and objectives of sustainable development are important and have even become a priority, and the states in the region, aware of the consequences of environmental degradation, fit into the ecological trends with their policies. This may be exemplified by the fact that the authorities of the United Arab Emirates have made sustainable development one of the key themes of one of the most important economic events in the world, EXPO 2020 (1 October 2021 – 31 March 2022). A special thematic pavilion has been dedicated to

the broadly conceived environmental issues and a number of regulations have been adopted with regard to pursuing the objectives of sustainable development (Bureau Expo Dubai 2017). Also the websites dedicated to EXPO 2020 expressly expose the sustainable development policy which is to be promoted in the Middle East by the United Arab Emirates. As emphasised by the EXPO 2020 organisers: “From recycling to promoting natural solutions, we hope to inspire others to reaffirm their commitment to the environment and protecting the Earth for future generations. All of our actions are geared towards creating positive environmental impacts on a national, regional and global scale, and support the Dubai Plan 2021, UAE Vision 2021 and the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (EXPO 2022).

Interestingly, Saudi Arabia has also paid particular attention to the problem of environmental pollution, issuing a decree obliging all organisations to comply with standards related to reduction of noise, air and water pollution. The Presidency of Meteorology of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has established a climate data rescue programme, consisting of recording and archiving metadata information, which is crucial for long-term analyses of climate changes (I-DARE 2022). Furthermore, the theme of environmental protection has been adopted within the Basic Law of Governance in accordance with article (322) of the Statute, which provides as follows: the State shall endeavour to preserve, protect, and improve the environment and prevent its pollution. Taking into consideration the fast economic development of the state, which for decades has been based predominantly on the oil sector, Saudi authorities have been systematically introducing regulations and establishing institutions whose task is to monitor environmental pollution, but also taking actions for the prevention of the natural environment degradation. An example of such institutions is the Department of Meteorology and Environmental Protection or the General Authority for Meteorology and Environmental Protection, and the actions are reflected in the adoption of legal measures in the form of the Environmental Law in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its executive regulations. Saudi Arabia’s efforts to protect the environment are also exemplified by initiatives such as establishing a research fund for energy and the environment. “The Kingdom has the most significant environmental reconstruction project in history. The project is focused on developments, which were integrated after the Gulf War and cost the Kingdom more than 1.1 billion USD. The Center for Desert Agriculture works on developing sustainable, low-input systems, which use water efficiently to produce food and grains and are proportionate with the coastal desert environments that depend on agriculture in relation to sea water and sunlight” (Saudi 2022).

Conclusion

Ecopolitics and ecological trends are not new or unknown phenomena in the Middle East. These phenomena have been becoming a well-established element of the religious and political landscape of societies and states in the region for at least a decade, and their increase is to be expected in the near future.

The fact is that Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes constitute one of the greatest barriers hampering and hindering the work of civic environmental movements, however, there are a number of innovative projects and initiatives both at the local and central level, which are fully aligned with the Western trends of the sustainable development policy, and frequently outdo the Western civilisation in terms of technological advancement.

The discussion on ecopolitics and ecological trends in the Middle East is therefore fully relevant and justified. Sources of the potential environmental disaster in the region should be seen in the wrong policy pursued by authoritarian decision-makers towards their native ecosystems. Middle Eastern states are facing a number of challenges and threats to their sustainable development. Factors contributing to the ecological instability in the region include the dynamics of demographic change, environmental degradation related to the overexploitation of raw materials, especially oil and natural gas, scarcity of natural resources such as water, food shortages being the consequence of droughts and global warming, but also intra-regional conflicts, the activity of jihadist organisations and multidimensional proxy wars fought in the region. This is why, if the Western part of the international society would like the states in the Middle East to pursue global sustainable development policy, it itself must avoid fragmentation of the region through indirect and direct participation in wars, and focus on peaceful settlement of disputes, promoting the implementation of environmental legislation in the region and establishing the relevant institutions supervising ecopolitics by these states.

The Middle East is a very receptive region, which is open to new ideas and solutions. It is a region where the model of authoritarian governance must ultimately become compatible with addressing challenges posed by Western ecological trends and ecopolitics. What is extremely important is that many states in the region have successfully met such challenges and understand that in the 21st century it is not possible to be a highly developed country (a regional power) without taking into account the objectives of the sustainable

development policy. In this case it is especially the young generation that has become the element of the social structure that is building, developing and exporting this ecological awareness in the Middle East.

Therefore, if ecological trends and ecopolitics remain in compliance with the political and religious objectives of the state and are aligned with internal and foreign policies without the risk of losing power and political and religious influence by the ruling authoritarian decision-makers, then they become an important instrument used to enhance the state's position in the Middle East and in the international arena. Ecopolitics and ecological trends have become effective tools used to show the world that a particular state has become modern and its economy is innovative. It appears that ecopolitics in this meaning has been particularly favoured by three Middle Eastern countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This last state promotes sustainable development and ecological trends in the most spectacular way and uses them to build its new position as a power in the Middle East.

In sum, ecopolitics and ecological trends do not threaten religion's dominant position in Middle Eastern countries. Islam and ecology do not contradict each other. Moreover, countries dominated by radical Muslims, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, focus on the development of ecological trends. Therefore, religion (Islam), politics (authoritarian regimes) and ecotrends constitute a new type of dependency triangle in the Middle East.²

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ABSTRACT

The paper explains that Islam and ecology do not contradict each other. Countries dominated by Muslims focus on the development of ecological trends. Ecological trends become essential to enhance the state's position in the region and the international arena. In this case, ecopolitics becomes practical tools used by political decision-makers to create an image of a modern state whose economy is innovative and whose society is aware of the benefits resulting from the implementation of ecological solutions. Nevertheless, there is a close correlation between religious and political circumstances (functioning of authoritarian regimes) and low effectiveness of environmental movements and groups.

KEYWORDS

The Middle East, Ecopolitics, Islam, Ecological Trends, Authoritarian Regime

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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".

SUBMISSION STANDARDS

1. AUSTRAL: Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations publishes only Scientific articles;
2. The research articles must contain a maximum of 12 thousand words;
3. The footnotes should be of complementary nature;
4. The bibliography must follow the rules of the Chicago system (Author-date or note-bibliography), specifying the used literature at the end of the text;
5. Contributions must be original and unpublished, and can be submitted in Portuguese, English or Spanish;
6. Contributions must contain the full name of the author, their titles, institutional affiliation (the full name of the institution) and an e-mail address for contact;
7. The complete filling of the submission form by the authors is mandatory;
8. Contributions from undergraduate or graduate students are allowed, as long as in partnership with a Professor or PhD, which will appear as the main author of the paper;
9. Manuscripts from only one author must be written by a Professor or PhD;
10. There is a limit of three (3) authors per article;
11. Contributions must be accompanied of: three keywords in Portuguese or Spanish and three keywords in English; title in English and in Portuguese or Spanish; abstract in English and in Portuguese or Spanish, both with up to 100 words.
12. Submissions must be made through the journal's website: <http://seer.ufrgs.br/Austral>

SUBMISSION PREPARATION CHECKLIST

As part of the submission process, authors are required to check off their submission's compliance with all of the following items, and submissions may be returned to authors that do not adhere to these guidelines.

1. Contributions must be original, and shall not have been submitted for publication in another journal; otherwise, it must be justified in "Comments to the Editor".
2. Submitted files must be in Microsoft Word, OpenOffice or RTF (as long as their size is up to 2MB) format.
3. URLs must be informed in the references when necessary.
4. The text must be single-spaced; Times New Roman typeface 12 pt must be used for the body of the text; italic is to be used instead of underline (except in URL addresses); Figures and Tables must be embedded in the text.
5. The text must follow patterns of style and bibliographical requirements described in the About the Journal section.
6. The identification of authorship of the work must be removed from the file and the Properties option in Word, thus ensuring the confidentiality criteria of the journal, accordingly with available instructions in the website.

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