

SCTCMG 2021**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»****SHAPING A NEW WORLD ORDER: ROLE OF THE BRICS AND CHINA'S POTENTIAL**

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Abstract

The article focuses on the BRICS association, particularly on China as one of the most viable member state, in the context of developing measures to establish a new world order providing for 'peaceful leadership' instead of the US hegemony. The aim of the study is to analyse the BRICS as an effective full-scale mechanism in the framework of cooperation between emerging global powers. The purpose of the research is realised through the application of methods of scientific knowledge, such as analysis of primary sources, system and structural research approaches, comparison and generalisation methods, processing and analysing the quantitative data. The relevance of the research stems from the emergence of a new accelerated wave of globalisation. As a result, states have faced new challenges and threats, including intra-state conflicts, ethnic strife, international terrorism, massive refugee exodus, and transnational criminal activities that undermine peace and stability. In such conditions, multilateral and multi-level rather than bilateral contacts between the states are required. Cooperation assumes new forms of various integration associations, one of which is the BRICS. After analysing a number of areas and indicators of the association countries, the BRICS member states do not yet have enough accumulated potential to play a key role in the transition from a unipolar system to a polycentric world order.

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1. Introduction

The economic and strategic world's map is rapidly changing. The developing countries advance to the forefront, integrating into global system and heading for new political, economic and strategic systems. Unlike the major global powers, which can impose their own vision of the world order based on self-interest, developing countries are concerned with establishing a secure and stable international environment. Middle powers previously had no significant weight in regional blocs and played a secondary role in alliances, but they were always involved in international organisations, participating in the process of building a new stable and orderly environment. These institutions served as a means of presenting their initiatives to the global agenda (Cox, 1989).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new accelerated wave of such phenomenon as globalisation emerged. States have faced new challenges and threats. In modern times, such international institutions are no longer based on integration within just one region since there is a necessity for developing interregional cooperation with the aim of combining joint efforts to achieve world security. One of these associations is the BRICS, which unites countries located in different regions that emphasises the multipolarity of the global integration process.

The association's official website defines the BRICS Information Portal (2015) as:

An informal group of states comprising the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Russian Federation, the Republic of India, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of South Africa. ... The growing economic might of the BRICS countries, their significance as one of the main driving forces of global economic development, their substantial population and abundant natural resources form the foundation of their influence on the international scene (para. 1, 7).

This means that cooperation assumes new forms of various integration associations. This versatility allows the BRICS countries to focus their attention on different areas of cooperation in order to develop comprehensive strategic partnership between the member states.

2. Problem Statement

In order to address such issues as intra-state conflicts, ethnic strife, international terrorism, massive refugee exodus, and transnational criminal activities that undermine peace and stability, it is not enough for countries to simply cooperate bilaterally. Multilateral and multi-level contacts are required. In recent years the so-called emerging global powers, rather than the great powers, are taking an active role in such institutions.

3. Research Questions

1. What political and economic measures do the BRICS countries have to counterbalance the super powers?
2. In which spheres – political, strategic or economic – is the cooperation between the BRICS countries the most intense?

4. Purpose of the Study

In this article, the authors will consider the leading role of the People’s Republic of China among the BRICS countries within the context of the development of economic, military and strategic measures to establish a new world order. This order provides for ‘peaceful leadership’ instead of the US hegemony as well as creating a new centre of geopolitical influence through cooperation with the Russian Federation in the BRICS format.

5. Research Methods

The choice of research methodology was based on the specifics of the objectives that the authors intended to achieve during the analysis of the identified problem. Through systematic and analytical research approaches, this article aims to explain the development of the BRICS, in particular the development of China within this organisation. Such methods as economic analysis, percentage and index analysis, event-analysis were used to exemplify findings of the research.

To compare the economic power of the BRICS member states and the United States, data on the main economic indicators, namely the countries’ GDP in dollars and the rates of GDP growth in percentage, was used from the World Bank database of open statistics. The period from 2001 to 2019 was selected for the analysis. See Table 01.

Table 1. Annual GDP growth (%) of the BRICS countries and the United States from 2001 to 2019

States	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
China	8.3	9.1	10.0	10.1	11.4	12.7	14.2	9.7	9.4	10.6	9.6	7.9	7.8	7.4	7.0	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.1
USA	1.0	1.7	2.9	3.8	3.5	2.9	1.9	-0.1	-2.5	2.6	1.6	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.9	1.6	2.4	2.9	2.2
Russia	5.1	4.7	7.3	7.2	6.4	8.2	8.5	5.2	-7.8	4.5	4.3	4.0	1.8	0.7	-2.0	0.2	1.8	2.5	1.3
Brazil	1.4	3.1	1.1	5.8	3.2	4.0	6.1	5.1	-0.1	7.5	4.0	1.9	3.0	0.5	-3.5	-3.3	1.1	1.3	1.1
India	4.8	3.8	7.9	7.9	7.9	8.1	7.7	3.1	7.9	8.5	5.2	5.5	6.4	7.4	8.0	8.3	7.0	6.1	4.2
South Africa	2.7	3.7	2.9	4.6	5.3	5.6	5.4	3.2	-1.5	3.0	3.3	2.2	2.5	1.8	1.2	0.4	1.4	0.8	0.2

China’s economic interaction within the BRICS was based on the statistical data from International Trade Centre agency from 2015 to 2019. See Table 02.

Table 2. Dynamics of China’s exports and imports with the BRICS countries

Year	Indicators (\$)	Brazil	Russia	India	South Africa
2015	Export	27,428,609	34,809,906	58,262,004	15,878,945
2015	Import	44,339,257	33,216,612	13,395,985	30,225,964

2016	Export	22,064,078	37,506,059	58,920,648	12,936,213
2016	Import	45,603,468	32,131,140	11,748,712	22,555,964
2017	Export	29,078,324	43,149,783	67,925,121	14,894,297
2017	Import	58,476,878	41,351,921	16,333,354	24,833,903
2018	Export	33,731,542	48,005,203	76,880,637	16,337,354
2018	Import	77,141,726	58,887,066	18,850,037	27,240,322
2019	Export	35,476,983	49,484,540	74,924,285	16,560,933
2019	Import	79,203,569	60,257,151	17,970,065	25,931,258

6. Findings

The economic interaction of the BRICS countries is one of the main factors in the formation of a multipolar balance of power in the world. According to the data from International Trade Centre, this interaction has led to an expansion in China's trade with all the BRICS countries. The share of China's exports and imports has increased over the past 5 years from 2015 to 2019 (see Table 02).

It should be noted that the largest importer for China for those 5 years was Brazil. The share of Chinese import from Brazil almost doubled in 2019. South Africa is on the third place as an importer and it is unstable. The share fell from \$30 million to \$22 million in 2016, and after a slight increase it fell again to \$25 million. India is at a lower position in import to China compared to the other three countries. Its share was fluctuating and reached \$17 million by 2019. However, India was the main country for China to export goods for the period 2015-2019. The share of Chinese export to India increased up to \$74 million in 2019. Brazil takes the third position in export from China. Its share was slightly declining in 2016 and it had risen up to \$35 million by 2019. A country with the lowest share in export is South Africa. With a fall in 2016 it had grown to \$16 million by 2019.

Russia had a stable second place in both export and import. By 2019 its export and import had amounted to \$49 million and \$60 million respectively. However, Russia's political presence in the BRICS should also be mentioned. Cooperation within the BRICS is extremely important for Russia, it is fair to state that primarily Russian-Chinese cooperation has rather political than economic edge. For Moscow the BRICS represents the foundation of a new world order, in which the United States no longer dominates.

6.1. Creating a new centre of geopolitical influence through cooperation with the Russian Federation in the BRICS format

Russia and China entered the twenty-first century as strategic partners. The states created a new model of relations with various socio-economic systems that enshrined in Russian-Chinese official documents, including the Treaty on Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation signed in 2001

(Embassy of the People's Republic of China, 2001). The joint idea of creating such organisations as the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) led to the possibility of rebuilding the bipolar system and forming a new centre of power in the form of an alliance between Russia and China against the USA and NATO (Lukyanov, 2016).

The leaders of Russia and China established several new types of dialogue structures and organisations to advance and defend the vital interests of security, territorial integrity, and countries' sovereignty by political means. Cooperation in resolving international affairs based on a political dialogue between Russia and China has helped to stop the aggravation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula and to activate the integration process in the Asia-Pacific region (Titarenko & Petrovsky, 2018). Therefore, Russian-Chinese relations are an essential factor for peace and stability within the Asia-Pacific region and the world in general. These countries have created a truly equal partnership that is not directed against any third party and can become a model of interstate relations between the two largest neighbouring powers of the twenty-first century.

6.2. Transformation of the G-8 into the G-20

A special direction of the BRICS strategy is the readiness to tackle international problems in close cooperation with emerging countries in the framework of G-20, G-8, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In this context the BRICS countries support the efforts of the G-20 as the main mechanism of the international economic cooperation in order to eliminate global imbalances, introduce alternative currency and reform the World Trade Organisation.

India, Brazil and China, which are not part of the G-8, but are equal members of the G-20, have stressed that the G-8 has lost its effectiveness and legitimacy to the G-20 and should be abandoned as a format. The Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim announced that "the G-8 is over as a political decision group" (Herrmann & Terhechte, 2011, p. 398).

In the future, the BRICS could possibly become a serious military challenger for the USA as well as NATO. Although the leaders of the BRICS countries have repeatedly stated that they do not intend to establish any military alliances based on the organisation, over the last few years there has been increased military.

Due to the lack of internal stability of most of the BRICS members, it is safe to say that the BRICS opposition to the US hegemony is mainly represented by China (Adnan, 2014). China has solid links with Africa which is represented by Forum on China-African Cooperation (FOCAC). China has more chances to win Africa over due to historical background. First of all, China has no tradition of colonialism as well as slave trade which makes China a more preferable ally for African countries than the USA. Moreover, China supports Africa in various fields, such as politics and economics.

China seems to have two major short- and long-term goals in this region: in the short run — to overcome the separation between financial and productive sectors and to reduce capital outflows from Africa, and in the long run — deliverance of new ideas of science and technology to a homegrown reconstruction (Campbell, 2008). Both goals remain elusive due to lack of power in the region.

In order to oppose the developed world, China focuses on the values and interests of the developing world. According to Timothy Heath, there are several key measures in Chinese policy: co-

opting international institutions; building a coalition of supporters; strengthening Chinese discourse power (Heath, 2018).

Chinese government makes efforts to increase its influence in international organisations such as the United Nations, G-20, International Monetary Fund, as well as to expand its influence and to be “the voice” of the developing countries. The establishment of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as an alternative to the Asian Development Bank is a perfect example of such efforts.

The statistics obtained from the World Bank database provided an opportunity to create line charts for greater clarity (see Figure 01).

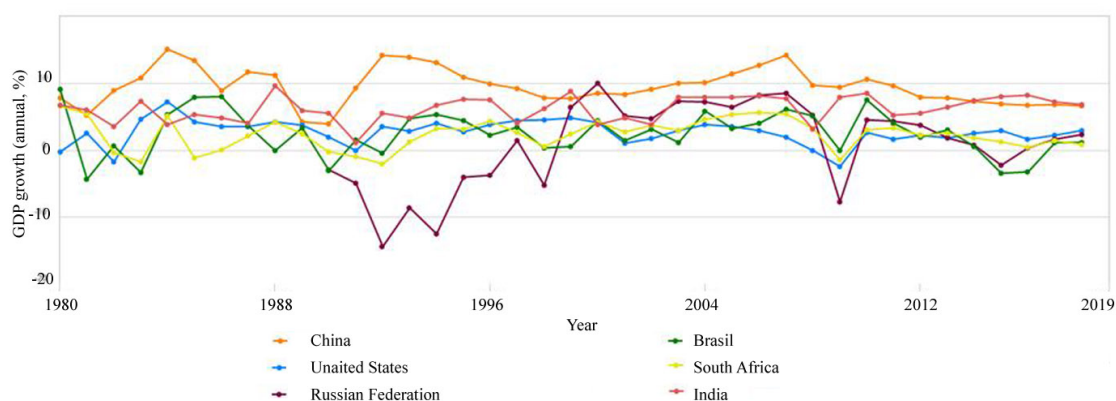


Figure 1. Annual GDP growth (%) of the BRICS countries and the United States.

*The lack of data for Russia from 1980 to 1990 is explained by the fact that it did not exist (the Soviet Union existed up to 1991).

From the chart we can see that China has considerably strengthened its position in the world since the adoption of the “Reform and Openness” course, and most notably in the economic sphere. China is in the forefront of the BRICS association, which is based on the main criterion – the rapid pace of economic development. Other BRICS countries – Brazil, India and South Africa – have grown less significantly during this time. Besides, this indicator in Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa fluctuates sharply from year to year, while in China, one can observe mild changes and stable growth, especially from 1997 to 2007. In general, China continues to maintain a higher rate of economic development than the countries selected for the analysis. Only India has shown similar trends of high economic growth in recent years.

6.3. “One Belt-One Road” as a way of tackling Chinese economic problems

China begins to consider new economic reform projects: primarily, the project for the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the “One Belt-One Road” initiative (OBOR). This project aims to build trade routes linking the Asian, European and African continents with their adjacent seas, in order to “establish and strengthen partnerships among countries ...” (National Development and Reform Commission of the People’s Republic of China, 2015, p. 3). The OBOR will help attract investment, provide new jobs and employment opportunities, and will offer a possibility for mutual experience exchange between the countries involved in the project in various fields, such as technical, cultural, etc.

The BRICS plays a particular role in this project: the New Development Bank, established in 2014 by five countries of the association, is one of the pillars of the institutional framework supporting the initiative implementation (Hui et al., 2018). Moreover, the BRICS member states, such as Russia, India and South Africa, participate in projects of the Chinese initiative. Among all five BRICS member countries, China is the most active advocate of using the alliance.

7. Conclusion

Even though China is the country with the most rapid economic development among all the BRICS countries, it is still very susceptible to the global conditions and prone to global crises. Although the PRC has demonstrated high economic indicators year after year, it remains an emerging country. Chinese projects and initiatives, in particular those that are being developed and implemented within the BRICS framework, and include financing and infrastructure development in other countries, strengthen the country's position in the international arena.

Every year, the BRICS declares more and more confidently its capability and intention to play a key role in the transition from a unipolar system to a polycentric world order and to resist the attempts of the United States to establish its hegemony. However, the BRICS does not yet have enough accumulated potential to achieve its global goals. Such a state of affairs will persist until the association is able to develop its military and economic power and strengthen its geostrategic positions around the world.

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