

The BRICS in Southern Africa: A Foreign Policy Analysis in Historical Perspective

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Abstract¹

The BRICS were created at the beginning of the 21st century to reorganize the international world order to represent their weight in international politics, economics, and geopolitics. Although they are entirely different, the BRICS saw a strategic space to reach these goals in the African continent. Thus, these countries started to broaden their presence in the African continent. As a result, BRICS started their relations with Africa differently, but they acted in similar sectors. The fellow paper pursues to analyze the Brazilian, Russian, Indian and Chinese (called here as BRICs) insertion in Southern Africa, highlighting the main convergence sectors and divergences between them. The methodology will be based on historical analyses, connecting their historical insertion in Southern Africa in a broad perspective of foreign policy objectives in the 21 st century. In the first session, we will approach the economic presence of BRIC in Southern Africa in 21 st century. Latter, we will abstract each one's foreign policy for the region (highlighting the main economic sectors and diplomatic presence).

Moreover, it will be possible to compare their presences, highlighting the convergence and divergence between them. The Chinese and Indian weight in Africa's economy is more perceptive than Brazilian's and Russian's. Nonetheless, all BRICs have been widening their trade and diplomatic relations with Southern Africa in the 21st century due to their perspective of the importance of Africa in international world politics.

Introduction

Frequently BRICs are considered the “new actors in Africa” that are competing for new markets. Although when we analyze the BRICs individual relations with African countries is possible to noticed that these relations have been long-lived. Each one have established different kinds of diplomatic, political, and economic relations with the African continent. That is why BRICs have different ways of acting in Africa, with some moments of complementarities and conflicts of interest.

This paper has the objective to do an outlook of the strategic insertion of Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRICs) in Southern Africa in the 21st century. It will adopt the qualitative methodology of a case study of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, highlighting the similarities and differences, identifying possible points of convergence and divergence between them. In this way, it will be adopted as criteria of analyses the historical relations between BRICs and Southern Africa, diplomatic relations (as high level of diplomatic visits), and trade relations.

The paper is divided into three sections beyond this introduction. In the first session, we will approach the economic presence of BRIC in Southern Africa in 21 st century. Latter, we will abstract

¹ This research is part of a broad investigation about BRICS in Africa developed within the project “A agenda externa do Brasil para a África: avaliações e propostas” realized at IPEA. Nevertheless, all the opinions presented here are of the author's responsibility and not of this institution.

each one's foreign policy for the region (highlighting the main economic sectors and diplomatic presence). Moreover, in conclusion, it will be possible to compare their presences, highlighting the convergence and divergence between them.

Africa in the 21st Century and The BRICS' Presence

The international scenario in the 21st century was optimistic for some developing countries, including the African continent, especially Southern Africa. The end of apartheid in South Africa, the independence of Namibia, and the end of civil conflicts in the 1990's impulsed an optimistic perspective for the new century, expressed by Africa renaissance thinkers, like South Africa's ex-president, Thabo Mbeki. Moreover, the development of globalization and the straightened of trade relations made multilateral institutions more critical for the maintenance of the international order. United Nations broadened its participants and its institutions. Also, many new groups of multilateral ties were created, like G20, which gained more visibility at the end of the Cold War. In this context, even inside the capitalist system, the political supremacy of developed countries became challenged and reflected in Africa's relations (Batista Junior: 2021; Saraiva: 2015).

The economic growth of the "emerging countries" makes them slowly dispute internationally for more space in international markets and more power in international institutions. BRICS countries are considered the leading group in these initiatives. They grew strongly and sustainably for many years at the beginning of the century. Likewise, they strengthened their political relations with many multilateral groups. In this context, they started to put the screws on international organizations' reform proposals to be more represented in their power structure (Batista Junior: 2021; Merwe, Taylor e Arkhangelskaya: 2016; Saraiva: 2015).

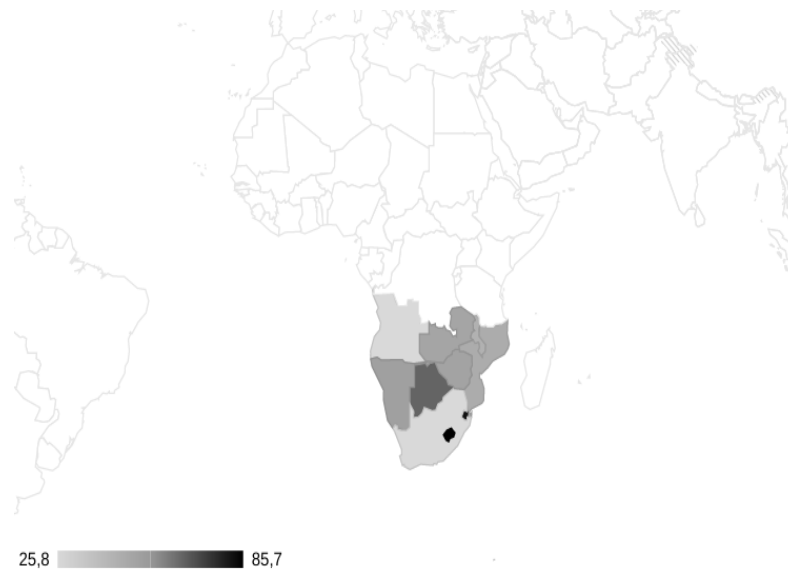
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At the same time, the African continent turned to be an investment space for these new actors, and African vote and political recognition became a relevant *soft power* in the multilateral forum that the emerging countries needed. BRICS presence in Africa became gradually more evident and caught the attention of international organizations (Saraiva: 2015). This reality became reflected in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Africa. In the 21st century, the FDI has been growing in the continent, peaking at US\$ 50 bilhões in 2009. The UNCTAD (2013) observes that between 2000 and 2008, the average investment in Africa by the developed countries fell almost 7%. Although, in the same period, the developing countries – especially China and India - increased their investment by 8.5%. Besides the growth of BRICS's FDI in Africa, the developed countries still are the most prominent investors. This shows that the presence of BRICS is far away from substitute developed countries as prominent investors in Africa but represent an alternative and a bargaining tool for African countries. So, the leading investors in Africa still are France, Netherlands, United States, and the United Kingdom, but China is becoming more relevant, and the other BRICS are too (UNCTAD: 2013).

The presence of emerging countries also is expressed in trade. BRICS in this context needs to be highlighted. From a global perspective, between 2001 and 2017, BRICS average growth was 7.1%. Also, they represented 23% of global GDP, 16% of international trade, and 12% of global FDI (except South Africa) (Zhongxiu e Qingxin: 2020). So, BRICS represents an essential slice of the international economy. This growth is reflected in BRICS's presence in Southern Africa, like the maps below can

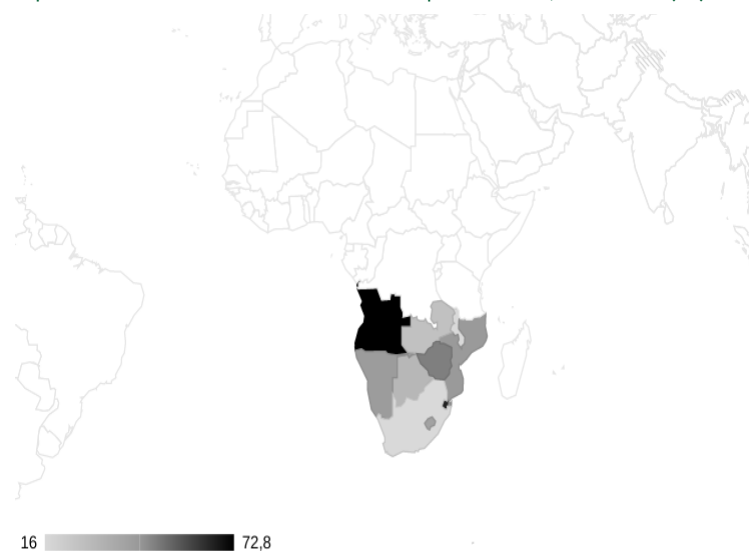
show. In 2019, BRICS was the destination of an average of 40% of Southern Africa's exportation and represented 52% of Southern Africa's importation (ITC: 2021). In 2015, Africa as a whole represented just 3% of world international trade, but 46% of its trade have emerging countries as partners (Merwe, Taylor e Arkhangelskaya: 2016).

Figure 1: BRICS participation on Southern Africa's importation, in 2019 (%)



Source: ITC 2020

Figure 2: BRICS participation on Southern Africa's exportation, in 2019 (%)



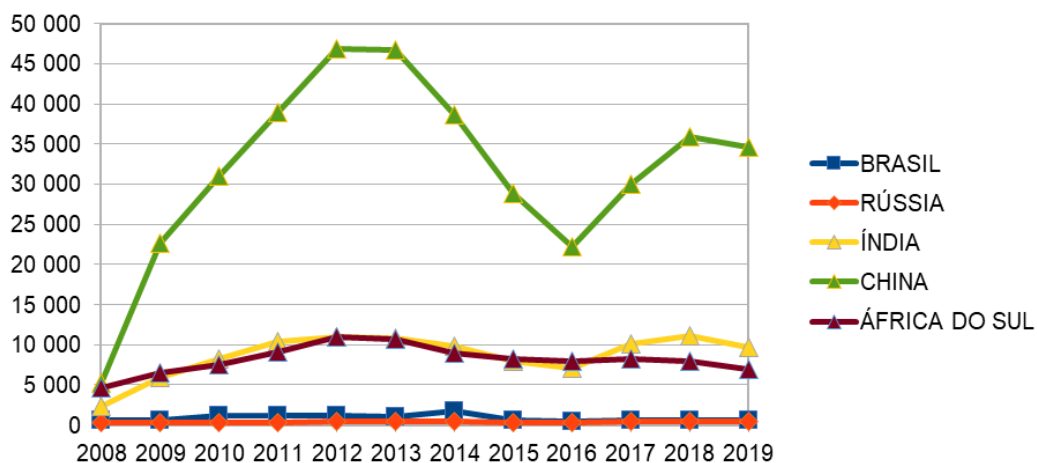
Source: ITC 2020

Despite the increasing investment and the importance of Africa in international politics, Africa's status of *commodity* dependency did not change so much. Even by BRICs side (taking out South Africa), the investments and trade realized with Africa are focused on natural resources. When looked specifically to the subregions, like Southern Africa, it is evident that almost all countries produce mineral resources (except Malawi and Eswatini), essential for the technological industry. Although, practically all countries in the region are commodity-dependent (except South Africa). The most relevant product varies between coal, diamonds, emeralds, oil, gas, and copper. And this

dependency did not change so much in 21st century, maintaining Southern Africa dependency on *commodities* rating (UNCTAD: 2013).

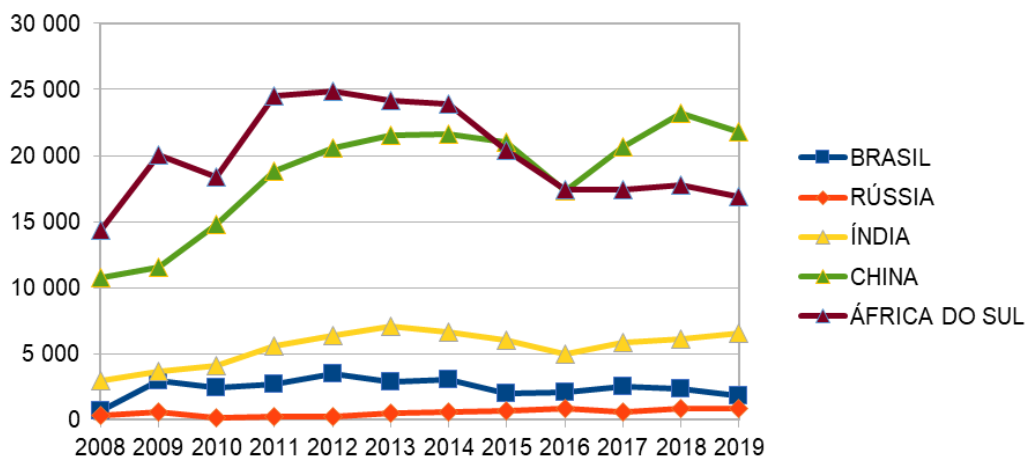
So, in the first part of the century, developing countries have increased participation in international investment and commerce and these are reflected in their African relations. However, this did not represent a revolutionary change for African countries. But, these new partners, who needed political support, gave Africans a little bit of political freedom once its partnership did not require policy conditionalities. After the first decade, though, the subprime crisis affected developing countries. The situation quickly became reflected in the decline of investment of these actors and the slowdown of commerce. These can be seen in the movement of BRICS’s investment in Africa. In 2000, the BRICS’s investment in Africa was US\$ 10 billion, it got the highest point in 2008, of US\$ 72 billion after that, it decays abruptly, and until today it did not recover, reaching just US\$ 45 billion in 2020 (UNCTAD: 2013, 2020). Also, it is reflected in trade between BRICS and Southern Africa, like the graphics shows, BRICS’s importation from Southern Africa counties increased exponentially until 2012. Still, after 2013 it just decreased until 2016 and did not recover until nowadays. Exportation to Southern Africa is more stable, but it also was affected between 2014 and 2016.

Figure 3: BRICS’ importation from Southern Africa (US\$ million)



Source: ITC 2020

Figure 4: BRICS’ export to Southern Africa (US\$ million)



Source: ITC 2020

Most developing countries, including African countries, are commodities dependent, so this vulnerability on commodities prices is a bottleneck for its relations with each other. So the fall down of *commodities* prices after 2014 affected these South-South relations. This conjunction of facts slowed down the Southern African countries' GDP and generated an economic crisis reflected in the region's political instabilities. Until 2015 African countries had an average growth higher than the average growth of the world. However, after 2015 most countries were affected by this fall and could not recover since then. Many economic problems started to affect African countries, like increasing public debt and external debt (UNCTAD: 2019). Brazil, for example, also a *commodity* dependent country, fell significantly in its trade relations with Africa and did not recover since. To better understand BRICs relation with Southern Africa, the following sections will be dedicated to discussing the presence of BRICs individually in Southern Africa, their history in the region, primary interests, diplomatic relations, and trade.

Brazil

Brazil has a particular relation with Africa. These political and trade relations were not stable all the time, and there were moments of more approximation and moments of withdrawal. We identify four times of intensification of these relations from the 16th century until the 21st century. In the 21st century, there is a new boost of these relations because of Africa's perception of the importance of Brazilian internal political ties and its position in the international order. Thus, Brazil amplifies its diplomacy structure in Africa, intensifies its trade relations, and boosts its presence in the continent.

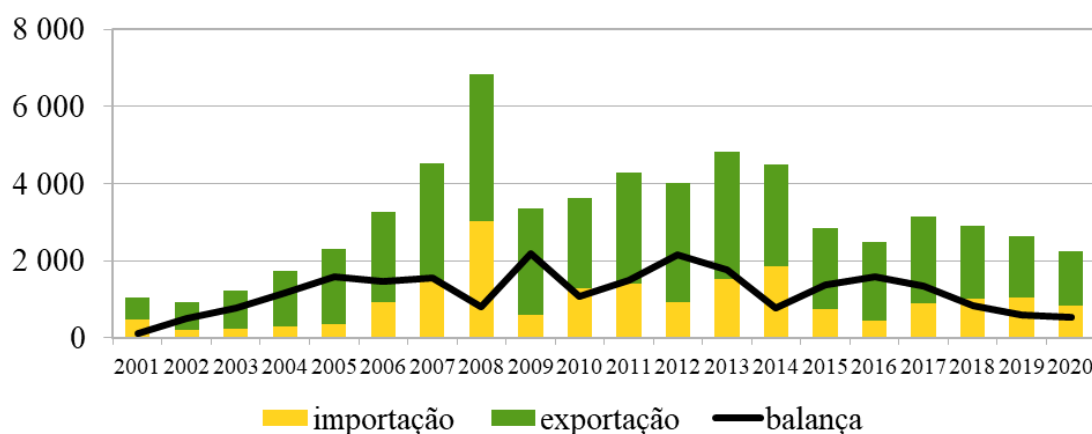
The first contact with Africans was with the slavery period in the 16th century, when Africans migrated to Brazil and straightened the political relations between regional chiefs. Brazil maintained contact with some autonomous African regions after independence until the commercial interference of the United Kingdom. This commercial pressure resulted in a distance of Brazil-Africa relations. Then, in the 20th century, there are two moments of rapprochement between Brasil and Africa. In the 1960s with the non-alignment movement and after, in the 1970s with the international oil shocks and the Brazilian necessity of oil importation. Most Brazilian relations focused on African countries Portuguese speakers (PALOP), oil producers (like Nigeria), and South Africa.

After the end of the Cold War and the conquer of independence of most African countries (also the end of *apartheid* in South Africa), it was possible to intensify these political relations. Brazil amplifies its peacekeeping operations and diversifies its diplomatic presence in the continent. When Lula da Silva became president in Brazil, in 2003, the country focused on getting more equivalent power in the international organizations and reduce inequality inside. For both objectives, the presidency policy showed its Africa relations as essential. For one side, African countries are the majority in important international organizations, like United Nations. On the other side, black people are the majority inside Brazil, and a relevant social group who fights for equality. So, rescue the cultural relations with the black continent was a relevant movement for many social groups for historical compensation. The fight against inequality inside and outside became substantial twig in Brazilian foreign policy. To do that, trade relations became more focus in developing countries, so Africa became a relevant partner. After 2010 Dilma continues Lula's policy and also promotes BRICS. Although Brazilian social and economical conjuncture was different, so her focus became trade results.

The Brazilian presence in Africa was expressed by three mechanisms coordinated mainly by the Ministry of Foreign Relations. The first was the expansion of the institutional apparatus. Brazilian embassies broadened from 18, in 2002, to 37 in 2016. The African countries amplified their presence in Brazil, too, achieving 35 embassies in 2015. Also, Brazil increases high-level visits. Lula visited 37 African countries (he went to the African continent 67 times in 8 years), Dilma visited 6 African countries (Brasil: 2016 ; Brasil: 2021; Jorge: 2018). Another mechanism was spreading

multilateral cooperation programs (like education programs PEC-G and PEC-PG) and multilateral organizations and strengthening those already existed, like CPLP, ZOPACAS, IBAS, and ASA. Also, the third mechanism was Brazilian impulse companies to expand to Africa mainly through credit concession by the national bank BNDES. In this context many of them have invested in the continent mainly the infrastructure sector, lead by companies like Construções e Comércio Camargo Corrêa S/A, Construtora Andrade Gutierrez S/A, Construtora Norberto Odebrecht S/A, Construtora Queiroz Galvão S/A, and others. Brazil also beneficiate African countries with external debt excuse of almost US\$ 1 billion from 42 countries (Visentini: 2013).

Figure 5: Brazil's commerce with Southern Africa (US\$ million)



Source: ITC, 2020

The trade reflects the political importance of the African continent. African countries got relevant in the Brazilian trade agenda. Nevertheless, the country still is not so significant player to African countries. Until 2011 trade between Brazil and Africa has been growing significantly, but after 2014 it fell and did not recover until nowadays. The Brazilian exportation to Africa increased from US\$ 2 billion in 2001 to US\$ 12.2 billion in 2011, and after falling to US\$ 7.5 billion in 2019. The exportation agenda is focused on sugar, meat, and grain. With the Southern region, the most important partners of Brazil are South Africa and Angola. The Brazilian importation is more stable than exportation; they passed from US\$ 3.3 billion in 2001 to US\$ 17.4 billion in 2013 after it decreased, and in 2019, it was just US\$ 5.5 billion. The importation agenda is centered on oil (and its derivatives), fertilizers, and precious stones. The most important partners are South Africa, Angola, Moçambique, and Namibia.

As I said before, Brazil's foreign policy to Africa at the beginning of 21st century was connected to internal policy groups in power. After Dilma's impeachment, these groups were strongly criticized, and it affected Brazilian foreign policy to Africa. With Michel Temer the government's focus on international trade with developed countries and Africa lost relevance. With Bolsonaro rising to power, Brazilian foreign policy focused on ideological partners, especially developed countries. After 2014 Brazil fell into an economic and political crisis that until today reflects in its foreign policy. It reflects in the closure of 3 embassies in Africa, Liberia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone (Estado de Minas, 2020). Brazilian relations with Africa have been directed to strengthen ties with conservative African leaders like Bissau Guinea's president, Umaro Sissoco Embaló (Rfi, 2021) and to protect conservative leaders' interests that are the social basis of the government, for example, religious churches that act in Angola (Metropoles, undated).

Russia

Nowadays, Russia is the country within the BRICS, which has fewer commercial relations with Africa. Although, this country has especial importance for the independence of African countries. Nonetheless, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the country started to withdraw from the relations with Africa that dropped fast until Putin's rise to the presidency. In power, Putin turns the attention to the Third World, including Africa. Slowly, Russia reinforces its presence in the continent. The causes for this comeback are complex, involving mainly geostrategy, mineral prices control, get new political partners, and amplify its consumer market.

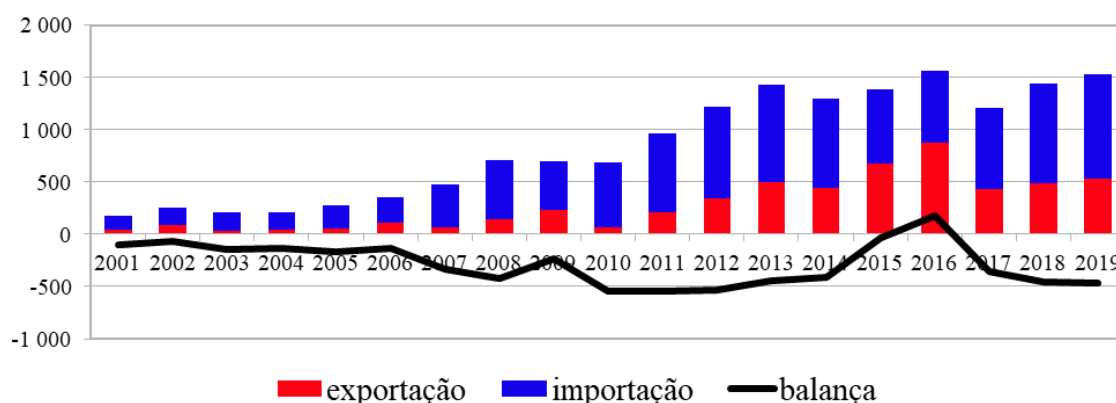
The first time Russia went to Africa was in the 15th century when orthodox missionaries went to Ethiopia. The Russian Empire tried to establish African colonies but could not do that, so it just set official diplomatic relations with Ethiopia and South Africa. With the Soviet Union, the country helped with troops and technical cooperation with African countries' independence (Besenyő, 2019). But, the fall of the Soviet Union represented a wastage of the presence of Russia in Africa. Russia retired from relevant cooperation agreements with 37 African countries and trade agreements with 42 countries. Also, Russia got next to European colonizers, which made Africans uncomfortable (Besenyő, 2019; Gerőcs, 2019). So, in the first moment, Russia turned to its problems and cultivated a negative image with African leaders. It just changed in the 21st century (Visentini, 2013).

Geopolitically, Russia realized that the end of the Soviet Union did not result in peace with Europe and start to carry about the need to diversify its partnerships with suppliers and consumers. Some elements slowly make Russia change this detachment. On one side, some products became not profitable to produce internally in Russia, so diversify suppliers became relevant. On the other side, Russia is a massive oil and gas producer and has Europe as its primary consumer market. So, it was interesting to be next to other oil and gas producers to control these commodities prices. Also, after the economic embargos in this century (especially after the Crimea crisis in 2014), Russia needs to diversify its consumers. These embargos showed the importance of building new political partnerships in multilateral institutions (Gerőcs, 2019; Merwe, Taylor e Arkhangelskaya, 2016).

In this context, Africa gradually caught Russia's attention and started an expansion of its presence in the black continent once again. In 2016 Russia had 40 embassies in Africa, and Moscow harbored 35 African embassies (Gerőcs, 2019). Russia inserted itself by different mechanisms like Russia-Africa Economic Forum, Russia-African Partnership Forum, and straightening cooperation (mainly in military and educational sectors). Also, Russia forgave two shipments, first in 2006 of US\$ 16 billion, and the second in 2012 of US\$ 20 billion, which opened space for new contracts in infrastructure, army, and mining sectors with Africans.

This Russian back in Africa is reflected in some embassies and cultural centers' reopening between 2001 and 2005. At the end of 2016, Russia had 40 embassies in Africa and received 35 African embassies in Moscow. Prime Ministers also visited Africa, Vladimir Putin visited five African countries, and Dimitri Medvedev visited four African countries (Gerőcs: 2019).

Trade does not reflect the political importance of Africa in Russian foreign policy. Until 2013 the commerce has been growing slowly, and after 2014 has been a slight variation—Russia exports to Southern Africa cereals, fertilizers, and railways. On the side of importation, Russia imports Southern Africa fruits, minerals, and tobacco. The main partners are South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique.

Figure 6: Russia's commerce with Southern Africa (US\$ million)

Source: ITC, 2020

The tiny trade between Africa and Russia is growing slowly. Between 2008 and 2013 its varied within US\$ 500 million and US\$ 900 million, and between 2014 and 2019, its variate within US\$ 1 billion and US\$1.4 billion. Besides the commodities crisis, these trade relations did not variate significantly, showing sustainable growth, but it still does not get its potential. In 2015 trade between Russia and all of Africa was US\$ 11.1 billion, which is just 2.2% of Russia's trade (Fituni e Abramova, 2017). Russia has four commercial offices in Africa (specifically in Algeria, Marocco, Egypt, and South Africa), which is coordinated by AFROCOM (Coordination Committee on Economical Cooperation with African Countries) formed by the Vnesheconombank (Foreign Economical Relations Bank) and the Russia Federation Chamber for Industry and Trade. AFROCOM coordinates as public companies and ministries as private sector for Africa (Besenyó, 2019; Geröcs, 2019). Foreign Direct Investment is evident the leading sector for Russia. Between 2003 and 2015, about 1.5% of Russia's investment went straight to Africa, totalizing US\$ 15 billion, of which around 60 and 70% were destined for exploitation of oil, gas, uranium, bauxite, and iron. About 30 Russian companies are in Africa in these sectors (Fituni e Abramova, 2017). These thirty Russian companies act mainly in Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Equatorial Guinea. Southern Africa is essential to highlight. Zimbabwe is where Russia has invested US\$ 3 billion in the platinum sector. In South Africa, Russian companies like Renova Group, OJSCMMC Norilsk Nickel, EVRAZ Group S.A, and OAO Severstal operate. and Angola (Merwe, Taylor e Arkhangelskaya, 2016).

Another relevant sector is the military sector. Russia is one of the leading military producers in the world. In 2018 its exported US\$ 16 billion military products to the world and already has US\$ 54 billion in its agreements portfolio (IISS, 2020). Between 2018 and 2019, Russia exports about US\$ 3.1 billion in weapons to Africa, being their main partners: Egypt, Algerie, Angola, Etiopia, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, and Mozambique (SIPRI, 2020). Also, between 2014 and 2018, Russia agreed to 19 military cooperation programs with Subsaarian countries. In 2019 happened the first Russia-Africa Summit about security and defense. An example of this partnership in military relations is the satellite agreement with South Africa in 2014, valued at R 1.2 billion (about US\$ 80 million) (Merwe, Taylor e Arkhangelskaya, 2016). In Southern Africa, Angola is a relevant importer of the Russian army, with US\$ 314 million invested in military importation (Russia is responsible for 44% of Angolan military importations) (ITC, 2021).

India

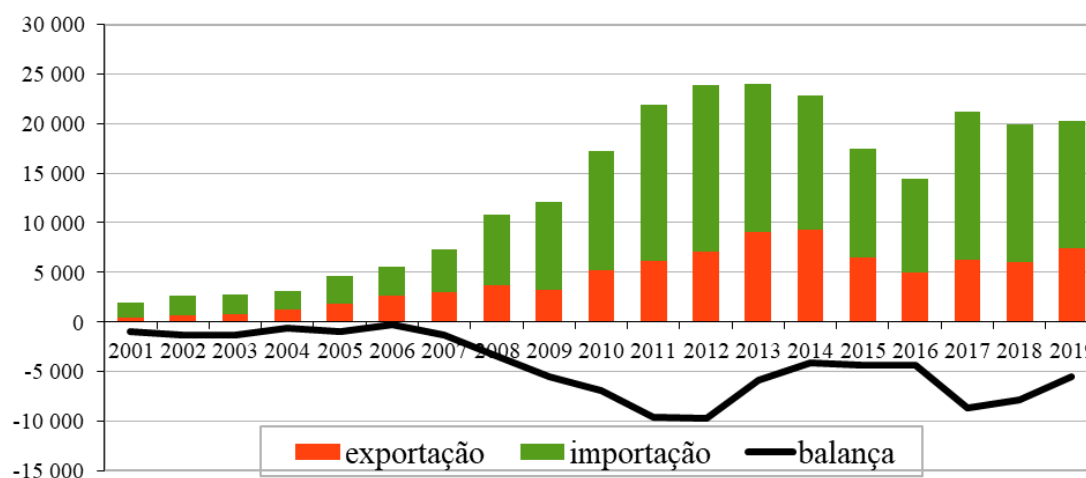
India has the most long-lived relations with Africa within the BRICs countries. Historical research has discovered that navigation started in India in the Sindh river more than 6000 years ago. It is believed

that the first contact with Africa happened about 4000 and 5000 years ago. Unlike the other BRICs, these relations did not cool down from time to time, and they have been maintained mainly with countries connected to the Indian Ocean. Also, India and African countries established intense migratory flows while establishing a relevant Indian community in Africa (Malone, Mohan e Raghavan, 2015; Visentini, 2013). Researchers point out that around 1.5 million Indians migrated to Africa to work in British plantations during colonial times. A small group of these migrants stayed in Africa for life. After that, a few merchants migrated to Africa, attracted by the consumer perspective, and creating an Indian community in Africa Continent (Visentini, 2013). The result is seen nowadays when looked at the social constitution. It is noted that Indian descendants are a relevant part of many countries, for example, South Africa, which 2.5% of the population are in this category (CIA, 2020a); Mauritius also is estimated that around a third of the population has a relation with Indian descendants (CIA, 2020b). Nowadays, about 3 million people living in Africa are Indian-originated (Índia, 2020a).

With India and Africa's independence, these political and social relationships went deep but focused on political support between States. In the middle 1960s, Indira Gandhi assumed power in India and turned the support to Africa independence more materialized. After the Soviet Union fall, thought India's Foreign Policy became progressively more related to the private sector and associated with trade interest (Visentini, 2013). Nowadays, the relationship with Africa is focused on agriculture, power source, irrigation, pharmacy, Informational Technology, and health sectors (Índia, 2020b). India does not have a prime minister's policy of travel, so Manmohan Singh (who was the Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014) visited five African countries (South Africa, Mauritius, Uganda, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Ethiopia), and Narendra Modi (in power since 2014) visited seven African countries (Ruanda, Uganda, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, and Maricius). India has just 32 diplomatic missions in Africa.

In the 21st century, the energetical difficulties in India make the relations with Africa critical for India's foreign policy. With the wars in the Middle East, India needed to diversify its partners' hydrocarbons to maintain its growth rate. So Africa turned into a relevant region for that (especially Lybia, Sudan, Nigeria, Egypt, and Gabon) (ÍNDIA: 2020i). India's importation of oil from Africa tripled between 2002 and 2012 (mainly from Nigeria, Angola, Egypt, and Algeria). It is estimated that until 2030 the country will need 3 to 4 times more of its energetical capacity (Merwe, Taylor e Arkhangelskaya, 2016).

Figure 7: India's commerce with Southern Africa (US\$ million)



Source: ITC, 2020

Trade has been increasing gradually. Exportation from India to Africa passed from US\$ 15 billion, in 2008, to US\$ 29 billion in 2019 (the highest point was in 2014 with US\$ 34 billion). India's importation from Africa is more relevant than its exportation. The country has been increasing from US\$ 26 billion in 2008 to US\$ 43 billion in 2012, and in 2019 decreased to US\$ 38 billion (ITC, 2020). Southern Africa trade also increased straight until 2012 and after had a decrease until 2016 with they still could not be recovered until 2019. In 2019, South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe had a commercial deficit with India. This year, Angola, Botswana, and Mozambique had a commercial surplus with India, mainly exporting oil, gas, and precious stones. The main products imported by them are vehicles, hydrocarbons, pharmacies, electric equipment, and plastic (ITC, 2020).

So Indian presence in Southern Africa, especially with the Eastside countries wet by the Indian Ocean, is related to a strategic perspective of survival in the international system. In this context, its presence in the military sector is also relevant to be highlighted. Since 2008 India has done a Naval Indian Ocean Symposium with 35 countries, 13 of them African countries (Constantino Xavier apud MALONE, MOHAN e RAGHAVAN, 2015). Also, India is the most significant contributor with troops for United Nations missions since 1950's India contributed with nearly 253.000 troops in 49 tasks, many of them in the African continent (like Onuc, Unomoz, Unitaf, Unosom, Unamir, Unavem, Unamsil, Unmee, Unoci, Unimil, Monuc/Monusco, And Unmis/Unmiss).²

China

China realizes that Africa is an essential region in its foreign policy. The first contact between China and Africa continent was in the 15th century with the Zheng He journey, but little later, it cooled off because of the Chinese idea to be a middle kingdom (Menezes, 2013). Nonetheless, after the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the Chinese Popular Republic (CPR) realized the importance of international diplomatic recognition, making China renew its relations with Africa. During Cold War, China thought it was relevant to build the Third Way. Zhou Enlai, Chinese Foreign Relations Minister, created "Five Principles of Pacific Coexistence," which influenced this movement and inspired the Bandung Conference in 1955, giving the first step to Non-Alignment Movement. In 1956, China materialized its diplomatic relations with Egypt, officially reopening its African ties (China, 2020a; Visentini, 2013).

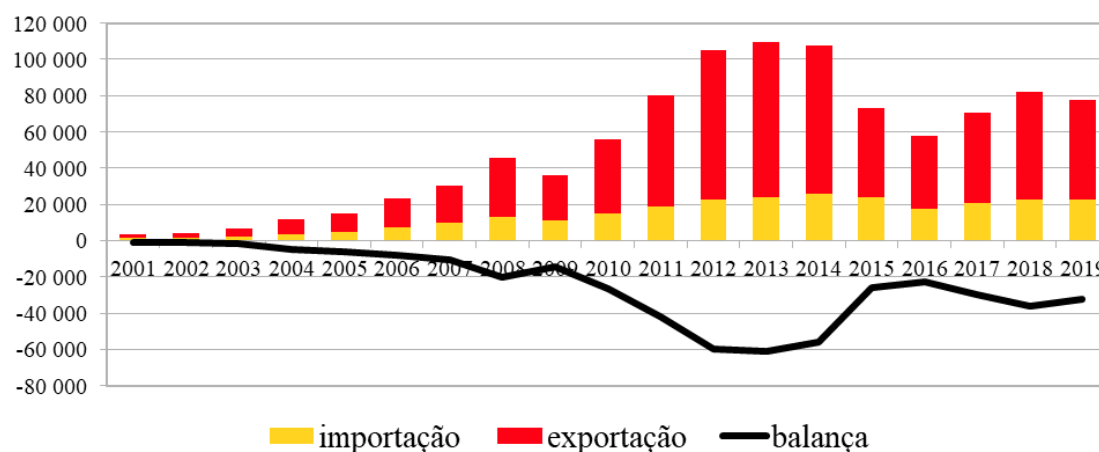
Since then, China has kept expanding its presence in Africa, but its strategy and interests have changed over time. Initially, it planned to get to countries by the ideology preferences and pressure Taiwan for diplomatic recognition. With the breaking relations with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, it became more pragmatic. But it was just after the 1980s that internal changes in China made its cooperation with Africa more directed to Chinese trade interests. It was from then that China started to establish joint ventures straightening the cooperation relations to enterprise investment (Brautigam, 2009). Between 1989 and 1997, the trade between China and Africa grew by 431%. In 1996 China installed the first Chinese bank on Africa soil in Zâmbia (Taylor, 1998). With the new century, China set new objectives associated with the "Pacific Rise," which determine an intensification of multilateral relations, mainly conducted by FOCAC (China-Africa Cooperation Forum) and the OBOR ("One Belt One Road"). Between the BRICs, China is, so far, the most relevant African partner. In 2018 China was the fifth most relevant investor in Africa, after Netherlands, France, United Kingdom, and the United States. Still, it is necessary to highlight that France, United Kingdom, and the United States decreased their investment in Africa, and China increased its investment (UNCTAD, 2020)

² INDIA. Permanent Mission of India to the UN. Source: <https://www.pminewyork.gov.in/pdf/menu/submenu__1260383365.pdf> . Accessed in August 2021.

It is necessary to highlight that the trade relations between China and Africa have increased significantly, and it recognized that its commercial relations influenced Chinese cooperation. The political ties maintained their importance during the time. For China, recognizing the Popular Republic of China as the official diplomatic representative is significant until nowadays (Brautigam: 2009). So, China maintained 40 embassies in Africa, and the Prime Minister, Xi Jinping has been in the continent five times since 2013, visiting all African countries (CHINA, 2020c).

Since 1994 the most significant partnerships with Africa have been head by three Chinese banks (China Export-Import Bank - or Chinese EximBank-, China Development Bank, and China Agricultural Development Bank) each one in a different sector but all interconnected (Brautigam, 2009). In 2019 the CAD Fund (China-Africa Development Fund, created by FOCAC in 2007) invested US\$ 5.4 billion in 37 African countries focused on the sectors: agriculture, living, industry, power, and mining (CHINA, 2019).

Figure 8: China's commerce with Southern Africa (US\$ million)



Source: ITC, 2020

Chinese importation from Africa increased from US\$ 4.8 billion in 2001 to US\$ 95 billion in 2019, which represents 2 and 4.6% of total Chinese importation. Last year, the main partners were South Africa, Angola, Congo, Líbia, and Gabon. Chinese exportation to Africa increased from US\$ 5.9 billion, in 2001, to US\$ 113 billion, in 2019, which represents 2.2 and 4.5% of total Chinese exportation. Last year, the main partners were Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria, and Kenya (ITC, 2020). Southern Africa portrays a relevant subregion in this context. Importation increased from US\$ 2 billion, in 2001, to US\$ 54 billion, in 2019 (peaking at US\$ 85 billion in 2013). The main products for importation are oil (and its derivatives), ores, and precious stones. Also, the exportation increased from US\$ 1.2 billion, in 2001, to US\$ 22.7 billion in 2019 (peaking at US\$ 25 billion in 2014). The main products are electronics and machinery. So, there is a deficit in the Chinese trade relationship with Southern Africa (ITC, 2021).

Due to the vast Chinese investment after the 2000s, China became gradually more active with peacekeeping missions troops supply in the African continent (been UNAMID of Sudan an example) and more interested in strategic partnerships. In 2017 China established its first military basis in Africa in Djibouti and also became part of weapons modernization plans with some countries (mainly in Angola and Mozambique in the Southern region) (IISS:2020). In 2018, China created the I Defence and Security China-Africa Forum, resulting in many cooperation agreements (IISS:2020).

Conclusion

BRICS have a long live relation with Africa commonly shadowed by political analysts. However, these relations were not a priority until the 21st century when developed countries stepped aside in their investment and trade relations in African countries. This opened space for BRICs increases their participation in African countries. In the present paper, we tried to identify the points of similarity and divergence between the insertion of these actors in the African continent. We analyze the historical relations between BRICs and Africa, highlighting how and why BRICs get next to this continent and Africa's importance in its foreign relations in the 21st century. After, we focus on the Southern Africa region, looking at diplomatic ties at the high level and then their commercial relations (identifying the leading partners in the region and their main products of importation and exportation).

In this paper, we argued that besides the relations between BRICs and Southern Africa seems to be recent, they have many centuries and have been increasing slowly. But their kind of insertion is different. Brazil started its relations with Africa during the colonization period, and the importation of African slaves characterized most of it. It gives Brazil a significant cultural link with Africa, and its relations are really connected to internal debates. On the other hand, Russia started its relations during the Russian Empire and tried to establish colonies that were frustrated. So it just intensified its ties after the Russian Revolution when the revolutionaries identified an opportunity to amplify its influence abroad, helping the Africans with their independence. India is one of the firsts countries to have contact with Africa, but differently from the others, they maintained contacts even during colonial times. Many Indians migrated to Africa and had a strong community there, maintaining their social and political relations. China was probably the first of the BRICs to contact Africa. Still, these ties became relevant after the 20th century when the Chinese Revolutionaries saw an opportunity to help independence in Africa.

At the beginning of the 21st century, developed countries decreased their investment in Africa and became involved in their problems. So, BRICs saw it as an opportunity to amplify their influence in international politics and trade. Trade relations nowadays are based on energy exportation and industrialized importation by African countries. But, at the same time, BRICs carried forward much investment on infrastructure without imposing politics on Africa. Unfortunately, most of the Southern African countries and also BRICs are vulnerable to commodity price variation. So, after the abrupt variation in international prices in 2014, BRICs and Southern Africa's trade relations were affected and decreased. In some countries, like Brazil, it is reflected in the decrease of political presence.

Also is relevant to note that some conjunctures put BRICs in interest conflict in Africa. An example of that is the military sector. Russia was the most crucial military source for African countries during the independence period, but after its withdrawal in the 1990s, China spread its presence in this sector. Nowadays, with Russia coming back, maybe it can be a point of interest conflict between them. But, it is relevant to underline that Africa is a vast continent that needs investment in many sectors. It may take too long for these market conflicts to effectively be a reality.

Meanwhile, the political pressure of BRICs on developed countries may be the most relevant result for African countries. BRICs can be an alternative for investment in the continent when developed countries do not prioritize Africa or when they impose policy determination. The BRICs approach, despite that, is not altruistic. They want more political power in international relations and also consumer markets for their products. These interests are different; for example, India and Brazil want a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. China and Russia, who already have their seats in the UN, want to diversify their political partners to shield themselves from developed countries' embargos. So, it's a relevant initiative to maintain these studies to identify political convergence between them.

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