



## BRICS: FROM NORM TAKERS TO NORM MAKERS

*Fábio Albergaria de Queiroz*  
*Guilherme Lopes da Cunha*  
*Liziane Paixão Silva Oliveira*

### **Abstract**

Since the end of World War II, the United States and Western Europe have been influencing the definition of rules and norms in the international system, which remain today. After the Cold War, especially in the context of the financial crisis (2008), a challenging debate emerged, analyzing the structure of norms, ideas and institutions and incorporating new interlocutors, such as BRICS countries. Besides, it reinforced investigations about the construction of norms and the articulation of developing countries in this environment. We hypothesize that BRICS seeks to broaden the decision-making process. Methodologically, the postcolonial literature of International Relations (IR), together with theoretical approaches on power studies, offer a welcome opportunity to evaluate the process that motivates BRICS as a driver for altering themselves from rule taker to rule maker. Therefore, it spurs analysis on sectors such as development, finance and international organizations leading us to reflect on to what extent do the new debates corroborate a changing scenario? In so doing, the research intends to evaluate the construction of an international order in which a greater number of States can participate effectively in the formation of norms and values in the interstate system.

### **Keywords**

BRICS. Development. Values. Interstate System

### **Resumo**

Desde o final da Segunda Guerra Mundial, os Estados Unidos e a Europa Ocidental influenciam o estabelecimento de regras e normas no sistema internacional que permanece até hoje. Após a Guerra Fria, especialmente no contexto da crise financeira de 2008, surgiu um debate acerca da estrutura de normas, ideias e instituições e incorporando novos interlocutores, como os países do BRICS. Além disso, o novo cenário internacional reforçou as investigações sobre a construção de normas e a articulação dos países em desenvolvimento nesse ambiente. Metodologicamente, a literatura pós-colonial de Relações Internacionais (RI), juntamente com abordagens teóricas sobre estudos de poder, oferece uma oportunidade bem-vinda para avaliar o processo que motiva o BRICS como um driver para se mudar de tomador de regra para formulador de regra. Portanto, estimula a análise de setores como desenvolvimento, finanças e organizações internacionais, levando-nos a refletir em que medida os novos debates corroboram um cenário em mudança? Ao fazer isso, a pesquisa pretende avaliar a construção de uma

ordem internacional na qual um número maior de Estados participa efetivamente da formação de normas e valores no sistema internacional.

### **Palavras-Chave**

BRICS. Desenvolvimento. Valores. Sistema Interestatal

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2009, a group of countries decided to consolidate the partnership called BRICS. At that time, the group formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China (and later South Africa) recognized that it was feasible to foster cooperation based on expectations that are common to developing countries. Since the 1990s, the systemic changes pointed to a challenging environment, in which there would be an aggiornamento in International Relations. Grasping the low capacity for altering the system dynamics, which remained disdainful about the importance of both developing countries and relatively less developed countries, some initiatives have been conceived to deal with systemic constraints and disparities and, among those projects, there was the BRICS.

Nevertheless, although the acronym "BRICS" stems from a financial market analysis, the potential of this coalition was already on the radar of analysts and diplomats. Enjoying the historical context and avoiding potential conflict, when recognizing the pseudo-insight of financial analysts, the formation of BRICS means an advance in terms of non-Western mobilization. In this scenario, the evolution of the BRICS has provided remarkable articulation capacity among its members aiming for a reformed economic and financial architecture.

In this way, BRICS brings in its essence the political effort to cease a second-class condition through a soft balancing strategy<sup>1</sup>. The working dynamics of the group demonstrate diplomatic planning in which members take into account effective participation in the definitions of the present and the future. Aware of the fact that the pillars of the contemporary interstate system were built by a small group of countries that invoked itself as rulers, keeping most countries apart from the system, the BRICS acts in order to improve the system, so that the interests of the underdeveloped and developing countries can be exerted. In turn, this contributes for providing mechanisms through which values and norms can be promoted according to plural convictions, and not just follow what determines the most powerful.

This research is organized in four sections. Firstly, it is verified the context in which BRICS gave rise, examining it as a diplomatic coherent alternative more than a suggestion made by financial analysts. Subsequently, it is investigated the weight of development in BRICS' essence, regarding the most recent measures in its institutional structure. Thereafter, it is identified the context of a broader decision-making process, taking into account both debates and sociopolitical environment. Lastly, it is argued that BRICS is instrumental in the emergence of norms and values that are more plural and representative of the mankind.

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<sup>1</sup> Soft balancing occurs when states generally develop ententes or limited security understandings with one another to balance a potentially threatening state or a rising power by fostering, for instance, ad hoc cooperative exercises and collaboration in regional or international institutions.

## 2. The BRICS in the Contemporary Interstate System

The BRICS is a group formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. As developing countries, its members demonstrate potential influence on world politics, and has had increasing recognition through intergovernmental cooperation and effective implementation of collective international policies. Although in an official version it is recognized as a creation of analysts from the financial market, especially the report written by Jim O'Neil (2001), the perception of a political strategy that ties these countries had already been observed previously.

Contradicting O'Neil (2001) as the first to realize the BRICS potential, it has roots before his supposed enlightenment. Not only there is a strong similarity between George Kennan's Monster Countries theory and BRICS inspiration; but also, unless in Brazil, studies conducted in the 1990s revealed an intelligentsia that would foreshadow the vaunted analysis in the following decade. Prates' (1996) research shows that, in the political environment of that time, the cooperation horizon between Brazil, Russia, India and China was already part of Brazil's diplomatic planning, underpinning i) articulation in international forums, ii) greater participation in the coordination of global economic activities, (iii) development strategies, and (iv) reconciliation of globalization with a socio-political orientation.

Nonetheless, defending these premises amid a complex political environment, shortly after the end of the Cold War, it would have been a risky move. In this sense, as a shrewd diplomat, Prates (1996, p. 43-44) advised discretion, since "any unintended consequence of this initiative could therefore be counterproductive and would have consequences that are highly undesirable for each of the four countries". Planning an effective policy would require caution and parsimony. In the same chronological context, Lessa (1998) identified the construction of great axes of geographical action: the axis of the regional powers in Brazilian foreign policy. His studies about the concept of Selective Universalism intended to interpret Brazil's priorities, which led to the perception of an effort to discard exclusive and excluding relations. Consequently, Lessa (1998, p.34) realized an axis formed by regional powers, "multi-centered at the angles a quadrilateral formed by Beijing-Moscow-New Delhi-Pretooria".

This reveals that, at least on the Brazilian IR thinking, a strategic perception about what the BRICS would be in the future. It was already part of a diplomatic understanding. This context contributes to demonstrate that not only a project like BRICS should be desirable for developing countries overriding needs but also that it would be necessary to find a neutral actor, preferable a non-State, that could perceive them first, as a scapegoat: this was the main role of O'Neil (2001). However, notwithstanding predictable, it is not reasonable to conceive that BRICS is a diplomatic maneuver previously planned.

Besides a financial realm, the BRICS has importance in terms of population, territory and strategic location. These characteristics insert the group in an agenda that makes the difference in the traditional political map and that allows them to influence the directions of global politics. Arkhangelskaya (2015, p. 2) clarifies their attributes:

Today BRICS combines three billion people (43% of the population) in the territory of 39.7 million sq.m. (more than a quarter of global land surface), producing almost 13 trillion. U.S. gross domestic product per year (21% of world production). Each of these five countries on three continents has influence in their respective regions in particular and in the world. (...) BRICS members are characterized as the most rapidly developing major economies of the world. Large number of important resources for the global economy provides an advantageous position for the states. The main common feature was that they are all developing countries with growing economies and influence, and they all strive for a free and more equitable agreement on global leadership, in which they and others will play an important role.

These characteristics paved the way for helping analysts to propel the creation of the coalition. Meeting in Ekaterinburg, Russia, these emerging states hold the first BRIC summit (2009) to engender multi-dimensional diplomatic efforts. In 2011, South Africa joined the group, and the name was changed to BRICS. The group is justified as a way of complementing existing multilateral efforts, which are reflected in international development institutions (CHIN, 2014).

The BRICS proposed both discuss and plan collaborative partnerships around the global economy and other burning issues for global development. In its first year of operation, the BRICS concentrated efforts on world economic issues and, specifically, on their economies (JYRKI, 2014, p.86). In 2012, a development bank was created, "mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in the BRICS countries and other emerging economies, as well as other developing countries" (CHIN, 2014, p. 366). Following the previous thought, the author refers to the events during the year of 2013 when the group announced the intention to create a BRICS bank:

We have the ambition to establish the new development bank ... in August 2013, governments agreed that the BRICS Development Bank (BDB) would start with a initial capital subscribed of US \$ 50 billion (...) A month later, it was reported that the BRICS leaders made progress in negotiating the bank's capital structure, partnership, participation and governance (CHIN, 2014, p.366).

Hence, development is a cornerstone in BRICS's architecture. When the BRICS was created, traditional global finance centers faced stagnation or low growth, while emerging countries experienced significant economic growth. The speech boosted by the BRICS countries emphasized economic measures, and its organization was based on four folders: Agriculture, Finance, Health and Trade<sup>2</sup>. Jyrki (2014, p.91) pointed out that BRICS has three features to consider: 1) they are economically diversified and complementary, which can be considered as commercial advantages for member countries; 2) all these countries have turned their backs on traditional western modernization; 3) they differ from the liberal view of the West, which makes them more daring in pursuing social expectations. In cases 2 and 3, this maintains intertextuality with Said's epistemological perspective (1996 and 2011), where he recognizes the need for a less ethnocentric approach.

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<sup>2</sup> Data reported on the official BRICS website, available at <http://brics5.co.za/academicpapers/ibsa-past-brics-future/>, November 27, 2016.

The BRICS raised expectations for economic and political changes. On the one hand, in economic terms, these countries registered a significant growth<sup>3</sup>, when world GDP grew by 3.6% in 2010 and 2.5% in 2014, as estimated by the World Bank; on the other hand, the BRICS is marked by the diversity of their industries and growth forecast:

China and India are the major global technology and services factories. On the other hand, Brazil will occupy the leading position in biodiversity, iron ore, ethanol and food while Russia will in arms industry and as a supplier of oil and natural gas. (DELAGE, 2011, p.8)

These arguments reinforce that, besides economic attributes, development is in the BRICS's essence. The official statements demonstrate efforts to build multilateral cooperation, supporting financing, development and green economy (BRICS, 2015). It should be noted that this vision of development is in line with the basis set by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), when 172 countries agreed that "that environment can be protected via responsible economic development patterns and that approach would ensure a healthier society in human beings which could fulfill their potential while living in harmony with nature and in relative prosperity" (UN, 2012).

### 3. Development as BRICS' permanent quest

The BRICS-led New Development Bank is an initiative for reaching financial complementation, mainly when there is a stifled global economy<sup>4</sup>. It does not propose to replace multilateral institutions, as Breton Woods institutions (World Bank and IMF) or any other. It emerges in 2014, through an agreement signed during the Sixth Summit in Fortaleza. According to Graça Lima (2016, p.11), the creation of the New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) demonstrate maturity: it becomes the first institution in the BRICS's structure with international legal personality.

Finance is a proactive face of the BRICS. Establishing its headquarters in Shanghai, the NDB provides funding to projects that promote development for emerging economies. An example of this type of proposal is referred to CRA, which aims providing resources to member countries at risk of instability in the balance of payments. Furthermore, the CRA may also act as a global fund for other emerging economies<sup>5</sup>: it was ratified at the Summit of Ufa, in Russia (2015), which established a new roadmap for the intensification of trade and investment between the BRICS, in addition to agreements for cultural exchange<sup>6</sup>.

Nonetheless, according to BRICSs rationale, development is effective when it goes together with security. This makes it a sensitive topic for BRICS. Abdenur (2017,

<sup>3</sup> In 2000. Brazil had GDP growth of 4.4% in 2010 and 7.6% in 2014. In the case of Russia. GDP growth in 2000 was 10% in 2010. 4.5% in 2014 of 0.6%. India's economy had an even greater GDP growth: in 2000 it was 7.6%. in 2010 it was 10.3 and in 2014 it was 11.5%. China's economy grew by 8.4% in 2000. 10.6% in 2010. and by 7.4% in 2014. Finally, the South African economy grew 4.2% in 2000, 3% in 2010 and 1.5% in 2014. (BRICS. 2015)

<sup>4</sup> Information available at <https://www.ndbbrics.org/br.html>. on 15 June. 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Information available on <http://brics.itamaraty.gov.br/>. on 22 April 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Information available on <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/politica-externa/mecanismos-inter-regionais/3672-brics>, on 22 April, 2018.

p. 89) asserts that, in spite of internal and external constraints, security is a rising subject: both terrorisms galvanizes support and a new agenda can be match with development, as food, energy and maritime security. Besides, an agreement on the BRICS Intelligence Forum<sup>7</sup> trumpets a progressive agenda: although security is complex political area, and geopolitics is a mercurial variable<sup>8</sup>, there is a challenging scenario where BRICS could improve their coordination process, as mentioned Abdenur (2017). In this sense, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), when incorporate India and Pakistan, contributes for BRICS project<sup>9</sup>, since reinforces HERZ et al (2011) arguments, that all five are great supporters of sovereignty, as well as of multilateralism within the framework of international security.

Despite differences in interests, identities, and domestic issues, which cannot be hidden, the five countries attain a certain convergence in international security. In the same way that the BRICS arises as a group, in certain situations, as a counterweight to the western powers, as is the case of the creation of the New Development Bank, among other joint projects, it is believed that in terms of international security the case is similar. Moreover, multilateralism is among the stronger evidences that serve to set basis for their conciliation. The five members support that any situation involving international security should be solved by the international community, emphasizing that they defend sovereignty, and it may be perceived as a pillar for BRICS' structure.

The group has no interests in overthrown the international order. Notwithstanding disagreement with disparities, BRICS are reaping the benefits from this order. Reform has more sense than revolution. Despite their mutual distrust in some topics, the group maintains an "idealistic" perspective about international security: it adheres non-proliferation, fight against terrorism, building a system of international security. Among their main beliefs, the BRICS tackles with developing countries needs and signalizes the desire for a more inclusive political environment.

Additionally, the intra-BRICS cooperation is aiming to foster mutual understanding among the countries. They recognize the importance of understanding themselves, encouraging the formulation of a perspective of "the BRICS on the BRICS". Since the Brasilia Summit (2010), there is the BRICS Academic Forum, which brings together academics from the five countries. In 2013, it was established a BRICS Think Tanks Council, composed of a think tank of each member country, which produces the annual report of recommendations to be submitted to the leaders (Lima, 2016, p.24).

In this way, the BRICS comprises a multi-subject agenda, coordinating different topics. As it can be seen, the main sources of cooperation in the BRICS countries comprises agriculture and agrarian development, communications, education, finance, health, industry, projects of inclusion of the population, trade and labor. These are subjects constructed through a legal and flexible architecture, through soft law,

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<sup>7</sup> Proposed formally through the Xiamen Declaration (2017) and adopted in the 8th BRICS National Security Advisors Meeting. in eThewwini. South Africa. 29 June 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Some initiatives unveil geopolitical movements that could strengthen or undermine BRICS's efforts, such as Ouad Initiative (SHARMA. 2010) and Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (PANDA, 2017) and Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (THANKACHAN. 2018).

<sup>9</sup> The admission of India and Pakistan in SCO improves a strategic dialogue among Asian peoples (NIZAMANI, 2018).

which is materialized through statements, reported sets, ministerial meetings on various topics, agreements, statements and understandings.

This multi-faceted BRICS' structure indicates a context near the Dahl's Polyarchy (2005), when it is considered in an expanded version of this concept, conceived in systemic scale. In this perspective, legitimate structures, adapted to political competition and following a peaceful evolution, by means of the evolutionary process - not conflictive -, would result in a gradual change for an essence designed to transform international politics. The BRICS countries, therefore, concentrate efforts for legitimizing multilateral mechanisms, and therefore contributes for counterbalancing the interstate system created by the great powers, where actors outside of the core cannot have a voice (TROITSKIY, 2015). In this context, in a pentarchy format, the group has development as its permanent quest.

#### 4. Broadening the decision-making process: debates and scenarios

The current international system cannot deal with the challenges of contemporary society. Rolland (2013, p.169) states that "what is certain is that the United States and Europe can no longer assume that they have the political and economic power to set the rules of the game". This argument reinforces the perception that important adjustments need to be made, chiefly when the lack of legitimacy and effectiveness is noted. The main decision-making countries have no legitimacy for representing all the States and, over time, disparities widen. Among other examples, the most striking are the functioning of the United Nations Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions.

In the 1990s, developing countries began to consider alternative scenarios. Thus, when the world underwent significant structural change at the end of the Cold War, diplomatic planning in some countries sought to analyze potential associations to take charge of constraints in representativeness. It is in this context that the secondary role of O'Neil (2001) is reinforced, since the potential for cooperation between countries had already been incorporated into the diplomatic and academic calculations, which conceived the possibility of associations such as BRICS, based on coordinated action.

BRICS concurs with the idea that structural reform is needed. For Said (1979) the negation of the Other and the belief of his inferiority in relation to the Self consolidates the perception of culture as a geopolitical element, which has been used as a means of oppression. This argument can be illustrated by Article 38 of the ICJ Statute<sup>10</sup>. It is in this context that BRICS functions as a project to break what Boaventura de Souza Santos (2007, p. 3) defines as "excluding political and cultural relations maintained in the contemporary world system." For the author, there is an abyssal line that divides the North and the South - not geographically strictly but conceptually - defining the contours of an asymmetrical and unequal structure. In this sense, BRICS leads to a post-abyssal world.

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<sup>10</sup> Article 38 of the Statute provides that: "The Court, whose function is to decide, in accordance with international law, the controversies submitted to it, shall apply: ... the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations."

The system's inadequacy with reality is visible through the crisis of representativeness, effectiveness and legitimacy that motivates the weakening of international institutions, especially financial ones. In the 70's, several compromises were broken, the most significant being the breaking of the dollar-gold standard. For Eichengreen (2011), the United States has exercised an exorbitant privilege, attracting the world's savings and subjecting the world economy to American interests. This also gave rise to a disconnection between the financial world and the real economy: Strange (2016, p. 1) advises about a gambling capitalism arises when "Western financial system is rapidly coming to resemble nothing as much as a vast casino". However, the financial crises of the 1990s<sup>11</sup> hit mainly peripheral countries, yet the crisis of 2008 affected central countries, that changes the geo-economic picture. This is one of the contexts in which the BRICS can be seen as a group that may promote reforms, improving rules and values for refining the international system.

This perception is not exclusively verified through BRICS. Other political contexts indicate mobilization for changing, such as the financial G2012, which, although created as a result of financial crises, it played a part in dealing with structural fissures arising from the shortcomings of the contemporary system. In April 2010, in Brazil, the G20 consolidated itself as the main body for coordinating actions against the sub-prime crisis (2008), in which the lack of legitimacy and efficiency of the G8 stood out. In the same context, at the G20 summit in Seoul (2010), it was decided to increase the vote with the IMF.

In this context, BRICS had a similar substance. Although newly created officially at that time, the process of building the platform defining the characteristics of the group had already begun. This occurs during the second and third BRICS summits: among other initiatives, it is identified that, at the second summit, the academic forum was created. At the Sanya Summit (2011), the third one, in addition to the South Africa accession process, BRICS elaborated measures for maturing and expanding: they discussed reforms at the United Nations Security Council, defined global interest topics, a dialogue with non-BRICS was opened and the demands on the IMF quota change was deepened. These were crucial measures in the consolidation of BRICS.

Thus, BRICS consolidated itself through two pillars: coordination in forums and construction of its own agenda. The NDB and the ACR show a political articulation in which a new type of participation in the inter-state system is proposed. Through focal points, where each country takes care of a thematic area, it improves the sharing of results with the others and demonstrates an authentic way of acting. Therefore, the Belt and Road Initiative - BRI (yidaiyilu)<sup>13</sup>, the Asian Infrastructure

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11 Among the main financial crises of this period, it can be mentioned those that occurred in Mexico (1995). Asia (1997) and Russia (1998).

12 Launched in 1999, as a result of the financial crises of the 1990s (Mexico, 1995. Asia, 1997. Russia, 1998) the group incorporates members of the former G8 and countries with geographic and economic representation. Hainal (2014, p.2) points out that it is an informal group that accounts for approximately 90% of the Gross Domestic Product, 80% of international trade, 84% of greenhouse gas emissions and 65% of the global population.

13 Announced by Xi Jinping at the University of Nazarbayev during a visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013, this initiative aimed to establish a New Silk Road linking China and Europe. Infrastructure is one of the main emphasis of this project, which has a sea and land route. The imprecise translation of Mandarin (一带一路) into English (One belt, one road) ignores a broader poetic and philosophical sense, which frustrates an adequate perception of the project.

Investment Bank - AIIB<sup>14</sup> and the NDB are answers to the reluctance and disregard for the participation of emerging countries in decision-making institutions. This reinforces the cardinal importance of the BRICS as a reformer more than a revolutionary.

##### 5 From rule taker to rule maker: could BRICS contribute for spurring norms and values?

BRICS can be conceived as part of a process that encourages a normative changing. It presents alternatives for reshaping systemic relations. Yet BRICS is not alone in this vocation: there are other coalitions processes that manifests the same aspiration, such as BASIC<sup>15</sup>, G20 (finance), G20 (WTO)<sup>16</sup>, among others. This reveals signal of a developmentalist political culture, without an immediate relation with cultural power of a country, nor soft power: it is more associated to a synergic link among developing countries, in which they identify themselves in the way of dealing with systemic constraints, taking into consideration beliefs, expectations and behaviors.

This has been based on legitimate, peaceful and collaborative (non-confrontational) political action. In this context, BRICS intend to articulate a pragmatic and collective approach, and, therefore, induce a mobilization that can alter the international system. According to Rolland (2013, p.170), referring to the economic aspect, there is a process of reinventing the system, because "together with the United States, Europe and other emerging powers, they must reimagine our global international economic governance". For the author, BRICS is a tool in this stage of reimagining the world.

Thus, the BRICS is seen as a proof of these systemic changes. At the same time, it is both a result of restrictions and a tool for reorient world order, concentrated in overcome hindrances that affect developing countries. However, there are other strong signs of these changes. In addition to the BRICS, some partnerships also serve as empirical element for proving this dynamic, such as BRI and AIIB<sup>17</sup>. Other coalitions that operate with similar effects are BASIC, the G20 (finance), and the G20 (WTO), which prove a harmonious rationality between countries that traditionally have been neglected in the systemic logic. In other words, this environment has encouraged developing countries to participate as protagonists in the inter-state politi-

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14 The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was announced in 2013 and inaugurated in 2016. For Chow (2016), without requiring conditions and willing to operate with less interference in internal affairs of other countries, the bank shifts the economic power from the United States to China.

15 Focusing on climate issues, the group comprising Brazil, South Africa, India and China was launched in 2009 during the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP-15). According to Roman et al (2011) BASIC has positioned itself as a mediating group between PED and PMDR, which facilitated the emergence of BASIC Plus or BASIC + at the group's 10th Ministerial Conference in 2012. For Maguire and Liang (2015, p.329), this has shown that the interests of the founding members go beyond individual objectives.

16 Since the creation of the Cairns Group in 1986, the subject of agriculture brought together countries around liberalization in the agricultural sector, in the Uruguay Round of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), which gave rise to the World Trade Organization ) in 1995. The G20 was created in 2003 during the preparatory meetings for the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún. The main aim of the group was to prevent the United States and the European Union from continuing to deliberate alone on agriculture, without the participation of the countries most interested in the subject. According to Huguenev (2004, p. 2), the G20 represents approximately 60% of the world's population, 70% of the world's farmers and 26% of commerce in agriculture.

17 According to Oin Yading, at a conference held at the FCCI (The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan), since the meetings of ASEAN + 3 (Association of Southeast Asian Nations + China, Japan and South Korea) there is a consensus on the expansion of infrastructure in the region. BRI and AIIB operate with the goal of generating shared benefits.

cal context, no longer as figurant, beggars or co-opted, adopting norms for which they have not contributed.

BRICS and the other coalitions have been articulated to reorganize the international order, which does not mean subverting the international system<sup>18</sup>. This is based on the belief that disparities between countries need to be reduced: the path to this outcome runs through the normative framework governing inter-state coexistence, which needs to stop generating concentrated benefits into a small group of countries for, instead, distribute it collectively. Consequently, the convergence between the BRICS' members has unveiled the existence of a fairly coherent collective rationale.

A basic characteristic of these coalitions, among them the BRICS, is their effort to make the largest number of States participate effectively in the composition of international normative structure. More people need to be part of the process of creating the international standards to which they will be subjected. The will of the most powerful countries militarily and economically should not be the metric to define who sets standards: States must be regulated by norms that they actually contributed to the creation. Indeed, military and economic force can not be the foundation of the normative structure, subjugating most states to a fictitious collaboration.

A more efficient governance model<sup>19</sup>, which underlies structural reforms, requires norms and values that represent plurality and diversity. The normative framework must represent as many States and people as possible. The importance of this guideline is demonstrated in the BRICS, when the former Chancellor Celso Amorim affirmed in the first Summit that "[it is] time to start reorganize the world in the direction that the overwhelming majority of mankind expects and needs". Therefore, the BRICS seeks to remodel power relations on the normative structure, so that norms and values cannot be shaped by the will of few voices.

For most states, the only option is accept the standards created, acting as mere norm takers. The BRICS symbolizes the desire for an increasingly participation, encouraging systemic adjusts that reduce the condition of rule takers so that more and more states can become rule makers and be part of the decision making process. It is in this context that not only BRICS, but also BASIC, AIIB and BRI offer political platforms that push for modifying international politics, in order to include as many countries as active participants in the production of norms and values, helping to legitimize the international order.

## 6. Final remarks

The cornerstone of BRICS's institutional architecture is consolidated around development. In a multifaceted approach, BRICS designs development on an agenda that encompasses security, finance, coordinated action in forums, joint positioning, in order to strengthen means to deal with constraints faced by developing countries. In

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<sup>18</sup> Yan Xuetong at a conference under the title "China and the changing world order" held at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies on January 22, 2018, stated that the world order has undergone changes, while the international system remains stable.

<sup>19</sup> See NASSER. Salem Hikmat. O que se diz e o que se cala a governança entre a fuga do direito e a busca pelo controle. *Revista Nomos*. v. 38 n. 2 (2018): jul./dez. 2018.

the midst of this perspective, BRICS has consolidated an authentic institutional structure through Think Thanks, thematic forums in several areas, high level meetings with authorities that occupy specific sectors in the member countries, in order to refine to the maximum the collective positioning.

The interstate system is not adequate to deal with contemporary challenges. Exclusionary political and cultural relations widen inequities and asymmetries between states. This results in a crisis of representativeness that has encouraging analyzes of alternative scenarios, which results in combinations of partnerships contemplated since the 1990s. The global finance sector, which has become the main thermometer of sociopolitical mismatch since the 1970s, provides a golden opportunity for the systemic inclusion of BRICS and other projects such as NDB, BRI and AIIB. Moreover, alternative coalition projects emerge such as SCO, Quad Initiative, Africa-Pacific Growth Corridor, among others.

It is in this context that BRICS participates in the transformation of the international normative structure. In addition to other initiatives, such as the G20 (finance), G20 (WTO) and BASIC, the BRICS is a shepherd in the formation of a political culture, in which developing countries seek to deal with systemic constraints and participate more effectively in the international system in a legitimate, peaceful and collaborative (non-conflicting) means, disagreeing with the international order, yet without seeking to break the international system. This is part of a process in which a greater number of States must participate in the composition of international norms and values, which are concentrated in a Western thinking. Therefore, as Celso Amorim reinforced, the world needs to be reorganized for involving the interests of humankind, and not exclusively part of it.

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