
The BRICS in the Global Order: A New Political Agenda?

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Abstract

Regarding the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) it's important to analyze comparatively the new power cycle in order to understand not only the impact of the world crisis as well as the relationship between the official political discourses and the economic instability. Actually, the trade liberalization and economic interdependence accompanied with an uncertain international system are putting pressure to the BRICS with their own agendas for global order in seeking for a balance and also to regain a new political and economical dynamic for the promotion of new strategies. The international system leading by the United States is presently experiencing turbulent structural change that consists of the need to implement political, social and economic measures and to create adjustments of the political debate towards the construction of a policy that can respond concurrently to the welfare and to international stability. Apparently the BRICS are the symbol of a new political and economic order eventually more stable. However, as international actors they are states that are included and remain in the Westphalian paradigm. In that order, it's import to measure the limits and the possibilities of these 'new' actors. It's only a matter of political power with international impact, or it's a matter of a new concept of civilization in the international system?

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1 International Relations Have Changed?

When the first decade of the twenty-first century had passed it began to be confirmed what several authors have been announcing: international relations have changed a lot, either in the qualitative point of view either in a quantitative angle, but faced with an exhausted paradigm that greatly increases opacity in international politics. In the background, as already noted (Veiga 2009), despite all the apparent major changes after the end of the Cold War, which in some aspects seem to represent an hypermodern leap, the truth is that these mutations were interpreted with an imaginary and a speech somehow outdated. Which means, of course, that we are facing a clash of narratives. But, because a story of our time can only be perceived as a cultural history which contains, at the same time, the short, medium and long term (Aróstegui 2004) so it must also be recognized that this opacity is difficult to explain, as there will be undoubtedly new elements alongside with others that are unveiled at the precise moment that we approach an increasingly faster time.

Either way, the “official” narrative is in reality an absence of narrative, but instead is a repetition of an idea that strongly affected the West. The Spanish historian Francisco Veiga argues that this mismatch is caused, basically, (1) the fact that the technological advances of the new media seem to put the planet at a distance of a keystroke, as limitless as a reinforcing a naive faith in technical progress, making believe that the globalization process was easily controllable, and (2) the psychological predisposition of Western societies to believe not only that they won the Cold War as the conflict in itself was not real with massive attacks and casualties comparable to those of previous global conflicts, and therefore did not involve the societies of abundance in any reconstruction efforts.

This narrative does not correspond, of course, to the facts because many events have been forgotten many events that should be weighed in a more accurate interpretation of reality. The greater assumption was to understand that the different perceptions of the world are in reality reduced to one, when, in fact, many other interpretations are possible. This applies to the evolution of the Chinese political system, which somehow triumphed with the end of the bipolarity world order in the international system that ran from 1945 to 1989. But not only: Islam also had reason to judge as the winner, as it somehow contributed to the erosion of Soviet power, in alliance with the West, no doubt, but with very different purposes, as we now can perceived.

Moreover, when, in 1997, a state like Malaysia emerged from the crisis by refusing aid from international financial institutions like the IMF, instead it preferred to turn to Islamic banking, it was also found a substantial disjunction that got unnoticed to the Western public opinion, which was occupied with the illusions of consumption. It was also lost the fact that the EU enlargement to Eastern European states didn't balanced the contradictory vision on Europe that was then installed, with implications that couldn't fail to have on relations with Russia because historically this would be absurd to believe in his disappearance (Platania 2007).

Another point of view of the problems that the world cannot fail to meet, and whose perception has been successively failing in the name of productivity, in itself an underground problem and long solved, but still has not exceeded the academic circles (Kende 1971; Lipietz 1997; Georgescu-Roegen 2007) and went through to real politics. This is the kind of blindness that could open the possibility of the human species may be entering in a new era, “anthropocene”, and believe in the unlimited technical capacity, not realizing the true contours of the ecological crisis that industrial civilization has created and also not be prepared to face the “biocide” and “ecocide” (Hösle 1992; Lebeau 2005).

This opacity has much to do with complex and contradictory conditions facing that part of humanity that somehow determines the so-called “world time”. In part, because it lacks of a solid basis for a worldview (Tarnas 2008), which alone carries with it a seemingly paradoxical strengthening of traditional assumptions that, in turn, can no longer enable a single narrative about the main fundamentals. We do not know if, as Heidegger said, “*only a god can save us,*” but we recognize that the audacity and daring that open paths are not the first movement of a social system when they feel unsure.

Then, because part of humanity that has the “factual” power provides what has been called the “super-class” or “hyper-class” (Rothkopf 2008; Dussouy 2009), i.e., one set of people, from multiple cultures and countries, which is not constituted as a homogeneous power elite but, wielding political power and economic transnational that distance themselves from any other population, including the national middle classes, and as a whole they end up without sharing the same classic western worldviews of capitalism. So, from here it derives a large opacity, since not only dissolves the notion of society, sociologically connected to national experiences, but still within the old boundaries strengthens any populist perspectives. Let us also remind that, in consequence, this hyper-class is characterized axiological by an enormous heterogeneity which accentuates the “chrematistics” drives in control of power.

It follows an appreciable anomie. This is because the so-called “globalization” ended up being a “total social phenomenon”, no doubt, but does not imply a “global society”, but instead corresponds to a kind of “global neo-medievalism” (Dussouy 2009) composed of networks of individuals who play their purely individual interests, organizations of different kinds, transnational corporations, remaining the states irreplaceable entities, as no other new form of organized political power have emerged. No doubt it has changed the scale and circumstances of its development, but nothing further.

2 The Emergence of BRICS and Its Narrative

The great example of our time is, of course, the emergence of BRIC and its narrative. The post-11 September 2001 international system that was marked by attacks perpetrated in the heart of Manhattan at the *World Trade Center*, which symbolized until that very moment the projection of American hegemonic power,

has come to accelerate and enhance the transformation of world order. Thus, it is worth mentioning that international relations are increasingly operating in a dramatically changing world of uncertain paths of order apparently indefinable, not composed by the continued presence of a hierarchy of powers, but by the convergence and/or divergence point as the unpredictability of the domestic facts potentially international (Moreira 1969).

The fickleness of the way in the international arena has been encouraging over the last decade the emergence of new forms of exercising power, as well as a strategic reconfiguration of the main actors within the regional balance of power in each State, in exercise of its sovereignty, demand that the new correlation of forces set up a hierarchical construction of the international reality that may be accepted by other powers beyond what had been stipulated in the *Treaty of Holy Alliance* in 1815, or declared by international law in ensuring the international order, as in the opinion of Bertrand Russell (2010) international relations should at first seek to avoid war and then prevent that powerful states oppress the weak.

The year 2001 in addition to symbolize the terrorist attack on U.S. territory, marks the beginning of a new economic era by the voice of Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs. Precisely, on November 30 emerged for the first time the acronym BRIC in the report "*Building Better Global Economic BRIC*" regarding countries as Brazil, Russia, India and China. In this context, taking into account the territorial sense of insecurity generated, it was essential to boost the economic and financial arena with international markets to avoid a global crisis. The BRIC emerged as a credible alternative and investment new market, as analyzed on the report of October 1, 2003, "*Dreaming with the BRICs: the path to 2050*".

The answer in the search for an equilibrium of world economic policy results in providing alternatives regional centers converging on the potential of growth rates regarding the Gross Domestic Product and the number of inhabitants that bring together the four countries, although they represent political systems with contrasting cultural and social characteristics. For Jim O'Neill (2011) the International Monetary Fund and the G8 economies represent the inability to meet the challenges of the new world that is being built, particularly considering since 2011 as the BRIC markets growth, which should, in redefining the world order, become more politically astute.

Note that the heterogeneity of the BRIC can generate apparently a first impression, concerning behavioral difficulties in the relationship between sovereign entities. However, Nicholas Spykman (1933) includes in the definition of international relations and relations between individuals relevant technical influence that they can stop engaging in intra-state behavior. So, it should be noted that starting from the individual, the homogeneity of the BRIC, particularly of its projection and the actual capacity of power transposed to the international system, will result in the congregation of wills of the individuals in the sphere of governing each of these countries, by other words, the political and economic elite.

Without a doubt, it is evident the need to identify and analyze the aspirations and immediate needs involving the system (Kaplan 1975). Relating to this case it is important to recall the visit of U.S. President, Barack Obama, in Brazil on 19 and

21 March 2011, whose speech emphasized the goal of achieving an equal alliance with the countries of Latin America, bringing to mind the concept of *alliance for progress* of former President John Kennedy. In a joint statement of President Barack Obama and President Rousseff is committed that the United States and Brazil represent a global partnership in building the world order.

This kind of partnership also applies to China, given the intentions by the U.S. administration to opt for a strategic policy of rapprochement in the name of public diplomacy and the combination of *smart power*, that integrates the concepts of *hard power* and *soft power* to counter the growing Chinese influence in Asia-Pacific region, and also to avoid the formation of a regional military and economic region between China and Japan with implications for international security (Pelle 2007). It should be noted that in the area of regional security in Central Asia China cooperates with Russia within the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization*. Moreover, in the American geopolitical vision India represents a natural strategic partner for being a factor of stability in South Asia with regard to Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Myanmar.

Precisely, in addition to China, which has a specific national determination that is being jointly shared with civil society to overcome nearly a century of humiliation (1842–1949) and in order to regain its place as the *middle kingdom* (Barbé 2011), Brazil has been positioned themselves as a strategic actor among the BRIC, not only at the regional level in Latin America but also globally in the consolidation of democratic values and reducing the high rate of poverty that plague these countries. President Rousseff reaffirms the need to build a new world order rooted around human values and not merely in a defense based on neoliberal economic matrix.

To do this, it's evident the need to create basic conditions which will promote the integration and not exclusion of the poor, beyond the imperative character to refocus the international debate around human rights. In the context of international politics Brazil has advocated a substantial reform of the UN to increase its effectiveness in the international arena in times of crisis or conflict, as was the cases of Libya, Iran and, recently, the inefficiency in managing the issue of Syria. It is recalled that President Rousseff expressed his counterpart Barack Obama's ambition to occupy a permanent seat on the Security Council, bearing in mind that the UN cannot continue to represent the old world order. In fact, the BRIC position themselves as strategic partners increasingly global and not only as emerging or growth markets, therefore the gradual recognition by the U.S. administration of the role of this group, not yet official recognized as an organization, in the reconfiguration of world order, even that to some analysts (Brzezinski 2012) the U.S. role in the Asian region consisting of the balance of respecting historical and geopolitical space of China, engaging in some ways acting as a conciliator, as the role played by Britain in the nineteenth century in terms of European politics.

The world is in transition to an effective change of paradigm because of states are operating simultaneously, as international relations actors, in an undeniable reality of global interdependence and unpredictability. On April 14, 2011 it was held a meeting of BRIC, with the motto *broad vision, shared prosperity* in the city

of Sanya, Hainan Province in the People's Republic of China, which was attended by the leaders of those powers. The agenda of the meeting addressed the following topics: (1) the strengthening of BRIC in the international arena, (2) the reform of the monetary system, (3) to trade in local currency, (4) the choice of policies on peace and conflict resolution, (5) the inclusion of South Africa in the BRIC countries, by its increasing geopolitical role, not only in southern Africa, but throughout the African continent.

The BRIC countries are regional powers endowed of global projection by the fact that they are carrying out the combination of three different levels in the international arena: (1) in the formal structures of the sovereign state, (2) in the internal environment with regional projection, (3) in the global external environment. The combination of these levels determines the effective capacity of balance and change over the international system, both politically and economically, with the intervention of a strong civil society; this is now an integral part of the change/reset in the redefinition of the world order.

When considering that the BRIC are an integral part of the international subsystem stand out in this case the following functions: (1) maintaining the internal structure of the state, (2) strengthening regionally and (3) expanding its activity in the external environment, (4) increasing its influence in the international system in order to maintain the balance of the global order with the other powers. However, the reconfiguration of world order around the BRIC also raises next to each society the emergence of a feeling, sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent, relative to the position of political and economic elite, which determines the degree of satisfaction from it.

Although they are disparate realities, the factor identity establishes the relationship between the BRIC countries, bearing in mind the need for convergence to ensure survival in the international arena means that the notion of difference should be legitimately recognized by the other to minimize the divergence in name of a common sentiment subsequently adapted or transformed (Anderson 2002), to be avoided disruption of external and internal environment. Moreover, the formation of alliances depend on the homogeneity (and structures similar values) or heterogeneity (different structures and values) of the system, as well as the ability to influence decision-making among other actors in international relations (Aron 1997). Consequently, in the sphere of BRIC it's possible to identify four dimensions (Hemant 2008), as follows: (1) cultural, in which each country has its characteristics, (2) management, which evidence the practice of different policies, (3) geography, where the allocation of the cost of transportation and communication derives from the distance between each country, (4) economic inequality because of costs, wages and access to natural resources.

The BRIC eventually may fill a very important new role in redrawing the geopolitical order, and requiring the U.S. to share power with other powers in the international arena in order to avoid its transformation in an *old Europe* (Jain 2006) of national states. Is it possible, however, reducing this problem to a simple, even if renewed, game of chess? We think that it's not possible, after all they are essential

regulatory links, even if they differ in function of the cultural space experienced by social systems.

3 The European Weakness

Anyway, the fact that there is only an apparent weakening of the state, because of the loss of political sovereignty of weaker units, is reinforced by the moves of the “global civil society” as the *Wall Street* or *occupy*, actually illustrate the deterioration of a feeling of instability of world order, but probably what is happening is a new design of the world order that will require the consent, not just of a superpower or a hegemonic power, like the United States, but with a block called the BRIC powers that have been changing the behavior of the international system, particularly through the projection of China at the global level with a Europe increasingly fragmented (Friedman 2012).

The European weakness is another symptom of the opacity of which we speak. It means, above all, a lack of confidence/in European society (Habermas 2004). The dangers of this deficit come now to the surface, since Europe is facing the dilemma of having to recognize that the other is part of their identity, which puts on the table the question of whether that vision is the identity Europe. Habermas thinks that the identity of large human groups implies, in developed societies, a sufficient rationalization of the political and cultural relations which involves replacing the old modern European nation-state. Obviously the fact that the European integration process have evolved according to systemic functional assumptions that somehow discharged a normative thinking, just shows that this process took place under the baton of economic subsystem that “knew” normative bonds are dispensable.

However, the post-1989 changes began to bring new issues, namely:

1. the EU enlargement to 27 members put in question the essence of the procedures of legitimation, as negotiations between states were never deliberative-democratic nature, based on a common spirit of solidarity and trust, such as occurred in the internal evolution of European societies as national liberalism could develop its ethical-political message endowed with a certain universality. Obviously this did not happen because it could not happen, but it is good to stress that it means something contrary to the dominant narrative, means that the EU, is more or less a coalition of states in Europe, have a different view of history, beginning with the drive nationalism and identity of Eastern European societies, which were, until 1989, under Soviet influence
2. The lack of resources puts itself problems of legitimacy that only ethical and political basis can avoid. However, as we know, the risks of persistent lack of citizen participation are enormous, because the mechanisms for coordinating national policies increasingly require the integration of systemic-functional basis
3. Given the drift of unilateralist U.S. foreign policy under the first term of George W. Bush the European Union showed a profound incapacity of reaction, if not

even suffered a blow when it was divided into “old” and “new” Europe. Disability that was accentuated by the problem of formation of the “constitution” of Europe, because of the appalling lack of ability to answer the fundamental question about the purpose of this unification, it seems so easy in the areas of systemic integration and so difficult, embarrassing and changes when it puts the problem of knowing the “real” political structure and identity in Europe with a Constitution. As Habermas points out again, the broad republican and Universalist eventually grow forever in the shadow of nationalism and not by the establishment of a true European *demos* (Habermas 2004). The result is a paradox: it is seen at a time, an empty Europe because it will be without it’s “people”; a Europe divided into States and a Europe deeply asymmetrical with “frantic” rulers, structures, business. However, there is, as everyone has noticed, the general interests politically sustainable without a common symbolic space

4 A New Universal Order?

Talking about a new universal order raises the problem if is possible to obtain a design that can contribute to a “hermeneutics of universality” (Dussouy 2009). Somehow, we can just start by saying that the idea of a unified humanity is a chimera because it does not stand up to factual analysis. Perhaps the most beautiful setting its assumption of a membership of a philosopher not exactly known for its specialty in political theory and international relations, Hans Georg Gadamer, who tells us that a more correct approach would be to have “the ability to hear the other thinking he would could be right. . .”.

Some authors, such as Ortega Carcelén (2006) speak of a “global cosmocracy” which requires three worlds: a chaotic, a pre-modern, a modern in nature, in an anarchic sense of Hedley Bull, where there are correlations of strength, even with regard to values, and a further one as post-modern, aspiring, and wanting a greater political and economic integration, or having the greatest representative democracy. This design presents difficulties, not least because it will always be difficult in terms of long cycles of history, which are the modern and pre-modern, for example. But not only: in this model cannot see how come men as subjects of rights, that international law and all legal and political tradition have long recognized. This position assumes that the rights of sovereignty of states can “naturally” be opposed to the rights of people and human rights. It is true that this means there is a “conceptual crisis” in international law that, before globalization, intends to participate in its regulation without losing their ancient armor of three centuries (Casella 2008).

Too big to solve local issues, too small to regulate global business, the state is in crisis, everyone knows but few people get to define sovereignty as an *organized hypocrisy* (Krasner 2001), which weakens as the *supreme potestas* is called into question in relation to other actors and techno-economic anarchy that knows no boundaries. Trying to overcome these weaknesses, Rafael Domingo (2008) opposes the idea of an “*Anthropoarchy*”, which is not a world state, but the recognition of a

‘united humanity’ to which all human being belong so irreplaceable that will allow developing a new global political will. This concept is appealing, although from our point of view too abstract and looks at humanity as a whole that knows no particular historical developments. It has, however, one virtue: it calls into question that the Italian legal philosopher Bruno Romano calls the “*functional contemporary fundamentalism*” (Romano 2002), who sees the subject in a piecemeal manner, which sees facts but does not see phenomena, in that the human action always takes place producing a surplus that power in social history. Thus, there is an axiological densification gap with respect to a substantive citizenship, in that the bonds which link men and societies should be produced by identity, despite the difference. The commitment to pluralism is very demanding; it is easy to succumb to the temptation of expressing universalism by standardization (Galli 2010; Appiah 2007) falling into the “factory” of identity ideology.

5 Conclusions

Modern politics is therefore facing a dilemma: the world “society” somehow post-Westphalian institutionalized and very opposed to a world economy that has globalized but rests on a model that, in case of conflict, corresponds to the “relational” structures of state in the sense that was assigned by René-Jean Dupuy (1986), i.e., based on the expansion of power and violence. It can therefore sustain the idea that the modern paradigm of politics was lost in a global world that does not respond to the complexities emanating from it (Revelli 2008). You could say, in effect, that modern politics has promised a certain idea of freedom through the double security/legitimate violence, but today is no longer able to perform, nor promised freedom, nor safety for granted. Globalization has become a powerful source of disorder whose conflicts seem more like a Hobbesian state of nature than with the order fierce mortal God.

Worse, in fact, the most important international conflicts are increasingly dependent on various causes and have gained an exceptional nature that has become a permanent problem before which humanity finds itself devoid of reflection, because we live in a global risk society (Beck 2006). It is a pure and simple fact that the successive interventions of states capable of this, interventions always more or less muscled, it does not follow what we might label as “the restoration of a social and existential balance”, which was always a purpose, in principle, pursued by conflicts, even if seen by the winning side, and it is true that we find lots of analysis around each failure, and even new concepts (such as *peace keeping*, for instance), it is not less true that we are facing a systemic failure, i.e., towards a crisis of the project that self appoint as a “new world order” and cannot sort out local disputes. In brief: it is not legitimate under an ethical political point of view, also not sustainable, from a “technical” “point of view”, the axis “Hobbes/Weber”, because humanity faces new dangers that can destroy a whole.

At the end of the bipolar world system, in 1989–1991, some thinkers, as the philosopher and theologian Balducci (2005), spoke of the senselessness of

contemporary warfare because of its limitless possibilities, of the swirling circle carrying conflicts in a limited and “closed” planet. Balducci thought that peace would be possible on condition on placing human consciousness at the epicenter of the problem regarding the solution of the tension between North and South; a solution which would require the creation of new cultural political and economic ties. That’s why this catholic thinker like to know that the early Christians were not designated as such until 43 AD when the Roman power “found” this concept for reasons of public order. What happened was somewhat the opposite: the unthinkable was instituted and the story is no longer safe. And yet, because the man cannot not learn, are the threats of endless wars and ecological catastrophe that produce, with its comprehensive nature, the unification of the human and its constitution as a collective subject who seeks self-preservation. The most important contribution of the West is, without doubt, the potential of its uncertainty. As Serge Sur (2010) analyze, the “mysterious frontiers of the West” that had always had as the focal point the spirit based on free thought and public debate. But, the author include, civilization is always precarious and endowed with a strange willingness to open itself to *hubris*. The present moment displays a world that thinks at the same time as eternal, immediate and very devoted to an attitude of *post festum, pestum*.

An erratic world, therefore, that accelerates in times of human, economic and ecological predation. All this has been overlooked by many apostles of globalization (Dussouy 2009), which leads us to believe that a theory of universality can no longer rely on the current political management arrangements for his narrative to a minimally objective. Only a new “global domestic politics” could draw a new vision of a universal world order. But the outlines of a global domestic politics that there are clearly among the “no longer” (the classic international institutions no longer work) and “not yet” (potential new institutions such as the G-20, have no meaning beyond strategies term).

A new global policy will need further more complex tools for an effective policy of global interdependence. However, we do not see such a policy as possible until it is put into effect a policy that goes beyond the “impossible unity of the world” and its “structurally outdated division between States.” Perhaps the contemporary crisis enables the opening of some inter-regional and inter-ethnocentric alternatives, perhaps the only possible way (Dussouy 2009).

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