



ORIGINAL PAPER

Unipolarity and Multipolarity in the System of International Relations

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Abstract:

When the Cold War ended, the United States faced a great debate over the re-evaluation of the basic principles of foreign policy. A central element of this discussion is related to the development of a security policy for this new era as well as the US military objectives. During the Cold War there was a broad consensus regarding the meaning of security as a word. At that time, security directly referred to the physical integrity and political sovereignty of the nation-state. Security was primarily related to the purpose, function, structure and cost of the armed forces. The security policy was formulated by a small group of people from the White House and the Departments of State and Defense (Popescu, 2020 : 14).

Over the last decade, the short definition of the word security has been called into question. Several notions of security have been suggested, incorporating other aspects, such as aspects of economic nature, aspects of social and environmental life, as well as military aspects. The main reason for redefining the meaning of security was the acknowledgement that the economic power of a state is of great importance in achieving its objectives, which will represent the new priorities of foreign policy. Another reason is the one brought to attention by environmental problems, as global warming is considered a major problem with direct effects on each person's health and safety, and this situation requires cooperation both regional and global cooperation.

From the point of view of foreign policy, the main concern of the USA was the achievement of a common security, which later turned into a collective security, thus going far beyond the notion of military blocs. Collective security includes all states or at least most states in a region, based on the idea that the security of one state is linked to the security of other states in the region. Therefore, a conflict within the states or between the states from the same geographical area is and becomes a concern for the other states. Collective security aims to incorporate all participating states into decisions that affect regional security.

Keywords: *security, bipolarity; unipolarity; system of international relations.*

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Unipolarity in the system of international relations and US hegemony

A characteristic of the contemporary world was the extensive reconfiguration of international relations, both in what quality is concerned - remodeling old balances, the emergence of new international institutions, increasing the number of actors in the international arena, geopolitical changes - and in quantity - the proliferation of actors such as transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations, the emergence of new states, but especially supranational arguments over the proliferation of black arms markets or climate change.

At the same time, we are witnessing a new stage of capitalist system consisting of increasing trade flows of goods and services, achieved through the export and import of consumer goods between countries from south to north, the establishment of a new economic regime under the auspices of finance and the expansion of economic reforms which decisively influence the international relations environment.

Lately, especially in the last three decades, the world has witnessed a series of structural transformations both in the capitalist economic system and in international relations. Both phenomena are continuously fed into a complex flow of relational networks made up of various actors whose interests are often in conflict and lead to the reconfiguration of the environment of international economic relations. The rise of the new world order is marked by a new step aimed at accumulating capital through a global program that will include numerous institutions starting with academics institutions leading to international organizations in order to reconfigure international political institutions.

We entered a world order different from the Cold War, which we lived after the Second World War and the North American unipolar moment could be felt after the collapse of Soviet imperialism. During the Cold War, the world system was bipolar, and the two great empires clashed in political ideologies. The mutual capacity for nuclear destruction has limited the military conflict between the two contenders, leaving room for the rivalry that will develop on the periphery in areas such as Afghanistan, Angola, Central America, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, in the context of liberation wars, uprisings and popular operations of propaganda and espionage.

Economic collaboration between the two competing empires was rare. The process of economic globalization took place within the Western bloc and represented the liberalization of trade and investment of multinational companies promoted under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The decline of the Soviet Union opened the door to a period of North American domination, a phenomenon encountered on the international political scene as unipolarity. The most obvious events were those that accelerated the process of economic and cultural globalization through the creation of the World Trade Organization and technological development through the spread of the Internet.

In the military field, we can mention the situation in the Gulf and the Balkans, the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the war against Islamic terrorism. The global financial crisis of 2008-2009, the epicenter of which was the United States, led to the failure of the Middle East democratization project and called into question America's ability to achieve its goals. Finally, Donald Trump's victory at the end of 2016 promoted a revisionist and nationalist profile in North American foreign policy. The Trump administration's main goal was to renegotiate trade and military agreements with its traditional partners. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico was renegotiated, as well as current business agreements with Japan, South

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Korea, the European Union and other allied countries. From a commercial point of view, it was proposed to withdraw the "asymmetric concession" granted in the context of the Cold War and rebalance the "playing field" to benefit all its producers. Some negotiations have already been completed, others are moving in the direction indicated by Washington (Balze, 2019).

In the military, the US diplomacy has put pressure on its traditional allies, NATO members, to contribute more to the common defense, increasing their military spending to at least 2% of GDP, despite resistance from some states, the process is ongoing. Germany, which spends about 1.3% of GDP, has vowed within NATO to reach the 2% level by 2023. The Trump administration focused its efforts on trade, technology and geopolitical relations with China, seen today rather as a "strategic rival" - as it is called in the US National Security Strategy, 2017 (Balze, 2019).

At the same time in Europe the federal guidance project led by Germany and France over the past three decades has shown signs of weakening. The idea of regaining sovereignty by prioritizing intergovernmental agreements is gradually gaining ground in European politics, which is why we can no longer talk about a "Europe of Nations". The British decision to leave the European Union - Brexit, the Italian opposition on immigration issues, the demand for greater autonomy from some Eastern European states - Austria, Hungary, Poland, the consolidation of critical political parties, administrative centralization are some of the phenomena that will contribute to a state of illness throughout the European continent.

In its turn, Russia's aggressive behavior towards Ukraine and the forced annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia's military involvement in the Syrian civil war to support President Bashar al-Assad put Moscow back on the table of world geopolitics. Financial sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies have exacerbated tensions between them but this was not enough to change Moscow's behavior. Tensions and disputes between China and other states bordering the East and South China Seas (Brunei, the Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam) have worsened recently as a result of the close relationship between America and Taiwan. The regional naval control by the Seventh Fleet in the Straits of Malacca through which more than 20% of the world's oil transits daily is just one of the awkward situations that irritate China (Balze, 2019).

The Asian giant has increased its naval capacity in the region and is trying to expand its sovereign rights by building military installations on islands in order to control airspace and protect its commercial interests. For several decades, the United States facilitated China's economic growth, while the latter tacitly accepted America's military dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. This period is over, and today Chinese geopolitical ambitions and American nationalist revisionism have begun to clash. China's eastern and southern seas and surrounding regions will be the prime targets of geopolitical and military disputes in the first decades of the 21st century, just as Europe was for much of the 20th century.

We are witnessing a new stage, a new era, in which China is experiencing a period of ascent while the United States is in a relative decline, facts that are determined by a new setting of the world. Its international strategy has been discreet, focusing on opening markets, attracting new foreign investment and ensuring the transfer of technology to modernize the economy. The large size of the Chinese market and its huge population were in fact the main basis of its progress. Economic openness, willingness to work, the dynamism of business, the strict social discipline imposed by the

Communist Party ensured the stability needed to facilitate a very high rate of savings and investment for more than thirty years, thus stimulating high and sustained growth of the economic sector. The model of state capitalism put into practice is characterized by a strong dose of state leadership in the selection of investments. Internationally, an ambitious mercantilist strategy has been applied. China selectively protected in the domestic market of foreign competition will promote large companies that will aim to conquer the foreign market (Balze, 2019).

Ironically, none of these would have happened if the United States had not changed its policy toward China during the 1970s. After President Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1973, many North American companies invested in China, this becoming the main trigger of the transformation process. It was the United States that facilitated China's incorporation into key economic institutions, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. On the other hand, the interest shown by large multinationals in accessing the Chinese market, taking advantage of low labor costs, has also led to the rapid development of export-oriented industrial centers.

The political history of the West and the consolidation of liberal democracies after World War II in countries such as Japan, Taiwan and South Korea confirmed the seemingly overwhelming force of economic development on the evolution of the political system. Chinese political developments have suddenly denied the illusions created. The political system is authoritarian and neo-totalitarian. The party is Leninist in practice and in its political ideas based on democratic centralism in order to manage the state and society. It is not a total freedom of the press, information transmitted via the Internet is censored, and political dissidents and ethnic minorities - Tibetans, Uighurs - are persecuted or sent to perform forced labor in rehabilitation centers.

In this setting of the world, as I like to call it, the US will remain the world's number one power on the world stage, but China is close to it and the differences between the two are narrowing on all levels. America is today the dominant military power because of its ability to project power globally. From a financial point of view, it maintains its prominent position; the dollar is by far the main international reserve currency. The USA is also the largest beneficiary of direct investment in the world, and its state-of-the-art technological dynamism is extraordinary (Balze, 2019).

It is the power with the greatest cultural influence, attracting students from all over the world, exerting an enormous ascendancy through its internet companies, television, news agencies and the wide presence of its brands in global consumption. We must also note that the privileged geographical position - a quasi-island to continental scrap with access to two oceans gives it the magnet position for skilled immigration. And yet, despite these strengths, the United States is declining relative to China. The institutional system, admired all over the world for decades, has become less functional, while the political space has become excessively contentious in recent years, negatively affecting the decisions made. From a military point of view, China ranks second after the United States. The defense budget is 56% higher than that of Japan, India and the countries that are part of the Southeast Asia Association (ASEAN) (Balze, 2019). Its military power is conditioned by the difficulties it encounters in establishing military alliances. China's development and America's relative decline will bring about a profound transformation in the world political system. The unipolar world in which the USA is considered a hegemon is falling apart, gradually moving towards a new scenario with strong bipolar characteristics.

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Multipolarity in the system of international relations between concept and reality. new centers of power: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – BRICS

The acronym BRIC - Brazil, Russia, India and China, was created in 2001 by Jim O'Neill, the chief economist of Goldman Sachs, in the study "Building Better Global Economic BRICs" (Ramos et al., 2012). Among the main points of the study done in 2001-2002, we can mention the real GDP growth in the big market economies. Over the next ten years, the share of the BRIC countries and especially China in world GDP was to increase and raise important questions about the global economic impact of fiscal and monetary policies in the BRIC states. Faced with such prospects for change, global policy-making forums should be reorganized and the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) should be adjusted to incorporate them as representatives of BRIC states. The term BRIC was easily established as a category of analysis in the economic, financial, commercial, academic and communication fields. This term refers to different states that have individual characteristics that must be taken into account as a result of the establishment of a new mechanism that will make it possible the connection between them.

The new millennium brings a dynamic of transformations in the international system considered a gradual process of global reorganization. In this process of reorganization, the BRICS group has emerged as an important player on the international political scene. Looking back at the formation and evolution of the BRICS group, it must be borne in mind that the emerging powers did not actively participate in the institutions of global governance. However, it should be noted that, given the gradual intensification of ties between the five states, the degree of institutionalization of the group has deepened, becoming soon a set of rules, norms and procedures that lead to the formulation of decisions meant to define the expectations, interests and behavior of the actors constituting them. At the beginning of the 21st century, Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa were gradually invited to the G8 Summit as observers - G8 + 5 (Ramos et al., 2012). The largest meeting of the group took place in 2009 in Ekaterinburg, Russia, and created a dynamic of the activities of the four original members.

The BRIC / BRICS summits have become very important, an occasion leading to the intensification of the interaction between the members, at the level of the heads of government, in order to defend the newly reformed and democratic financial and economic architecture much more reformed and democratic. The support provided by the BRIC even without the participation of South Africa was intended to support a new multipolar world order in order to reform the UN and hoping for India and Brazil obtaining a more obvious position within it. Given that the global economic recovery was not solid, leaders realized the need to reform international financial institutions and called for a more predictable and diversified monetary system to protect the interests of developing countries, as a financial and technical cooperation for sustainable development. The 2011 summit in China marked the entry of South Africa into the BRIC group, and from now on the group has had the acronym BRICS in which economic and financial development, agriculture, energy, science and technology projects will be the main objectives of the actors involved in this group.

To strengthen cooperation for global stability, security and prosperity, the 2012 New Delhi Summit included topics such as managing the global economic crisis and institutional reform. During the Summit, BRICS members discussed the viability of a

joint investment bank to finance infrastructure projects and a sustainable economy in emerging countries. In addition to the Summits, numerous group meetings were held at the level of ministries responsible for security issues. A decade after its establishment, we can ask an obvious question: What is the importance of the BRICS for the world order so as become able to propose a new development paradigm? (Costa Vazquez, 2018).

In this situation I will start with the second part of the question, motivating the fact that it cannot be said that the BRICS group proposes a new paradigm of development, but rather the emergence and institutional consolidation through the New Development Bank which is more and more closely linked to the changes in the economic and political system as a result of China's development. The BRICS did not emerge in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, but in a multipolar system after the 2008 financial crisis. Therefore we can say that three variables stimulated the formation of common goals for the creation of BRICS, which can be classified as follows:

1. The crisis of the neoliberal paradigm, which involves a crisis of neoliberal globalization and, therefore, the questioning of the role of the transnational financial class, especially after 2008 (Essop & Overbeek, 2019). At the political and institutional levels, developing and emerging countries have called into question the management of national crises through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, by imposing predefined solutions, such as the Washington Consensus. At the 2010 G20 Summit in Seoul, an agreement was reached, called the Seoul Consensus, based on the importance of inclusive and sustained economic growth to reduce poverty in the absence of a single formula for development (Ramos et al., 2012).

2. Mutual demands for greater participation of BRICS members in global economic governance institutions: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We are also witnessing new types of hegemonic relations between existing and emerging global powers.

3. China's crucial and growing role in global governance, from rule moderator to "rule maker" (Wang, 2011). This process implies a new type of leadership in global governance, in inter-state relations and between social forces. The rise of China and the new Xi Jinping administration in 2013 promoted a series of foreign policy changes that politicians regard as substantial, with an affirmative and expansive purpose (Wang, 2011). This change was correlated with the creation of financial institutions, the strengthening of international trade and a greater incentive for foreign investment. This process of Chinese consolidation and expansion has shaped what we call the merger of BRICS institutions into Chinese-led institutions.

Based on these three variables, we can say that the main objective of the BRICS was to cooperate in the G20 Summits and to emphasize the importance of reaching a consensus on a reform of international financial institutions to allow greater participation of emerging powers in the international order (brics.itamaraty.gov.br). At the second Summit, BRICS members highlighted the crisis of legitimacy and the need for reforms in international institutions, especially in the United Nations (Vadell & Ramos, 2019). The third BRICS Summit took place in Sanya in 2011. The meeting highlights two events: the inclusion of South Africa and the fact that all BRICS countries were part of the United Nations Security Council that year. There was also a fact that led to concerns about international security, the consequences of the Arab Spring. The Fourth Summit took place in New Delhi in 2012 and was characterized by a common and assertive

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position on the implementation of new reforms in government institutions. For the first time, the possibility of setting up a new BRICS development bank was discussed, which led to the commitment of all countries to assess this possibility (brics.itamaraty.gov.br).

The evolution of the number of members from 4 to 5 was observed at the fifth BRICS Summit in Durban, in 2013 (brics.itamaraty.gov.br). The incorporation of South Africa as an interlocutor for Africa opened the doors of development cooperation, this being considered the great novelty of the first great transformation of the group. As at previous Summits, the BRICS reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism and the defense of democratic global governance through reforms in international financial institutions. At the BRICS Summit in Fortaleza in 2014 (brics.itamaraty.gov.br), also considered the sixth, a new era of meetings was inaugurated in which the proposals exceed the requirements. The main theme was: inclusive growth and sustainable solutions. The agreement led to the establishment of the New Development Bank (NDB), which aims to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in member countries for emerging and developing economies. NDB authorized an initial capital of \$ 100 billion with an initial capital of \$ 50 billion, divided equally among the founding members. At the Goa Summit in 2016, the demands made by the BRICS called for a more equitable order that would include greater participation of group members in international institutions, emphasizing the importance of cooperation in a multipolar international order.

At the Xiamen Summit, China aimed at financial consolidation, an action plan for innovation and cooperation, a strategic framework for customs cooperation between the BRICS and a Memorandum of Cooperation between the BRICS Business Council and the New Development Bank. There were also agreements on monetary issues, such as the BRICS local currency bond markets and the future establishment of a BRICS local currency bond fund, emphasizing interbank cooperation between development banks. On this occasion, an agreement was reached for the creation of a New Development Bank office in South Africa, the first regional office. The BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, in July 2018, had as its main theme the "Industrial Revolution". All the main objectives were related to China's economic expansion: deepening economic and trade cooperation between member countries for a favorable growth of industry, institutional expansion of New Development Bank with the creation of an office in São Paulo, Brazil, strengthening a BRICS plus, which it means extending the economic and political formation of the BRICS to a new yet undetermined formula. The expansion of the BRICS was on the agenda of the Xiamen Summit (brics.itamaraty.gov.br). Foreign Minister Wang Yi even suggested the incorporation of Mexico, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in order to expand an active platform for South-South cooperation.

In conclusion, the BRICS continues its existence; however, the group's agenda will coincide with China's imperative expansion into the contemporary capitalist system. BRICS is an intragroup of balanced economic cooperation with a mutual benefit, the main trade focus being China. Throughout the 21st century, China has established itself as the main partner of the rest of the BRICS members: Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa with significant trade surpluses in its favor. On the other hand, BRICS plus, in any established format, is a priority of the initiative of the great Chinese project of a "new silk road".

Conclusions

Quite recently, especially in the last three decades, the world has witnessed a series of structural transformations both in the capitalist economic system and in international relations. Both phenomena are continuously fed into a complex flow of relational networks made up of various actors whose interests are often in conflict and lead to the reconfiguration of the environment of international economic relations. The rise of the new world order is marked by a new step aimed at accumulating capital through a global program that will include numerous institutions starting with academic institutions leading to international organizations in order to reconfigure international political institutions.

Thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe should reflect on the changes that have taken place in terms of security developments. The first conclusion that can be highlighted is that humanity is facing a completely different scenario. Perhaps the most shocking thing for post-modernist organizations was the cruel phenomenon of war in different parts of the world, war being seen as an aspect that had disappeared from our lives and whose consequences have shaken the peaceful foundations of the European continent in particular and other continents in general.

Generally speaking, we will keep on witnessing the emergence or prolongation of inter-state conflicts, with the use of violence, this time a biological violence, which will seek to influence the moral values of society by undermining civil rights and freedoms. Western perceptions concerning Islam as a threat will continue, the flow of migration will increase, organized crime and terrorist movements will remain, possibly with higher levels of lethality, the proliferation of mass destruction weapons, especially biological and chemical ones will also be valid. More precisely, all the above mentioned phenomena will interact with each other, with different levels of intensity. Due to the impact they will generate, as well as the ability to spread to other phenomena, migrant flows, environmental damage and, in particular, organized crime as well as intrastate conflicts will play a decisive role in international security.

This last type of conflict will be in particular the distinctive phenomenon of the international security context, based on an unprecedented quality: the double attribute of being the phenomenon with the highest quantity and quality of interactions with the rest, and entirely the only specific subsystem within the field of international security. No one can say that this scenario or any other is inevitable, because methodologically, its usefulness is limited to reducing levels of uncertainty. On the other hand, it could be said that, unless other significant random events - commonly unusual in the field of Social Sciences - occur, the contrasts between the proposed scenario and the global situation of international security at the dawn of the 21st century would be limited.

As these significant events are linked to the human will and its ability to shape the future, two courses of action are clear in order to improve international security in the near future. The first of these modalities consists in the conscious and constant promotion and development of two specific phenomena of the international security subsystem: peace cult initiatives with the participation and involvement of non-governmental organizations. The second way is to identify phenomena that conspire simultaneously against the outbreak and development of intrastate conflicts, of Western perceptions of Islam as a threat, of the hierarchy of migratory flows as terms of danger.

The transformation of the short-term efficiency that the international community can achieve, in its effort to improve the parameters of international security in the future, forces us to go beyond the limits of this subsystem. These things involve

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operating with the stable forces of the emerging post-Cold War order. Therefore, the efforts to reduce conflict levels and the multifaceted violence inherent in international security will bring lasting benefits if the dual nature of globalization is diminished and the existing cultural antagonisms are reduced.

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Article Info

Received: November 22 2021

Accepted: December 02 2021
