

# **Bolsonaro's 'Anti-Communist' Government Relation with China - What was in it for Taiwan?**

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# **Bolsonaro's 'Anti-Communist' Government Relation with China - What was in it for Taiwan?**

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Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2022

## **ABSTRACT**

The relations between Brazil and China have been in a delicate situation ever since Jair Bolsonaro got elected. He was the first president of Brazil elected using a speech hurting the amiability of the country's most important economic partner. Inspired by the former president of US, Donald Trump, and desiring his approval as equal, Bolsonaro and his family dissolved years of diplomacy tradition of Brazil and its recent pursuit of political protagonists internationally. This paper seeks to explore how this new dynamic affected both countries' relations, and if Jair Bolsonaro's demonstrations of friendliness to Taiwan during his election were sustained once elected.

To be able to do so, this research will be using the qualitative method, utilizing narrative analysis as the tool to reach the results. The data analyzed come from interviews, official government statements, and articles from the journals and newspapers. The hypothesis for this research is that Jair Bolsonaro will not be able to effectively change the political direction of Brazil's stand on China due to the economic support China holds on the country's financial balance. The results found by this researcher during the analysis, that the ideological stand of Jair Bolsonaro cannot be harmonized with Brazil's sectors, interest groups and the country's economic necessities. However, during his term he was able to facilitate visa entries to Taiwan.

Keywords: Bolsonaro. Brazil. China. Taiwan. Anti-communism. BRICS. Brazil's Foreign Policies. Brazil's Trade Policies. Brazil-China Policy. Trumpism. COSBAN. BRI. CCP. NDB.

## 博爾索納羅與中國的“反共”政府關係——這對台灣有什麼影響？

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文藻外語大學 2022

### 摘要

自博爾索納羅當選以來，巴西和中國的關係一直處於微妙的境地。他是巴西第一位使用損害該國最重要經濟夥伴和藹可親的演講當選的總統。受到美國前總統唐納德特朗普的啟發，並希望得到他的平等認可，博爾索納羅和他的家人瓦解了巴西多年的外交傳統以及它最近在國際上對政治主角的追求。本文試圖探討這種新動態如何影響兩國關係，以及博爾索納羅在當選期間表現出的對台灣友好的表現在當選後是否能持續下去。

為了能夠做到這一點，本研究將使用定性方法，利用敘事分析作為達到結果的工具。分析的數據來自採訪、官方政府聲明以及期刊和報紙的文章。這項研究的假設是，由於中國對該國財政平衡的經濟支持，Jair Bolsonaro 將無法有效改變巴西對中國立場的政治方向。該研究人員在分析過程中發現，Jair Bolsonaro 的意識形態立場無法與巴西的部門、利益集團和該國的經濟需求相協調。然而，在他的任期內，他能夠為台灣的簽證入境提供便利。

關鍵詞：博爾索納羅。巴西。中國。台灣。反共。金磚國家。巴西的外交政策。巴西的貿易政策。巴中政策。特朗普主義。考斯班。一帶一路。中共。新開發銀行。

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South America.

BRI: Belt and Road Initiative

COSBAN: Sino-Brazilian High-Level Commission for Consultation and Cooperation

CBERS: Chinese Brazilian Earth

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CEBC: Brazil-China Business Council

EECT: Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Brazil

FIESP: Sao Paulo State Industry Federation

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IMF: International Monetary Fund

MDIC: Ministry of development, industry, and commerce

MERCOSUL: The Southern Common Market

MRE: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NDB: New Development Bank

WHO: World Health Organization

WTO: World Trade Organization

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## INTRODUCTION

There is a 16,474 km distance between Brazil and Asia. This distance separated the Asian continent from Brazil diplomatically, commercially, and politically for years. From the Portuguese colonization, granted that Portugal reached Asia during its mercantilism years, there was barely a significant connection that lasted. When the Portuguese imperial family moved its home to its only colonized country in South America, it was still not enough to consolidate such ties. There were attempts to create a similar Chinese wave of immigration, as seen in the US, in the 18th century, to supply the labor needed in coffee plantations, however, this attempt was obstructed by the Chinese government.

Relations between Brazil and China slowly began in the early nineteenth century and continued until 1949, when they were disrupted by the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Diplomatic relations between the PRC and Brazil were officially restored in 1974 with an agreement on the establishment and operation of Brazil's embassy in Beijing and China's embassy in Brasília.<sup>1</sup>

Since the independence of Brazil, the US was the primary commercial partner of the country and had a strong influence over Brazil; however, with the election of President Getulio Vargas, things took a different turn since Getulio was a nationalist.

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<sup>1</sup> Gutemberg, P. Lopes Jr, "The Sino-Brazilian Principles in a Latin American and BRICS Context: The Case for Comparative Public Budgeting Legal Research · University of Wisconsin Law School Digital Repository," *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 33, no. 1, accessed January 9, 2022, <https://repository.law.wisc.edu/s/uwlaw/media/21534>.

According to Pires and Paulino (2011), after the election of Getulio Vargas for the presidential office in 1951, Brazil inaugurated a new movement, in the internal plan, by making policies of strong national-developmental nature and, in the external, by greater economic independence from the United States. This fact reached its peak in 1961, when the then vice president João Goulart, on a visit to Chinese territory, was received by the government as a “great friend of China.”<sup>2</sup> Even 50 years ago, some interest groups started to believe the relationship between countries could be beneficial.

In 1911, Sun Yatsen proclaimed the Republic of China, and Brazil recognized it in 1913 and, in 1914, installed a diplomatic mission in the Chinese capital.<sup>3</sup> From 1911 to 1949, Sino-Brazilian relations were practically only diplomatic. With the founding of the People's Republic of China (Mainland China) by communist leader Mao Ze Dong, Brazil breaks off relations with mainland China and recognized Nationalist China (Taiwan) as the legitimate representative of the Chinese people. This Brazilian attitude can only be understood in terms of the context of the Cold War, as Brazil was an ally and was aligned with the United States, the leading superpower of the capitalist bloc. According to Fujita (2003), “After the proclamation of the new People's Republic of China, Ambassador Gastao de Rio Branco moved to Japan on November 24, 1949, accredited to the Allied Supreme Command, leaving the issue of recognition of the new regime pending. With the outbreak of the Korean War and the intensification of the

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<sup>2</sup> Costa, Guilherme Octavio Morais “A Evolução do Comércio entre Brasil e China: uma Análise das Relações Comerciais Bilaterais Sino-Brasileiras” (Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho, 2015), <https://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstream/handle/11449/132468/000855880.pdf?sequence=1>.

<sup>3</sup> Fujita, Edmundo Sussumu “O Brasil E a China-Uma Parceria Estratégica Modelar,” *Revista Política Externa* II, no. 4 (May 2003): 59–70.

East-West confrontation, Brazil began to align itself with Washington's strategic visions, while avoiding military involvement in the Korean Peninsula. In this context, in December 1952, Brazil sent Ambassador Gastao de Rio Branco from Tokyo to open the embassy in Taipei, recognizing the nationalist regime as the legal authority of China, a situation that would remain until 1974.

However, once the military coup took place in Brazil, resulting in the destitution of President Joao Goulart and instituting a new political regime, the diplomatic relations with China were set back. The Brazilian military not only rose into power using anti-communist propaganda to depose the democratically elected president but also incarcerated a Chinese commission staying in Brazil under a commercial mission. This set of diplomatically questionable actions limited Brazil's relations in Asia with Japan. This political background favored Japan for commercial purposes for years, except from 1940 to 1951 as the war period and the aftermath. Brazil became the third highest Japanese commercial transaction in Latin America until the 80's when there was economic stagnation in both countries. This economic crisis not only affected the economy but also put pressure on the government, and, in 1984, after 20 years, the military regime fell and gave place again to democratic elections, abandoning reminiscent cold war ideological impediments that existed before. The results of this shift influenced international economic policies, and the efforts to connect both countries soon took shape, and gained real momentum at the beginning of the 90's when a established relationship between China and Brazil was a success and offered room for increasing developmental cooperation. Meanwhile, Brazil was slowly recovering from what is known in Brazil as the "lost decade" crisis, a consonant scenario faced by China. Although they present cultural differences, Brazil and China have many

complementarities and commercial similarities. Both stand out as major emerging economic powers with large-scale growth in domestic markets.<sup>4</sup>

According to Cabral (2005), specifically in 1999, three events that shaped the Sino-Brazilian relations. The first of them was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Brasilia, an opportunity that Brazilian president Ernesto Geisel transformed into a business mission, and the bilateral cooperation intensified. It was expected the joint conjunction would bring a new frontier of, not only commercial advantages from both countries but as well in politics. The largest countries from South America and Asia could contribute to a new level developing countries' cooperation, resulting in a creation of a multipolar world. From that moment onwards, converging relationships were established at the highest level of international politics. Above all, the idea was established that the new century would begin with challenges that would have to be answered jointly between the two largest countries in the developing world in order to contribute incisively to the creation of a multipolar world.

Another event Cabral (2005) understands as important was the launch of the CHINESE BRASILIAN EARTH RESOURCES (CBERS) satellite, built in cooperation between Brazil and China. The impact of this cooperation went beyond strengthening the alliances; it also ruptured the monopoly held by Europeans and North

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<sup>4</sup> Costa, Guilherme Octavio Morais “A Evolução do Comércio entre Brasil e China: uma Análise das Relações Comerciais Bilaterais Sino-Brasileras” (Universidade Eestadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho, 2015), <https://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstream/handle/11449/132468/000855880.pdf?sequence=1>.

Americans in mapping and surveying natural resources. There is great significance to, at that point, developing countries to be able to exert autonomy over mapping their territory and tracking natural wealth. It safeguards the countries' sovereignty. To Brazil, it also meant the first step towards the space age, which the country lacked support until that point.

Also, according to Cabral (2005), the second major event, which attracted the attention of the world of science and technology, was the launch of the CHINESE BRAZILIAN EARTH RESOURCES (CBERS) satellite, built through a partnership between the two countries. In addition to the technological plan, the launch of the satellite had another symbolic importance: it broke the monopoly of the North Americans and Europeans in mapping and surveying our natural resources, so important and decisive for the recognition of our national sovereignty, helping to map the territory and enabling greater autonomy in tracking potential resources. Lastly, the other event according to Cabral (2005), was the first meeting held, in 1999, with Chinese and Brazilian scholars, businessmen, writers, politicians, and diplomats to firm a 10-year mutual rapprochement plan.

The relationship between states kept intensifying, and in 2001, President Jiang Zemin visited Brazil; although it was a short visit, it still is considered a huge mark between the states since they created the COSBAN (Sino-Brazilian High-Level Commission for Concentration and Cooperation), coordinate in numerous bilateral fields of actions.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Andrade, Israel De Oliveira, "A Dinâmica das relações Econômicas entre Brasil e China: Uma Análise do Período (2000-2015)," December 2015,

The meeting included, according to Becard (2011), nine state ministers, nine governors, and approximately 400 hundred businessmen, resulting in nine bilateral acts and fourteen business contracts.

Since China became a member of the WTO in 2001, breaking through internal impediments, it has been the most beneficiary of globalization from developing countries. Many companies from different countries (specially developed countries) found the perks of reaching China to expand their business and develop their industries. The new markets brought new needs and combined with China's ambitions, the need for commodities rose. Within this context, China represents an important and great opportunity to intensify trade and economic relations with Brazil, given its intense and expressive economic growth. The Brazilian sectors that can benefit from this strategic alliance are numerous, ranging from the agricultural sector to the manufacturing sector, technological cooperation to engineering services, and strategic areas such as steel and hydrocarbons to pharmaceutical product patents, among several other sectors.<sup>6</sup> According to the Ministry of development, industry, and commerce (MDIC), the relations between both countries grew twenty percent between 2001 and 2010.

By Becard's (2011) statement, the background for this modernization was due to the Xiaoping policies adopted in the 80's and 90's. These policies were meant to bring

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[http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/6472/1/BEPI\\_n21\\_Dinamica.pdf](http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/6472/1/BEPI_n21_Dinamica.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Costa, Guilherme Octavio Morais "A Evolução do Comércio entre Brasil e China: uma Análise das Relações Comerciais Bilaterais Sino-Brasileiras" (Universidade Eestadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho, 2015),

<https://repositorio.unesp.br/bitstream/handle/11449/132468/000855880.pdf?sequence=1>.

modernization to China in different areas of development. China adopted an aggressive strategy to the international market, visioning foreign investments. During this period of time, China stood out by growing GDP by 9,5% a year for the whole next decade. Something not expected from a communist country. Pathing the way to China to consolidate as a powerhouse as recipient of industrial direct investment.

At the same time, Brazil started to plan strategies that went beyond its bonds tight with the Washington Consensus, expanding its horizons. After a financial crash resulted from massive state constructions and urban plans caused by the military spending and national resolutions, drowning the country in debt with the IMF lending, it was time to reach different investment visions. China, with all its thirst for commodities, was the perfect match.

In these new circumstances, the agreement between both countries also allowed China to expand its relations beyond the US and Japan, consolidating as an opener regime. Increasing the exportation to US\$ 1 billion in 1990, ten times more than in 1970. However, while Nonnenberg (2010), says that the creation of Special Economic Zones was created in China, to support the industrial production and creation of technology, contributing for the growing of economic growth in the Asian country, the same was not happening in Brazil, as a colonized country, dependent of commodities, Barbosa e Mendes (2006) stated that pressure from interest groups started to clash. On one side, the interest groups and entrepreneurs, taking advantage of the central market influenced by commodities commerce (and its appreciation due the monetary fluctuation), and on the other the interest groups opposing the disloyal advantage the Chinese products caused in the domestic market.

## **The rise of left wing and Brazil's direction shift**

After 2002, with the election of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Brazil had its first left wing government. Even though interest groups from different markets in Brazil were worried about the ascension of a “communist regime”, the actual radical alternation of the economic system expected by the elite never happened and its influence on its country's policies were null. Nonetheless, President Lula's administration was a turning point to the country's position in the international scenario.

It is fair to affirm that President Lula got a great advantage to start his term with Brazil going through a stable era, a direct influence from President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who certainly followed a neoliberal agenda, believing in a necessary fortification of the external presence while still relaying in a multilateral relation with the US.<sup>7</sup> Lula was looking to reshape Brazilian foreign policy, having a vision of regional integration, and building an identity as a continental country; causing the search for new partners to be intensified and a developmental plan to be created. From this developmental policy, transnational companies began to have more prominence. The regional integration process opened doors for these companies to migrate to neighboring countries, favoring regional development and opening space for the country to exercise leadership in the international scenario. In addition, Lula also developed several programs for the development of a domestic economy, expanding

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<sup>7</sup> Frutuoso, Bruna Eduarda Silva; Silva, Ana Carolina Braga, “A Relação Bilateral Brasil-China No Governo Lula - 2003 a 2011» Relações Exteriores,” Revista Relações Exteriores, October 15, 2020, <https://relacoesexteriores.com.br/relacao-bilateral-brasil-china/#ftoc-heading-2>.

the consumer market so that it could act as a stimulator of economic activity.<sup>8</sup> The focus on reaching cooperation with developing countries, unifying them as block, without of simply following the premises of developed countries elevated Brazil's protagonism into levels never expected before. Some of the most remarkable being the new approach to MERCOSUL, unifying the countries neighbors (Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and as a solidified block with influence and advantages in the market, preparing for Alca (American free trade area), and the opening to multilateral trade. This became the guidelines that structured the Worker's Party period in power, also followed by the next elected president Dilma Rouseff.

As for China, President Lula's first step to forthcoming in the Asian country happened in 2004, for the 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the diplomatic relations between countries. The Brazilian president had an official visit in China, bringing along seven chief of ministry, six governors, one senator and a commission of 420 members. Among several conversations, both countries signed several documents guided by four principles, explained by Lima (2016):

- “1) Strengthening of mutual political trust, based on an equal dialogue.
- 2) Increase in economic-commercial exchange with a view to mutual benefit.
- 3) Promotion of international cooperation, with an emphasis on coordinating negotiations.
- 4) Promotion of exchanges between the respective civil societies, to deepen mutual knowledge.”

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<sup>8</sup> Biancarelli, André, “A Era Lula E Sua Questão Econômica Principal Crescimento, Mercado Interno E Distribuição de Renda,” 2014, .

Lima (2016) also explains how both sides put into practice economic-commercial projects in scientific-technological fields, social and cultural fields, amplifying the Sino-Brazilian Strategic Association, to boost mutual support for the citizens of the country's well-being. The Sino-Brazilian High Commission for Cooperation was created and co-presided by Brazil's vice-president Jose de Alencar and China's Deputy Prime Minister Wu Yi. This new commission, according to Lima (2016) aimed to orientate and coordinate the relation development between countries.

Despite that, the Brazilian commission did not refrain from standing the ground in accordance with the country's ideology. Topics such as the separatist movements from Tibet and Taiwan were discussed without abiding by Brazil's disavowal towards it. Representing the agreement with the UN's position of authority in the international system while advocating for the reformation of the Security Council, a matter that President Lula's government had been frequently focusing on during his term, defending it to become a more representative and democratic sphere. The national demand was not the only thing the Brazilian commission was after, it was important for the commission to also promote China's relation between Latin America, requesting to increase dialogues that could benefit MERCOSUL.

The hopeful interactions led the Brazilian government to grant market economy status to China, allowing the private sectors to influence the decisions and market pricing without the interference of the state. The Brazilian business community strongly protested it, in particular, one of the most influential interest groups, the Sao Paulo State Industry Federation (FIESP), was sustaining the movement. The change of policy could

be considered a different approach than the government was acting so far, however, the intention of granting China this status was to gather the Chinese support towards the candidature of Brazil to the permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Nonetheless, the expectations were not met since the assistance from China did not come in this matter. The disappointment was not big enough to affect ongoing and future cooperation.

The vicinity between countries reached all-time high in 2009 when China became Brazil's main exportation destination, and the stock of Chinese investments in Brazil totalled around US\$ 250 million. As one of the objectives of Chinese foreign policy, identified by Becard (2011), was to diversify suppliers and consumers, Brazil has emerged to become an important trading partner. China's external objectives included diversifying its trading partners and reducing dependence on a restricted group of suppliers of raw materials, inputs, and machinery, as well as diversifying the consumers of their products. On the other hand, there were also Brazilian investments in China, with 384 projects totaling US\$ 280 million aimed mainly at the area of aircraft production, such as Embraer, which maintains a factory in Harbin, China, in sectors of coal, real estate, textile industry and auto parts industry, such as Embraco, Vale, Petrobras, Marcopolo, Maxion, Veg and Schulz; in addition to some banks, and financial institutions.<sup>9</sup>

In 2008, the world faced the financial crash, and while many nations had falling

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<sup>9</sup> Frutuoso, Bruna Eduarda, "A Relação Bilateral Brasil-China No Governo Lula - 2003 a 2011» Relações Exteriores," Revista Relações Exteriores, October 15, 2020, <https://relacoeseteriores.com.br/relacao-bilateral-brasil-china/#ftoc-heading-2>.

economic growth, others managed to, not only secure a good growing economic, but also take advantage and elevate their relevance in the international scenario. According to Oliveira (2010), both China and Brazil played an important role in the international recovery processes during the crisis, such as in the consolidation and convening of the G-20 summit, alongside other emerging economies. This factor enabled greater participation in international financial decisions, in addition to bringing countries together so that adjustments in international trade could be carried out. Individually, the countries also had an important role in different international conflicts, some of them being the North Korea and Iran nuclear crises, the peace operations in Haiti, the Honduras political coup. It also had a rising influence in deliberations about climate changing, international security and development.

The new importance of these actors in the international community did not go unnoticed by the established influential developed countries. In 2001, the British economist Jim O’Neill working for investment bank Goldman Sachs, wrote about the upcoming emerging nations and its new role in the global market and called them BRIC – an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

The article brought attention to the growing commercial and political power these nations started to develop in recent years, intensified by globalization. As their global reach expands, emerging powers need to increase both their soft power and their hard power in order to preserve their interests abroad.<sup>10</sup> BRIC, as a coalition, came together after Russia noticed that it would be beneficial for the country to create direct alliance

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<sup>10</sup> Niu, Haibin, “A Grande Estratégia Chinesa E Os BRICS,” *Contexto Internacional* 35, no. 1 (June 2013): 197–229, <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-85292013000100007>.

with these rising influent governments, since politically, Russia is limited by the western institution's arrangement. Russia was the first country to push the other participants together and coordinate the foreign policies on key issues and to unite Brazil, China, and India by their lack of representativity in the hegemonic system controlled by the developed nations and their inability to oppose it as individual actors. The attempt was successful and, in 2010, the delegation also accepted South Africa, becoming BRICS and increasing their influence on all big continents.

The head of Itamaraty (Brazil's Ministry of foreign) Celso Amorim, who stayed in office until 2015 and helped solidify President Lula's foreign affairs vision, played a significant role in the emergence of the BRIC. Brazil plays an important role in the South American economic, diplomatic, and political sphere, however it was fully well recognized by the office that there was a necessity for a means to surpass its limits. The vision of the administration was that BRICS could be an intermediary political circle between the West and Latin America. Being side by side in alliance with these major economies, especially China, also brings advantage to Brazil and helps to take the country out of the "forever colonized" country. There is a saying in Brazil that has been repeated by generations that "Brazil is the country of the future" and the BRICS cooperation is seen as one way to reach this hope.

As for China, the BRICS nations' collaboration can help China enhance the voice of rising powers inside the current international system, and so boost China's capacity to engage with established powers on international obligations. As a result, China has been working with other rising countries in groups such as the BRICS, BASIC, and the G20 to promote the restructuring of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the

World Bank, as well as to rethink the climate change conference negotiating process. In this sense, developing countries share Chinese views on global governance, international institution reform, and the future of the international order. Also, given the present global economic slump, China may benefit from the intra-BRICS relationship by exploring and deepening economic cooperation among emerging countries.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most important steps to solidify and establish the cooperation between the BRICS participants was the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB), signed during the BRICS Summit hosted in Fortaleza-Brazil, in 2014. The NDB was created in agreement among the countries with the intention to build a robust and diversified portfolio of sustainable infrastructure projects, in order to fulfill its mandate and achieve strategic objectives and to reach them, the Bank supports public or private projects through loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments. The NDB funds projects following the Key Areas of Operation such as clean energy, urban development, environmental efficiency, transport infrastructure, irrigation, water resources management and sanitation, social infrastructure, digital infrastructure and COVID-19 emergency assistance.

The New Development Bank enables the countries to help each other develop without the need to resort back to traditional institutions like the IMF, which would demand the adoption of policies that might not be aligned with the country's strategy. The autonomy BRICS gained can reach a better analysis in the future. Even though the participants and the alliance per se it is not free from problems or for strategic

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<sup>11</sup> Niu, Haibin, "A Grande Estratégia Chinesa E Os BRICS," *Contexto Internacional* 35, no. 1 (June 2013): 197–229, <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-85292013000100007>.

individual pursues in the global stage, all the possibilities it can create for the participants is still to be seen. So far, it has fulfilled its purpose.

Brazil and China relations can be considered recent, if compared to other countries, however, it already is essential for the development of both states. Brazil, at the moment, still relies on exportations to China to grow its economy. How long the ties will remain favorable for the Latin American country, only time will tell. As China, to cultivate relations to retain a substantial, and relevant market and political advantage is crucial to achieve its ambitions of increasing influence.

### **Research Motivation**

Being born in the '90s, I grew up with all the Brazilian foreseeing Brazil's bright future. The older I got, the more significant changes in policies were being made and the foreign relations perspective was never this strong. My country was finally stepping to the front of the international political stage and creating alliances that were fortifying the national interests while creating more opportunities to raise the country from poverty.

After watching four years of Bolsonaro's term as president, the bright future we could once see for Brazil started to crumble. One of the biggest arguments that supports this claim is how President Bolsonaro had no emphasis on previous important alliances such as BRICS and focused on cultivating relations with Trump's USA while creating diplomatic problems due to his ideologies.

This paper creates the opportunity for me to explore the relationship between China and Brazil during his terms and compare previous governments, understand

Bolsonaro's preference for Taiwan, and how it affects international ties.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the Brazilian foreign affairs with China before and during the government of President Jair Bolsonaro. The main goal is to understand how the president's anti-communist ideology is currently affecting the relationship between Brazil and China if there is a possibility that his ideology will lead to growing relations with Taiwan and what would be the consequences of such a decision.

### **Contribution**

The present study attempts to address multiple gaps and in doing so makes important contributions. First, the study intends to try to bring some contribution to the significant gap in literature observing Brazil and Taiwan's political and commercial relationships.

Second, to deeply analyze the possibilities of diplomatic and commercial shifts with China caused by President Jair Bolsonaro's ideology and its government approach to Taiwan.

### **Limits**

This research is limited by language barrier, so any information source in languages that are not Portuguese, and English will be ignored.

## **Delimits**

My case study will only focus on the events before September 2022, since in October of the same year the elections will be held, and some changes might occur to benefit the campaign.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In 2018, Jair Messias Bolsonaro came out victorious after an election full of turmoil, and he changed Brazil's course, utilizing anti-communism, populism, and other campaign tactics as a tool in a way that Brazilian political tradition has never seen before. Many recent studies have debated President Bolsonaro's ideology, precisely the effect of his heavily ideologically tuned speeches and behaviors pre-election and post-election. Most of them seem to hit one particular country: China, followed by Jair Bolsonaro's role model, Donald Trump. Pre-election and post-election, Jair Bolsonaro demonstrated a fondness for Taiwan, viewed as a viable option instead of communist China.

It is impossible to understand how Bolsonaro rose into power in Brazil using as his base the anti-communism rhetoric without first understanding the mechanics of this statement and its influence in Brazilian politics since 1935 when there was a revolutionary insurrection movement led by the National Alliance Liberator, a leftist front hegemonized by communists <sup>12</sup>. As said by Motta (2002), Brazilian anti-communism is undoubtedly one of the most relevant political phenomena in the two phases of the institutional collapse of democracy in Brazil. In some ways, anti-communism has been a ghost in Brazilian democracy, a democracy that has been short-lived on some occasions. Even though Brazil has 500 years of existence and 132 years

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<sup>12</sup> Motta, Rodrigo Patto Sá, *Pensar as Direitas Na América Latina* (Alameda, 2019).

as a republic, less than 50 years could be understood as a democracy, and around only 30 years with free and direct elections. Brazil suffered two coup d'états, one in 1937 when the authoritarian President Getulio Vargas stayed in power until 1954, and another in 1964 when the military assumed control, and it remained until 1984. According to Motta (2002), the anti-communism recurrent from this period of Brazilian history was subsidized by three "ideological matrices": Catholicism, nationalism, and liberalism<sup>13</sup>. Motta (2019) observed that Anti-communism served as the perfect integration point for multiple heterogeneous groups' portrait of left-wing mobilizations, social movements, or policies to combat inequalities in general<sup>14</sup>.

As seen, Bolsonaro did not bring anything new to stir up conversations; he fueled what has already been haunting his country's politics since the 20th century. Nonetheless, this alone would not be the sole reason why he rose. He used another factor commonly present in Brazilian politics: the use of populism. Populism, as defined by Laclau (2013), is a "political logic of the formation of the social from popular manifestations. The formation of equivalence, between the different demands, becomes a popular demand, creating an antagonism between institutions and the social, which allows the understanding of social manifestations not mediated by political institutions"<sup>15</sup>. The politician creates a persona that bestows himself as the representation of the majority of the population, using his image to represent a

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<sup>13</sup> Guimarães, Feliciano De Sá; Silva, Irma Dutra De Oliveira, "Far-Right Populism and Foreign Policy Identity: Jair Bolsonaro's Ultra-Conservatism and the New Politics of Alignment," *International Affairs* 97, no. 2 (March 2021): 345–63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaa220>.

<sup>14</sup> Motta, Rodrigo Patto Sá, *Pensar as Direitas Na América Latina* (Alameda, 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Laclau, Ernesto, *A Razão Populista* (São Paulo: Três Estrelas, 2013).

familiarity and identification of this part of the population and create a duality between "us" (the people) and "them" (the elite) and a plan of action or demands that would enable "us" to overcome "them"<sup>16</sup>. Weffort (1978) gives another meaning: "Populism is always a popular form of the exaltation of a person in which he appears as the desired image for the State." Different authors identify different types of populism: the classic populism embodied by presidents such as Getulio Vargas and Janio Quadros and neoliberal populism represented by President Fernando Collor de Mello. However, Bolsonaro might be framed in a different category, far-right populism<sup>17</sup>. Classical populism, as defined by Saes (1994), focused on leader charisma and unification of masses attributed centrality to economic redistribution programs, while the neoliberal populism observed by Gomes (1996) shifted the focus to combat the state centralization of power and economic power (privatizations), giving less importance to institutions and organizations, but exemplified by Weyland (2001), still using the leader of the masses artifice. The far-right populism has some peculiarities compared to the others, even though it shares some of its narratives. Authoritarian populism uses three specific strategic narratives, according to Norris and Inglehart:

- 1) security against risks of instability and disorder (*against communism, the cultural Marxism influencing globalization and globalism*)
- 2) the value of conformity to preserve national traditions (*the "good citizen family, Christian model family*)

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<sup>16</sup> Laclau, Ernesto *A Razão Populista* (São Paulo: Três Estrelas, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Motta, Rodrigo Patto As, *Em Guarda Contra O Perigo Vermelho: O Anticomunismo No Brasil, 1917-1964* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 2002).

- 3) loyalty towards influential leaders who protect the group's customs and traditions<sup>18</sup> (*the Protestant Christian pastors, military, and established interest groups*)

Jair Bolsonaro's campaigning slogan simplified all three aspects, "Brazil acima de tudo, Deus acima de todos" (Brazil over everything, God above all). Part of his narrative utilized the method of "majorities act like mistreated minorities" and one of the examples in when President Bolsonaro gave a speech at the General Debate of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly – on September 22, 2020, and gave the following remark “[...] I call upon the entire international community to protect religious freedom and fight against *Christophobia*. [...]”<sup>19</sup>, ignoring the fact that 81% of the Brazilian population is declared Christians<sup>20</sup>. Another classic populist tactic is the intense use of nationalism and the creation of enemies of the nation’s status quo. Historically, previous Brazilian populist politicians materialized the anti-communist threat onto three specific countries, URSS, Cuba and China. Bolsonaro added one more, Venezuela.

Aside from the similarities, far-right populism thrives in its unique aspect, its

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<sup>18</sup> Norris, Pippa; Inglehart, Ronald F, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge Etc.: Cambridge University Press. Copyright, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> “Remarks by President Jair Bolsonaro at the General Debate of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly – September 22, 2020,” Ministério das Relações Exteriores, September 22, 2020, <https://www.gov.br/mre/en/content-centers/speeches-articles-and-interviews/president-of-the-federative-republic-of-brazil/speeches/remarks-by-president-jair-bolsonaro-at-the-general-debate-of-the-75th-session-of-the-united-nations-general-assembly-september-22-2020>.

<sup>20</sup> “50% Dos Brasileiros São Católicos, 31%, Evangélicos E 10% Não Têm Religião, Diz Datafolha,” G1, January 13, 2020, <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2020/01/13/50percent-dos-brasileiros-sao-catolicos-31percent-evangelicos-e-10percent-nao-tem-religiao-diz-datafolha.ghtml>.

interconnective global movement fed by thinkers that theorized and strategically mobilized cultural resentment, organizing it in a coherent sociological critique of globalization in several sociological sectors <sup>21</sup>. For Jair Bolsonaro, two people were crucial for adapting his far-right populist script before, during, and after the elections: Olavo de Carvalho, a Youtuber who called himself a "philosopher" even though he did not have any academic background (also revered by Bolsonaro's government Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araujo), and Donald Trump.

Although there is nothing new in populist politicians, these movements were increased by the advent of social media, not coincidentally. Social media are fertile ground for far-right leaders and their campaigns once speech verification criteria are absent, empowering any individual as an independent interlocutor if their message is loaded with authoritarianism and persecution.<sup>22</sup> Sader (2018) points out that the situation is aggravated by the campaign the extremists set against the traditional media legitimacy calling them manipulators while disseminating extremists politics view based on data without any empiric validation. The advent of social media created a new language, a language Bolsonaro was taught to use efficiently to approximate himself to those who shared similar ideologies, a campaign strategy used by Donald Trump.

President Bolsonaro's far-right ideologies always had a place deep in Brazil's conservatism political history. However, it is the first time such radical rhetoric has

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<sup>21</sup> Rita Abrahamsen et al., "Confronting the International Political Sociology of the New Right," *International Political Sociology* 14, no. 1 (February 11, 2020): 94–107, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olaa001>.

<sup>22</sup> Camilla de Azevedo Pereira and Caroline Gonçalves Coutinho Gomes, "A Extrema Direita Adiciona o Neoliberalismo: O Papel das Mídias Sociais no Atual Cenário Político," *Cadernos de Relações Internacionais* 2019, no. 2 (November 26, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.17771/pucrio.cadri.45949>.

reached the country's foreign policy <sup>23</sup>. During the 2018, Jair Bolsonaro's campaign was guided by five points, reaffirmed on each occasion:

- a) closer ties with the United States, Israel, and Taiwan.
- b) commercial opening, with tariff reduction, and the search for bilateral agreements;
- c) deepening integration in Latin America "with countries that are not dictatorships";
- d) moving the Brazilian Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem;
- e) pressure for regime change in Venezuela, with the imposition of sanctions on the government.<sup>24</sup>

The first point caused commotion, because it was completely the opposite direction as past governments. While President Lula was looking to reshape Brazilian foreign policy, having a vision of regional integration, and building an identity as a continental country; causing the search for new partners outside of Washington, opening doors and favoring regional integration and development for the government to lead in the international scenario, President Bolsonaro would often shift the country's strategy to a pro-Trump foreign policy<sup>25</sup>, even if sometimes would damnify Brazil's long time effort to apply foreign politics based on bilateralism<sup>26</sup>. To prove his intention,

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<sup>23</sup> Feliciano De Sá Guimarães and Irma Dutra De Oliveira E Silva, "Far-Right Populism and Foreign Policy Identity: Jair Bolsonaro's Ultra-Conservatism and the New Politics of Alignment," *International Affairs* 97, no. 2 (March 2021): 345–63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa220>.

<sup>24</sup> Vidigal, Carlos Eduardo, "Bolsonaro E a Reorientação Da Política Exterior Brasileira," *Meridiano 47 - Journal of Global Studies* 20 (December 13, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.20889/m47e20011>.

<sup>25</sup> Boadle, Anthony "Governo Bolsonaro Deve Seguir Linha de Política Externa de Trump," *Reuters*, November 12, 2018, sec. Brazil, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idLTAKCN1MQ2V3-OB RTP>.

<sup>26</sup> Amorim, Celso "Brazilian Foreign Policy under President Lula (2003-2010): An Overview,"

Jair Bolsonaro organized a travel party to visit Taiwan while campaigning for the 2018 presidential election; however, the visit was framed as a parliamentary visit since Bolsonaro still had Federal Congressman status. The trip was documented on his YouTube channel<sup>27</sup>, showing Bolsonaro visiting schools and universities in Taipei and meeting with the Taiwanese vice-minister Mei-Hua Meng and other Taiwanese government members.

However, Jair Bolsonaro was not alone. His immediate family, his sons, and the government members came from the same party. Jair Bolsonaro has four sons, three of whom are part of Brazilian politics. The oldest, Flavio Bolsonaro, 37 years old, is a senator elected in 2018. Carlos Bolsonaro, 35 years old, is a city councilman of Rio de Janeiro. Eduardo Bolsonaro, 34 years old, is present in congress as a congressman. Oligarchies in Brazil are an old problem to the development of the country. There innumerable sectors where the presence of such is almost normalized to Brazilian society, and its extension naturally progressed to the political field. Farago (2021) coined the term “politics as a family business”, when referring to the 60 families that take turns on power in several different states, however, this is the first time in Brazilian history to have a president with offspring’s both in the senate and congress, also holding big influence in the Brazilian diplomatic decisions.<sup>28</sup>

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*Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 53 (2010): 214–40,  
<https://www.scielo.br/j/rbpi/a/CMNH5Hc6x63gRKQKY4yGgbj/?format=pdf&lang=en>.

<sup>27</sup> Jair Bolsonaro, “Os Compromissos de Bolsonaro Em Taiwan.,” [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), 2018,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKVnvrkcfQ>.

<sup>28</sup> Farago, Cátia Cilene, “A Política Como Negócio de Família,” *Conversas & Controvérsias* 9, no. 1 (September 14, 2022): e42108, <https://doi.org/10.15448/2178-5694.2022.1.42108>.

## METHODOLOGY

For this research project, it is necessary to observe and analyze different narratives throughout the process since it is about other countries. It also needs to compare two different Brazilian government politics, making it qualitative research. There are many narratives in this case: the narrative of President Bolsonaro, the implications of this narrative to the country's foreign affairs with China and its impact on the Brazilian economy, compared to the relations between Brazil and Taiwan and how much China affects it. Narrative analysis is the best way to understand the problems and consequences of his actions on Brazil's external foreign policies.

Ultimately, the change between the right and far-right narratives toward the left governments brought Brazil to such a political state. The data I would analyze would come from interviews, official government statements, and articles from the journal. Bolsonaro, like Trump, uses social media (Twitter, YouTube) and has a type of "social media government" that directly impacts Brazil in different ways. To understand the narrative as a whole using his social media analysis, it needs the support of content analysis. It is crucial to relate the duality and unreliability of Bolsonaro's speech in different media and how he juggles certain words, themes, and concepts to trigger his popularity among followers and remain in power or create problems in the international scenario. This research will use face validity and predito to create a logical link between the questions, the pieces of information available through literature, and other data collection sources to understand the strategy followed by his government based on comparing his statements and the actions effective for the last three years.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### What were Bolsonaro's China foreign policies?

There were many speculations about the future of Brazil's foreign policies when the result of the election came out in 2018. During the 2018 campaign, Bolsonaro often voiced his strong opinions about taking Brazil's path to drift in another direction. Some of his most polemics advocations were to withdraw Brazil from the Paris Treaty, change the Israelian embassy to Tel Aviv, close the National Brazilian Authority Palestine embassy, and highly criticize the China-Brazil relation, which he referred to in an interview as: *"We cannot become tenants of our own land. There is a country out there, China, that we should keep commercial ties, but we should not allow to that them come and buy Brazil."*<sup>29</sup>

### Bolsonaro and the beginning of his government

By January 1, 2019, he addressed the issue officially, confirming that the Brazilian foreign policy would be sovereignty-driven, focused on the development and the construction of "grandeza" [...] abiding by traditionally acknowledged foreign policy goals.<sup>30</sup> Shortly on January 2, 2019, his new foreign policy minister, Ernesto Araujo, made a speech clarifying the new course, inaugurating "the new foreign policy," stating that Brazil was ready and looking forward to straightening relations with the United

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<sup>29</sup> Jair Bolsonaro: as promessas do candidato do PSL à Presidência. "Jair Bolsonaro: As Promessas Do Candidato Do PSL à Presidência." G1, October 11, 2018. <https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticia/2018/10/11/jair-bolsonaro-as-promessas-do-candidato-do-psl-a-presidencia.ghtml>.

<sup>30</sup> Sawicka, Monika "Burning Bridges and Defending the Faith. The Troubled Brazil-China Partnership in the Bolsonaro Era," *Anuario Latinoamericano – Ciencias Políticas Y Relaciones Internacionales* 10, no. 1 (December 28, 2020): 121, <https://doi.org/10.17951/al.2020.10.121-146>.

States and other states ruled by right-wing conservative governments such as Hungary, Poland, Italy, and Israel.<sup>31</sup> No mentions to BRICS partners were made during this speech.

The international perception of the election and the first few months of the new government was that this change had the potential to turn the country upside down and transform Brazil's place in the world, hampering its historic attempt to achieve greater international status.<sup>32</sup> Buarque (2022) interviewed members of the Security Council. Their perception was that his coming to power broke with the traditional long-term domestic arrangements that gave stability to the country's global positioning.

While in the first year of the Bolsonaro government, pragmatism prevailed over Brazil-China relations, making it, in the opinion of a crucial Brazilian diplomat, Marcus Caramuru, a "diplomatic spring" started in 2020 by government groups with a solid anti-government view -China caused tensions in bilateral relations, centralizing as a platform of friction the contours of the global health crisis and the technological dispute between China and the USA.

However, the increase in Brazil's dependence on trade relations with China, the continuity of cooperation within the BRICS, in particular, the practical use of the New Development Bank (NBD), and the efforts of interest groups and the deepening of cooperation between subnational governments with China partly offset the negative

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<sup>31</sup> Araujo, Ernesto "Discurso Do Ministro Ernesto Araujo Durante Cerimonia de Posse No Ministerio de Relacoes Exteriores" (January 2, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Buarque, Daniel, "Upside-down Diplomacy – Foreign Perceptions about Bolsonaro’s Intentions and Initial Transformations of Brazil’s Foreign Policy and Status," *Third World Quarterly*, July 18, 2022, 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2022.2098103>.

impact of the anti-China wing of the government.

The year 2020 was marked by the tension in political relations between the Brazilian and Chinese states. This can be attributed to the continued alignment of some high-ranking cadres of the Brazilian state with the Sinophobia rhetoric of Donald Trump, the US president, who has been, on the one hand, trying to pressure third countries to harm Chinese Information Technology companies, within the framework of the technological dispute between the US and China and, on the other hand, attributing the blame for the Covid-19 pandemic to China.<sup>33</sup>

The interest in deepening Trump's alignment with the US led in 2020 to greater radicalization of the anti-China discourse in Brazil, importing criticism against the country from Trump. The pro-Trump group that has anti-China rhetoric with influence in the Brazilian government is represented, above all, by the President's son, federal deputy and chairman of the Foreign Relations and National Defense Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Bolsonaro; by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araújo; by the international affairs adviser to the Presidency of the Republic, Filipe Martins; by the then Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub and by the President himself, Jair Bolsonaro. These high-ranking actors, also aligned with bloggers on far-right pages, can be called the "olavista wing" due to the philosopher Olavo de Carvalho. Carvalho.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Buarque, Daniel, "Upside-down Diplomacy – Foreign Perceptions about Bolsonaro's Intentions and Initial Transformations of Brazil's Foreign Policy and Status," *Third World Quarterly*, July 18, 2022, 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2022.2098103>.

<sup>34</sup> Diego Araujo et al., "A POLÍTICA EXTERNA de BOLSONARO NA PANDEMIA," 2020, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/brasilien/17340.pdf>.

## The Trump's influence

A similar malaise recurred in November, shortly after the US National Security Adviser visited Brazil. Eduardo Bolsonaro accused, on Twitter, that Huawei's 5G technology would bring espionage and cybersecurity problems to Brazil. Although the post was deleted, the Chinese Embassy, once again, raised the tone and stated that Eduardo's position could have "negative consequences and carry the historical responsibility of disturbing the normality of the China-Brazil partnership". Again, the MRE (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) did not act to alleviate the situation, preferring through a note to criticize China for having been offensive and disrespectful in spreading its indignation through social networks.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of Brazil, it is interpreted that the objective of the Sinophobia wing of the government was, by creating tensions in bilateral relations between the countries, to provide an opportunity for a deepening of the alignment with the Trump administration and to reinforce China and the USA as excluding options for foreign policy – for more than this fact clashes with the reality of China's importance to Brazil.

With each episode of tension, there was a mobilization on their part to pacify bilateral relations. However, amid the escalation of criticism of China by actors linked to Eduardo Bolsonaro and the contradictions of government decision-making, uncertainties were created in the bilateral relations.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibañez, Pablo, "Geopolítica E Diplomacia Em Tempos de Covid-19: Brasil E China No Limiar de Um Contencioso," *Espaço E Economia* 18, no. 18 (April 21, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4000/espacoeconomia.13257>.

The issues surrounding the national 5G auction, which will define the implementation of such infrastructure in the country, became, in 2020, one of the aspects in which the tensions provoked with China by the alignment of Brazil with the US were most illustrated. After the tensions caused by Eduardo Bolsonaro's Twitter posts, in March, President Jair Bolsonaro called Xi Jinping and, days later, said he would allow Huawei to participate in the 5G auction. However, the decision went through several mishaps throughout the year vis-a-vis pressure from the US. Aiming to force Brazil to limit Huawei's participation in the event, Todd Chapman, the US ambassador to Brazil, even said that the country would not suffer reprisals but would have to deal with "consequences" if they opted for the infrastructure of such a company.<sup>36</sup> In addition, seeking to encourage non-adherence to Chinese technology, the US National Security Advisor, Robert O'Brien, signed a memorandum with the Ministry of Economy in which the offer of credit of US\$ 1 billion granted via Eximbank from the USA to finance projects in different areas in Brazil, including the implementation of 5G with the exclusion of the Chinese company.

On the other hand, Brazil did not hesitate to take China's side in situations that aligned with government interests. An example of this phenomenon was Brazil's participation in the group of countries that pressed for the reactivation of discussions at the World Trade Organization (WTO), a body that since December 2019 has been paralyzed by the US. Among the members of this initiative are the European Union and China. At the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), Brazil supported China when it, together with Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, and Iran, proposed a resolution that weakened

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<sup>36</sup> Jair Bolsonaro: as promessas do candidato do PSL à Presidência, "Jair Bolsonaro: As Promessas Do Candidato Do PSL à Presidência," G1, October 11, 2018, <https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticia/2018/10/11/jair-bolsonaro-as-promessas-do-candidato-do-psl-a-presidencia.ghtml>.

the UN's ability to pressure cases of disrespect to human rights. It is noteworthy that the Brazilian support was due to the Bolsonaro government's interest in weakening the national human rights agenda.

Despite the global economic recession resulting from the pandemic and the tensions in Brazil-China interactions, trade relations between the countries grew in 2020, highlighting the following aspects:

1. Exchanges maintained the north-south pattern.
2. The trade balance remained favorable to Brazil.
3. China's commercial importance for the country grew<sup>37</sup>.

### **Did Bolsonaro's statements against China compromise any trade policy?**

The tension became palpable when China blocked the first disbursement of USD 10 billion from the Brazil-China Cooperation Fund, set up in 2015 to finance infrastructure projects in Brazil<sup>38</sup>. According to Stuenkel (2019), at the beginning of 2019, relations faced the most challenging moment in history. Despite these strains, his son Eduardo Bolsonaro was more explicit, summarizing Sino-Brazilian trade exchange as ideology-driven; in January 2019, Chinese authorities invited members of the then-presidential party PSL for a visit to China, and in May 2019, Hamilton Mourão made a trip to Beijing. His task was to improve the tarnished image of Brazil by convincing the Chinese government that pragmatic forces within the Brazilian administration were in

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<sup>37</sup> Sawicka, Monika, "Burning Bridges and Defending the Faith. The Troubled Brazil-China Partnership in the Bolsonaro Era," *Anuario Latinoamericano – Ciencias Políticas Y Relaciones Internacionales* 10, no. 1 (December 28, 2020): 121, <https://doi.org/10.17951/al.2020.10.121-146>.

<sup>38</sup> Rittner, Daniel "Retórica Anti-China Trava Uso de Fundo Bilionário No Brasil," *Valor Econômico*, March 7, <https://valor.globo.com/brasil/noticia/2019/03/07/retorica-anti-china-trava-uso-de-fundo-bilionario-no-brasil.ghtml>.

control of the situation and able to restrain attitudes that could damage bilateral relations. His visit also led to a reactivation of COSBAN.

### **The first impasse of Bolsonaro and China**

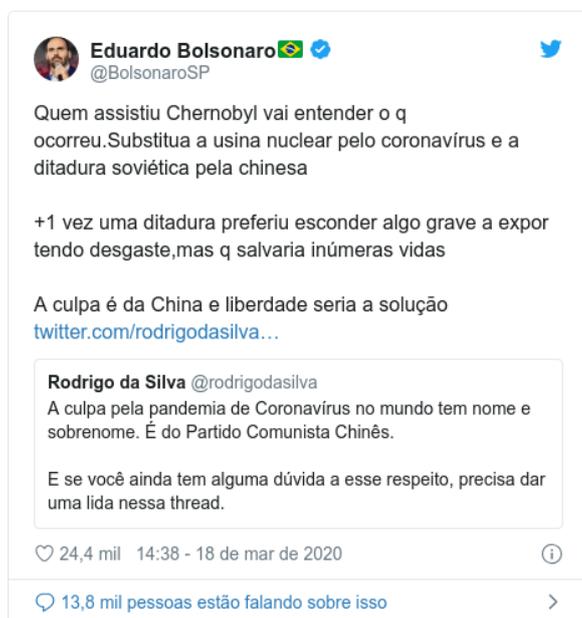
While running for President, the far-right candidate expressed opposition to Chinese investors acquiring land or controlling strategic industries. In March 2018, Bolsonaro and his sons visited Taiwan. On that occasion, the politician tweeted a critical comment about communist regimes which his administration would not embrace. China responded that contesting the "one China" principle would "cost Brazil a great deal" after Bolsonaro won the election. During his first visit to the US in March 2019, President Bolsonaro mentioned the need to reformulate Brazilian trade relations since "ideological factors would no longer affect them." It is worth noting that the fact that Bolsonaro relied on his rhetoric that the Worker's Party strongly followed the communist agenda.

One of the most disastrous issues facing the current Brazilian government is perhaps this cabinet of hate and who operates it: primarily, the President's children, who have expressed interference in their posts, as well as speeches, defamation, and destruction of the reputations of those disaffected by the Presidency. In the case of the arrival of COVID-19, something completely unusual took shape from Twitter. After being called the 'Chinese virus' by US President Donald Trump, a digital clash that ended up reaching narratives of having been a virus 'created' by China to destabilize the world economy on the western side and of having been taken by the Americans in army games that took place on Chinese territory. In any case, Trump came to be criticized on numerous fronts, including Chinese diplomacy, especially for being xenophobic. At the

end of March, the American President himself had already 'stopped' calling the pandemic a Chinese virus.<sup>39</sup>

It is essential to say that until the fateful tweet by the federal deputy and son of the President, Eduardo Bolsonaro, Chinese diplomacy had not yet expressed itself with such aggressiveness against Brazil. On March 18, 2020, that is, just two days after Trump had spoken, the deputy asserted, from a tweet by one of the founders of a page called Spotniks, that China was to blame and that freedom would be the solution, comparing the situation to the disastrous Chernobyl accident.

**Fig. 1 Eduardo Bolsonaro, the President's son accusing China to hide COVID-19, using the Chernobyl case as an example.**



Source: BBC Brazil (2020)<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibañez, Pablo, "Geopolítica E Diplomacia Em Tempos de Covid-19: Brasil E China No Limiar de Um Contencioso," *Espaço E Economia* 18, no. 18 (April 21, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4000/espacoconomia.13257>.

<sup>40</sup> Mota, Camila Veras "Tensões Com China - Mas Também Negócios - Aumentam Em Dois Anos de Bolsonaro," *BBC News Brasil*, December 15, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-55268591>.

Even before dawn, in the early hours of March 19, Yang Wanming, China's ambassador to Brazil, released a note on the same network 'vehemently' repudiating the deputy's words, demanding immediate removal from Twitter and apologies to the Chinese people. Protesting with him were the Itamaraty and some key personalities in the government, such as the President of the congress at the time, Rodrigo Maia.

Fig. 2 Diplomatic Yang Wanming statement.



Source: Yahoo Noticias (2020)<sup>41</sup>

Since then, a series of statements from the Chinese Embassy began to circulate, highlighting the Chinese people's empathy for Brazil and the respect that China maintains for the sovereignty of others. In one of them, the Embassy advises: "To turn around as quickly as possible, since history teaches us that those who insist on attacking and humiliating the Chinese people always end up shooting themselves in the foot." The direct threat was corroborated by an official note published on the website of the

<sup>41</sup> "Ministro de Bolsonaro Debocha Da China Em Tweet Sobre Coronavírus: 'Plano Infalível Do Cebolinha,'" Yahoo Noticias, April 5, 2020, <https://br.noticias.yahoo.com/abraham-weintraub-china-coronavirus-bolsonaro-161154352.html>.

Embassy in Brazil, which had not accepted the way Ernesto Araújo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, had spoken:

"We oppose the defamation and insults against China imposed by anyone and in any form. The Chinese side did not accept the management made by Chancellor Ernesto Araújo on the night of the 18th. Deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro has to apologize to the Chinese people for his flagrant provocation. The Chinese side always and resolutely defends its principles and will never be ambiguous and tolerant with any practice that goes against its fundamental interests. We hope that some individuals on the Brazilian side, in their minority, will abandon their illusions, let alone underestimate our resolve and ability to safeguard our own interests."

What seemed to be unprecedented stupidity and with possible negative consequences for Brazil was not only not resolved but gained a new episode: the Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub, posted, on March 4, 2020, a tweet with a joke in terrible taste, using a classic Brazilian children's character by the comic book artist Mauricio de Sousa, to insult and question Sino-Brazilian relations, with the traditional xenophobia slang utilized in Brazil to make fun of how Asians speak Portuguese words.

**Fig. 3 Minister Abraham Weintraub making a Sinophobic joke about the Chinese accent**

**while speaking Portuguese, implying that China straightens because of COVID-19.**



Source: Yahoo news (2020)<sup>42</sup>

The reaction was again radical. In addition to the note below, the Embassy published a series of tweets about the incident. In one of them, he stated: "Deliberately elaborated, such statements are completely absurd and despicable, which have a strongly racist nature and unspeakable objectives, having had negative influences on the healthy development of China-Brazil bilateral relations." Words such as indignation, repudiation, xenophobia, and the request for immediate correction are also highlighted in the text passages. The reactions of the Brazilian chancellor on that occasion were null. However, the then Minister of Health, Luiz Henrique Mandetta, called the Chinese ambassador and, in addition to apologizing, sought to affirm the ties of cooperation and friendship between the countries. The minister also focused efforts on solving logistical bottlenecks that Brazil has faced in the fight against Covid-19, especially concerning

<sup>42</sup> "Ministro de Bolsonaro Debocha Da China Em Tweet Sobre Coronavírus: 'Plano Infalível Do Cebolinha,'" br.noticias.yahoo.com, April 5, 2020, <https://br.noticias.yahoo.com/abraham-weintraub-china-coronavirus-bolsonaro-161154352.html>.

the supply of personal protective equipment and fans, both necessary to combat the proliferation and symptoms of the disease<sup>43</sup>. After this tweet, however, Abraham Weintraub was forced to resign.<sup>44</sup>

This is another aspect that borders on surrealism in the statements of people so close or directly linked to the Presidency at a time when China is aware of the disease and forms of treatment, in addition to producing most of the supplies needed to combat it.

**Fig. 4 China's embassy manifesto against the anti-China declarations by members of the government.**

Manifestação do Porta-Voz da Embaixada da China  
no Brasil sobre Declarações anti-China Feitas  
pelo Membro do Governo Brasileiro

Em 5 de abril, o Ministro da Educação do Brasil Abraham Weintraub, ignorando a posição defendida pela parte chinesa em diversas gestões, fez declarações difamatórias contra a China em redes sociais, estigmatizando a China ao associar a origem da COVID-19 ao país. Deliberadamente elaboradas, tais declarações são completamente absurdas e desprezíveis, que têm cunho fortemente racista e objetivos indizíveis, tendo causado influências negativas no desenvolvimento saudável das relações bilaterais China-Brasil. O lado chinês manifesta forte indignação e repúdio a esse tipo de atitude.

Atualmente, a pandemia da Covid-19 está se espalhando globalmente, trazendo um desafio que nenhum país consegue enfrentar sozinho. A maior urgência neste momento é unir todos os países numa proativa cooperação internacional para acabar com a pandemia com a maior brevidade, com vistas a salvaguardar a saúde pública mundial e o bem-estar da Humanidade. A OMS e a comunidade internacional se opõem explicitamente à associação de vírus a um certo país ou uma certa região, combatendo a estigmatização sobre qualquer pretexto. Instamos que alguns indivíduos do Brasil corrijam imediatamente os seus erros cometidos e parem com acusações infundadas contra a China.

Source: BBC Brazil (2020)<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ibañez, Pablo, "Geopolítica E Diplomacia Em Tempos de Covid-19: Brasil E China No Limiar de Um Contencioso," *Espaço E Economia* 18, no. 18 (April 21, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4000/espacoconomia.13257>.

<sup>44</sup> Stuenkel, Oliver, "Why Beijing Wants Bolsonaro to Win," *Foreign Policy*, September 22, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/22/brazil-election-china-economy-brics-bolsonaro-lula/>.

<sup>45</sup> Mota, Camilla Veras, "Tensões Com China - Mas Também Negócios - Aumentam Em Dois Anos de Bolsonaro," *BBC News Brasil*, December 15, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-55268591>.

Another episode that put the son of the President happened in May 2020, when he incited a hashtag on Twitter with the sayings #VivaTaiwan and displayed the Taiwanese flag, which rapidly propagated with Bolsonaro's followers and allies.<sup>46</sup> The response from China came from a letter, recommending the President and its congress to avoid any congratulations to the new President of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-Wen.

### **The fall of grace: the interest groups pressure**

However, there are groups within the government – linked to economic sectors interested in Brazil-China relations, such as agribusiness and mining – represented by the Vice-Presidency of the Republic Hamilton Mourao, by some actors from the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Infrastructure, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, which are more aware of the importance of China to the country and reject the Sinophobia of certain government actors. With each episode of tension, there was a mobilization on their part to pacify bilateral relations; despite that, in the face of the escalation of criticism of China by actors linked to Eduardo Bolsonaro and the very contradictions of government decision-making, uncertainties were created in bilateral relations.

The harsh tone of China's response – on both occasions – caught the attention of analysts, as the country usually tends to appease the criticism it suffers. However, especially since the beginning of the pandemic and also due to the intensification of the dispute with the US, guidelines have been given by the Chinese government for its

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<sup>46</sup> Hioe, Brian, “Increased Support for Taiwan from Brazil and India Results from Tensions with China,” New Bloom Magazine, June 25, 2020, <https://newbloommag.net/2020/06/25/brazil-india-tw-china-tensions/>.

diplomats to respond more actively to the anti-China narratives that are emerging in several countries.

### **Brazil and the 5G open market dispute**

In 2020, Anatel's (the Brazilian National Telecommunication Agency) technical area finalized in November a proposal for rules that did not exclude Huawei. On the other hand, also in November, the MRE (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) signaled a possible adhesion to Clean Network, a program of the Trump administration that aims to restrict the participation of Chinese companies in digital networks. The MRE has already stated that Brazil supports the principles of such a program in which it is explicitly stated against the intrusion into the networks of evil actors, such "as the Chinese Communist Party" (US DEPARTMENT OF STATE, 2020).

Also, Brazil's alignment with the US at the multilateral level produced contradictions. There was the adoption of anti-China rhetoric, mainly on issues involving the pandemic, but in situations in which being together with China reinforced national agendas of interest to the government, the country's behavior was more conciliatory with the Chinese. In the context of the BRICS, the contradictions were expressed in the contrast between the country's growing use of the NBD and the increasing disdain for the geopolitical role of the grouping.

Emphasizing the importance of national sovereignties and defending the practice of unilateralism, the Brazilian government's speech presented a profound antithesis of the Chinese position, which, in turn, emphasized the defense of multilateralism and the international system centered on the UN, as well as praising the WHO's role in

combating the pandemic. Furthermore, in a likely Chinese reprisal for the episode in which Brazil took sides against China at the WHO, formal support from China and Russia for the inclusion of Brazil, India, and South Africa in the UN Security Council was withdrawn, despite the document still demanding reforms in the Council.

Some analysts have argued that the Brazilian government's alignment with the United States has created barriers to Chinese investment through "technical locks" in the energy, telecommunications, and trade sectors. In the case, for example, of the Angra 3 nuclear plant, the Brazilian government would be trying to favor the American Westinghouse to the detriment of the China National Nuclear Corporation. In addition, concerns about Huawei's participation in the construction of 5G networks continue.

While the Chinese Ambassador to Brazil, Yang Wanming, declared the optimism of Chinese companies for investments in Brazil and reaffirmed China's intention that the country could integrate the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (AGÊNCIA O GLOBO, 2020). In March 2020, the Brazilian government joined the *América Cresce* Program, an initiative by the United States that can be seen as an attempt to contain the growth of Chinese investments in Latin America, especially in infrastructure, and to oppose the BRI. Several analysts have warned that if the Brazilian government chooses to abandon the rule of non-discrimination and national treatment of China, Chinese investments should be curbed (ROSITO, 2020).

Although China has started to promote soy production in other countries, Brazil is currently tough to be replaced as a supplier of such a product, given the size of its production. The increase in the purchase of Brazilian oil and the growth of meat exports

to China in 2020 (Brasil, 2020) show that, so far, the commercial dynamics have maintained and deepened, in a clear manifestation of the usual Chinese pragmatism in the economic relationships.

Ernesto Araujo's sinophobic vision, as well as the constant tension fostered by Itamaraty in relations with China, in 2020, in support of the government's anti-China wing, accentuated a movement that was already visible in 2019: the transfer of dialogue channels and cooperation mechanisms between Brazil and China for other actors, especially subnational governments (states and municipalities) and other non-central organizations, such as the Brazil-China Business Council (CEBC).

### **What are the current relations between Brazil and Taiwan?**

Brazil does not maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan because it recognizes China as a single, integrated nation. The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Brazil (EECT) is the official representation of the Taiwanese government. It fulfills the role of an embassy, taking care of issues related to visas for entry into Taiwan and supporting Taiwanese living in or visiting Brazil. "Brazil is a great partner in terms of trade. In 2007, bilateral trade between Brazil and Taiwan represented more than US\$ 3 billion", says Jorge Shyu Guang Pu, director of the EECT.

Among the products imported from Taiwan by Brazil are components for computers and LCD panels, according to data from the Ministry of Development. In 2008<sup>47</sup>, Taiwan was the 12th country of origin for Brazilian imports and the 30th

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<sup>47</sup> "Sem Relações Diplomáticas, Brasil E Taiwan São Parceiros Comerciais," *Gazeta do Povo*, November 16, 2008, <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/economia/sem-relacoes-diplomaticas-brasil-e->

destination for exports. Until March 2021, Brazil showed a US\$ – 471.1 million deficit, meaning that more products were imported from Taiwan than exported to the Asian country. However, the country currently occupies 15th place in the ranking of imports.

To exemplify, in 2020, the Trade Balance between the two countries showed a deficit of US\$ – 791.1 million, a relatively high value compared to other Asian countries. Although, there is still an important field to be explored in Comex relations. According to surveys carried out by Comex<sup>48</sup>, in 2020, the main Brazilian products exported to Taiwan were:

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[taiwan-sao-parceiros-comerciais-ba4b11v12b0nkxu14sw8e5nbi/](#).

<sup>48</sup> Editoria Comex do Brasil, “Taiwan Se Firma Como Importante Parceiro Do Brasil Com Trocas Comerciais de US\$ 5 Bilhões,” Comex do Brasil, August 13, 2014, <https://www.comexdobrasil.com/taiwan-se-firma-como-importante-parceiro-do-brasil-com-trocas-comerciais-de-us-5-bilhoes/>.

**Table 1 Product exported to Taiwan (2020)**

	Products exported to Taiwan	US\$
1°	Corn	413 million
2°	Soy	335 million
3°	Copper ores and their concentrates	159 million
4°	Cellulose	89,1 million
5°	Iron, spiegel, granules and powder of iron or steel and ferroalloys	38,9 million
6°	Sugars and molasses	26,9 million
7°	Iron ore and its concentrates	24,3 million
8°	Leather	20,2 million
9°	Other hydrocarbons and their derivatives	19,8 million
10°	Other products - transformation industry	14,6 million

Source: Comex do Brasil<sup>49</sup>

### **Bolsonaro's allies and Taiwan**

At the same time, such trade movement between both countries cannot be directly traced to Bolsonaro's sympathy for the country. Even during his term, his pledge alliance went to the opposition of the interest groups by following its desire to assert Taiwan as a priority stake and the hold with everlasting democracy against China. Some

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<sup>49</sup> Editoria Comex do Brasil, "Taiwan Se Firma Como Importante Parceiro Do Brasil Com Trocas Comerciais de US\$ 5 Bilhões," Comex do Brasil, August 13, 2014, <https://www.comexdobrasil.com/taiwan-se-firma-como-importante-parceiro-do-brasil-com-trocas-comerciais-de-us-5-bilhoes/>.

of the most significant support for such claims come from their attempt to bring Taiwan to the front stage of Brazilian relations are trying to pass a law project aiming to recognize Brazil as a "friendly nation" and creating a more accessible visa application to Brazil, hurting the bilateral diplomacy politics (that was already damaged by facilitating US citizens visa to Brazil). Deputy Loester Trutis, from the "*Bolsonarist*" wing of the party, presented a bill asking Brazil to recognize Taiwan as the country's "friendly people." "Even without diplomatic relations with Brazil, they are willing to share this progress," said the deputy, who visited Taiwan last year. In Metropolis, he criticized mainland China – always referred to as "communist" – and praised the country's "capitalist and democratic" system, which, he said, "works."<sup>50</sup> Other deputies from the bench linked to Jair Bolsonaro would be willing to support the project, which still does not have proper support from the Presidency. The explanation for such reasoning is [...] "Taiwan's characteristics, such as advanced technological knowledge in areas such as education, public security and the prison system would be beneficial to Brazil."

After Bolsonaro decreed the exemption of visas to tourists from the United States of America, hurting the Act of Reciprocity maintained by the Itamaraty for the last decades, in March 2019, he announced that tourists from China and India would be the next to benefit from such action. By December 2019, the news reported a different scenery. The news reported that Itamaraty was prioritizing the implementation of electronic visas for passports issued by the Taiwanese **government**[1]. Meanwhile, the priority once said given to the other group was not mentioned to have priority.

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<sup>50</sup> Vinhal, Gabriel, "Bolsonaristas Querem Que Brasil Reconheça Taiwan Como 'Povo Amigo' Do País," *Metrópoles*, May 14, 2020, <https://www.metropoles.com/brasil/politica>.

On the other hand, the Taiwan representative in Brazil, Tsuche Chang, commented in an interview in 2020 for Poder360<sup>51</sup> about the relationship between countries. Representant Tsu Che Chang, even though understanding the position Brazil stands with China, argued that the Brazilian market could attract more Taiwanese investments if some facilitations occur, such as: improving the gap between the linguistic barrier to facilitate the business attraction, accepting the Taiwanese international driver license and the visa facilitation, which was a demand that is already got approved. When asked by the interviewer if it could incite China's rage, Mr. Chang answered, "[...] China is not buying soy from Brazil out of friendship. It would be tough to substitute Brazil as its leading exporter due to Brazil's capacity of production."<sup>52</sup> When asked about Bolsonaro's trip to Taiwan, his response was a surprise, and Bolsonaro reached out, interested in learning about the educational system in Taiwan.

Some cities in Brazil are taking responsibility for implementing 5G by themselves, and Taiwan has been playing a role in the conversation. According to Taiwan News (2021), the mayor of Sao Jose dos Campos, Felicio Ramuth, and Taiwanese representatives had a seminar at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Sao Paulo. Taiwan held a 5G spectrum auction in February 2020, while Brazil completed its 5G network auction in early November 2021. Chiang declared that Taiwan wants to share its expertise in creating 5G, Open RAN (Radio Access Network), and related technologies with Brazilian businesses in the future and offer firm support to their efforts. According to her, this will strengthen relationships between Taiwan and Brazil

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<sup>51</sup> Chang, Tsu Che, Poder Entrevista: Tsu Che Chang, representante de Taiwan no Brasil, interview by Paulo Silva Pinto, <https://www.poder360.com.br/Economia/Brasil-e-Timido-Em-Comercio-Diz-Representante-De-Taiwan/>, October 16, 2020.

<sup>52</sup> Chang, Tsu Che Poder Entrevista: Tsu Che Chang, representante de Taiwan no Brasil, interview by Paulo Silva Pinto, <https://www.poder360.com.br/Economia/Brasil-e-Timido-Em-Comercio-Diz-Representante-De-Taiwan/>, October 16, 2020.

along the 5G supply chain.

The most recent interaction happened on October 4, 2022, with the "13th Taiwan-Brazil Joint Business Council Meeting." Mr. R.T. Tsai, Executive Director of the CIECA (Collision Industry Electronic Commerce Association), and Mr. Renato da Fonseca, Superintendent of Industrial Development of the CNI (National Industry Confederation), co-chaired the meeting. The opening remarks were given by Mr. Sergio Cunha, Head of the Trade Promotion Section of the Commercial Office of Brazil in Taipei, and Dr. G.J. Lee, Deputy Director General of the Bureau of Foreign Trade (BOFT). Resuming the meeting after a 6-year break, according to Deputy DG Lee, was crucial since both parties could now further explore supply chain cooperation in the future. The discussion at the meeting was primarily about semiconductors and intelligent cities. There were about 120 delegates from each side.<sup>53</sup>

### **What is the future of Brazil's relation with Taiwan and China?**

Soon enough, in two years, the relationship between China and Brazil will be complete 50 years, and the sight of the future looks promising for the partnership. In 2022, COSBAN (Sino-Brazilian High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Commission) outlined medium and long-term plans for pragmatic cooperation in multiple areas. The 14th BRICS Summit, attended by the presidents of China and Brazil, reached a series of consensuses to defend multilateralism, justice, and equity, the improvement of the global governance system and the interests of emerging markets

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<sup>53</sup> MIS, "Bureau of Foreign Trade, MOEA," [www.trade.gov.tw](http://www.trade.gov.tw), November 28, 2011, <https://www.trade.gov.tw/english/Pages/detail.aspx?nodeID=4201&pid=751235>.

and developing countries, injecting positive energy into a world full of uncertainties.<sup>54</sup> After Donald Trump failed his election and Jair Bolsonaro faced a period of isolation during his diplomatic endeavor, plus the pressure of Brazilian interest groups, Jair changed his narrative and reached proximity with China. In 2021, in one of his statements at the opening of BRICS, he praised China as essential to Brazil, especially in regard to the vaccines China contributed to Brazil.<sup>55</sup> One of the significant factors for such a change is the substitution of Ernesto Araujo as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the fall of Abraham Weintraub as Minister of Education.

Stuelkel (2022) argues that China would rather the reelection of Bolsonaro for the upcoming elections in Brazil in October 2022 than the prior president Lula, who strengthened the ties with China in the first place. Stuelkel (2022) claims that Bolsonaro's distance from the West due to his authoritarian politics benefits China in maintaining its current power in South America, even though Beijing doesn't necessarily see him as a better candidate. The former president Lula, once elected, would not be undesirable to China; nevertheless, it would be expected to end the isolation from the West, creating unwanted competition for China. With Bolsonaro, Brazil's economic dependence on Beijing would be greater than under Lula's governance.

The future of Taiwan and Brazil has yet to have any evidence to become stronger than it already is. The improvements in the relationship between countries could only

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<sup>54</sup> Chen Peijie, "Chen Peijie | Brasil E China: Uma Parceria Voltada Para O Futuro | Opinião," Poder360, September 15, 2022, <https://www.poder360.com.br/opiniao/brasil-e-china-uma-parceria-voltada-para-o-futuro/>.

<sup>55</sup> Vettorazo, Lucas, "Bolsonaro Diz Que Parceria Com a China é 'Essencial' Para O Brasil | Radar," VEJA, September 2021, <https://veja.abril.com.br/coluna/radar/bolsonaro-diz-que-parceria-com-a-china-e-essencial-para-o-brasil/>.

come from the commercial perspective, especially with the 5G technology. None of the studies conclude a withstanding position where Taiwan could benefit Brazil at the same level as China. Therefore, it seems unlikely that a transitional shift to support Taiwan's diplomacy would be possible.

## CONCLUSIONS

Brazil has been ruled by Jair Bolsonaro's administration since 2018 and brought the whole country under a different circumstance with his management and ideological preferences. He is a representative of the right-nationalist movement, inspired heavily by the same ideological system and path as Donald Trump. He is frequently participating in domestic and foreign diplomatic missions and political unrest. Not only him but also inserting his family shares the same political view, going as far as accusing China of espionage through Huawei. The result of the government official's public and repeated attacks and fake news on the Chinese people throughout the elections, and mainly during the pandemic, created diplomatic difficulties between the two nations never faced before. It was the Bolsonaro administration's alignment with that of Trump, not essentially with the US, that spurred the worst Sinophobia attacks.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the two countries' relationship has yet to be impacted; on the contrary, economic engagement has intensified. The president and other prominent political personalities have mediated the conservative and anti-globalist viewpoints directed against China as a result of the significant impact of subnational actors on Brazilian foreign policy and the complex nature of Brazil-China relations. This mediation was a project of national actors and subnational, including supporters and agents from the sectors that profit from Chinese foreign investments and exports, who managed to maintain a pragmatic accord with the actual state of the

country.<sup>56</sup>

It was also observed that, despite some disagreements in the multilateral arena, the cooperation of the countries through the BRICS, especially with greater use of the NBD, continued, as well as other actors, especially subnational governments, gave greater dynamism to the relations. Therefore, due to Itamaraty's anti-China orientation, Brazil's cooperation relations with China were increasingly based on the action of non-central actors as a way of circumventing the sinophobic exposures.

The publication of offensive materials to the dignity of Chinese culture by a top federal executive was one of the most appalling events of this passage, and the minister also refused to apologize formally. This fact demonstrates that there is still a considerable prejudice concerning Chinese society, which does not contribute anything to Brazil and makes it the target of international discredit. However, the only reprisal for such behaviors was blocking the Brazil-China cooperation fund, a total value of U\$10 billion.

While the proximity of Bolsonaro to Taiwan during his election seemed an attempt to support and amplify his anti-communist ideology to the voters, the isolation in the West and the many interest groups that benefit from China's commerce forced him to adapt his narrative. However, the complete change in his narrative after Donald Trump vacated the White House in January 2020 left him completely isolated in the West, creating proximity with China. The duality present in his speeches and the turn

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<sup>56</sup> Lima, Maria Luíza Caputo; Veríssimo, Michele Polline “RELAÇÕES COMERCIAIS E POLÍTICAS ENTRE BRASIL-CHINA E OS EFEITOS DA PANDEMIA DO COVID-19,” *Revista Estudo & Debate* 29, no. 2 (June 30, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.22410/issn.1983-036x.v29i2a2022.3065>.

of his government can also be recognized as a tactic to keep himself in office. Despite everything, he needed to follow the narrative he used to gain popularity and rise to power, but he failed to put it into practice. The rise of the exportation to China does not follow the promises of his term inauguration speech. Interestingly, there was little to no backlash towards him about the change of support from his allies in government or voters. Bolsonaro was able to disguise his opportunism by continuously attacking western countries that did not align or agree with his ideology, such as France and or any other country that he considered as "leftist."

His opportunism resulted in abandoning the "support" to Taiwan, relegating it to the far past. Therefore, there is no data signaling a possible drastic shift in the current relations between these countries. Even the representative of Taiwan seems to understand the decision to change the support, even though he believes the commercial relationship between Taiwan and Brazil should and can straighten without any permanent backlash from China.

Bolsonaro and China became unlikely allies, reaching a consensus and reprehensible topics reinforcing authoritarianism. While leaving the promise of freedom and democracy Taiwan once offered for its campaign platform seems to provide its governmental system behind. The apparent economic dependence that Brazil has on China, once a matter of extreme concern to Bolsonaro's party and follow, suddenly does not hold the same severity, abandoning the ghost of the "communist threat." China continues to be the most significant commercial partner.

The research intended to bring some clarity over the unusual situation Bolsonaro put Brazil in by attracting Beijing's rage about his sudden approach to Taiwan and to be able to reunite the scarce data about Brazil and Taiwan's relations. It was challenging to find more specific data, but in this research, most of the data available in English and Portuguese about Taiwan and Brazil's relation are condensed here.

Brazil is facing a moment of unpredictability due to the campaign's results, once the winning candidate was Lula. There are some fears over Bolsonaro's reaction in his last days in office. Many believe he will try to pull some similar tactic as Donald Trump, calling the election a rigged result and using it as an excuse to give motion to a coup d'état. The fears due to his unstable political persona can demonstrate that even though the support of Brazil to Taiwan could bring diplomatic benefits to the small island, the association of Taiwan with politicians that act against democratic principles could hurt the image the Taiwanese government tries to project to the world. As a standing country surviving against authoritarianism, putting a lot of pride in its democracy, and accepting support from alt-right leaders can be a double-edged knife.

Nonetheless, the results will most likely not significantly influence the current relationship with China since Lula was the one who created great proximity between countries in search of mutual support. Meanwhile, one possibility that could approximate commercial relations between Brazil and Taiwan during the new Lula's term is Lula's efforts to improve Brazil's industrialization. Inacio Lula da Silva showed in his previous term as president that putting his country's sovereignty was a priority, which can lead diplomacy back to its position in the international scenario.

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